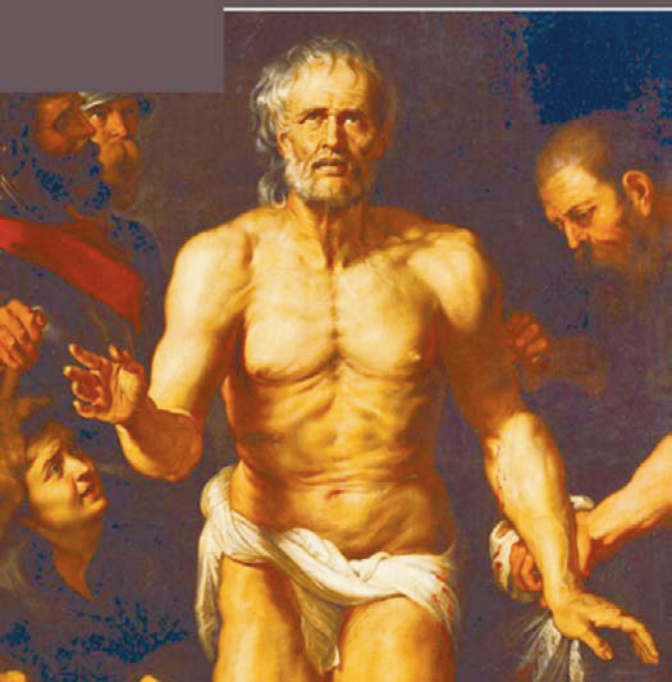


*Edited by*  
John G. Fitch

*Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*  
Seneca



OXFORD READINGS IN SENECA

OXFORD READINGS IN CLASSICAL STUDIES

**Greek Religion**

Edited by Richard Buxton

**Homer's *Iliad***

Edited by Douglas L. Cairns

**Virgil's *Aeneid***

Edited by S. J. Harrison

**The Roman Novel**

Edited by S. J. Harrison

**Aristophanes**

Edited by Erich Segal

**Greek Tragedy**

Edited by Erich Segal

**Menander, Plautus, and Terence**

Edited by Erich Segal

**The Greek Novel**

Edited by Simon Swain

**Euripides**

Edited by Judith Mossman

**Ancient Literary Criticism**

Edited by Andrew Laird

**Aeschylus**

Edited by Michael Lloyd

**Ovid**

Edited by Peter E. Knox

**The Attic Orators**

Edited by Edwin Carawan

**Catullus**

Edited by Julia Haig Gaisser

**Lucretius**

Edited by Monica R. Gale

*All available in paperback*

*Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*

# Seneca

Edited by

JOHN G. FITCH

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.  
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,  
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press  
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States  
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Oxford University Press 2008

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted  
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,  
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate  
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction  
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,  
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover  
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data  
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India  
Printed in Great Britain  
on acid-free paper by  
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 978-0-19-928208-1 978-0-19-928209-8 (Pbk.)

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

## Contents

Introduction	1
<i>John G. Fitch</i>	
1. <i>Imago Vitae Suae</i>	23
<i>Miriam T. Griffin</i>	
2. Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius: A Revaluation	59
<i>Marcus Wilson</i>	
3. Self-scrutiny and Self-transformation in Seneca's Letters	84
<i>Catharine Edwards</i>	
4. Imagination and Meditation in Seneca: The Example of <i>Praemeditatio</i>	102
<i>Mireille Armisen-Marchetti</i>	
5. The Will in Seneca the Younger	114
<i>Brad Inwood</i>	
6. Boundary Violation and the Landscape of the Self in Senecan Tragedy	136
<i>Charles Segal</i>	
7. Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama	157
<i>John G. Fitch and Siobhan McElduff</i>	
8. Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?	181
<i>Patrick Kragelund</i>	
9. Staging Seneca: The Production of <i>Troas</i> as a Philological Experiment	195
<i>Wilfried Stroh</i>	
10. Seneca's <i>Oedipus</i> : The Drama in the Word	221
<i>Donald J. Mastronarde</i>	
11. Gender and Power in Seneca's <i>Thyestes</i>	244
<i>Cedric Littlewood</i>	

12. The Implied Reader and the Political Argument in Seneca's <i>Apocolocyntosis</i> and <i>De Clementia</i> <i>Eleanor Winsor Leach</i>	264
13. Roman Historical <i>Exempla</i> in Seneca <i>Roland G. Mayer</i>	299
14. <i>In umbra virtutis: Gloria</i> in the Thought of Seneca the Philosopher <i>Robert J. Newman</i>	316
15. Seneca and Slavery <i>K. R. Bradley</i>	335
16. The Dating of Seneca's Tragedies, with Special Reference to <i>Thyestes</i> <i>R. G. M. Nisbet</i>	348
17. Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines <i>Elaine Fantham</i>	372
18. Seneca and Renaissance Drama: Ideology and Meaning <i>A. J. Boyle</i>	386
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	419
<i>References</i>	421

# Introduction

*John G. Fitch*

## RUBENS' *DEATH OF SENECA*

Rubens' painting is based on an account of Seneca's death by the historian Tacitus. Nero had ordered Seneca to commit suicide, ostensibly on suspicion of involvement in a conspiracy, but really because Seneca's renown and devotion to philosophy made Nero's weakness and disrepute all the more conspicuous by comparison. The soldiers sent to enforce the death sentence; the amanuensis recording Seneca's last thoughts; the family doctor assisting in the suicide; above all the philosopher's self-possession and inner strength in facing this supreme test—all are there in Tacitus, though Rubens has rearranged events and persons to compose his image.

It was an age when arbitrary death could come at any time. Death is a familiar presence in Seneca's dramas and prose works, along with the issue of how to face death courageously—how, one might say, to affirm selfhood at the very moment of dissolution of the self. The practical goal of Seneca's moral philosophy is to strengthen the individual's ability to maintain a consistent self-command in the face of adversities and in the final test of death. He uses two interconnected strategies. The first is to train the self to overcome instinctive emotional reactions by the power of reason. The second is to teach that nothing beyond our control, including death, is evil or good in itself: good and evil are moral terms, and can apply only to our moral choices, not to anything outside them. The prime aim of philosophy is to develop *virtus*, a moral term whose connotations include courage,



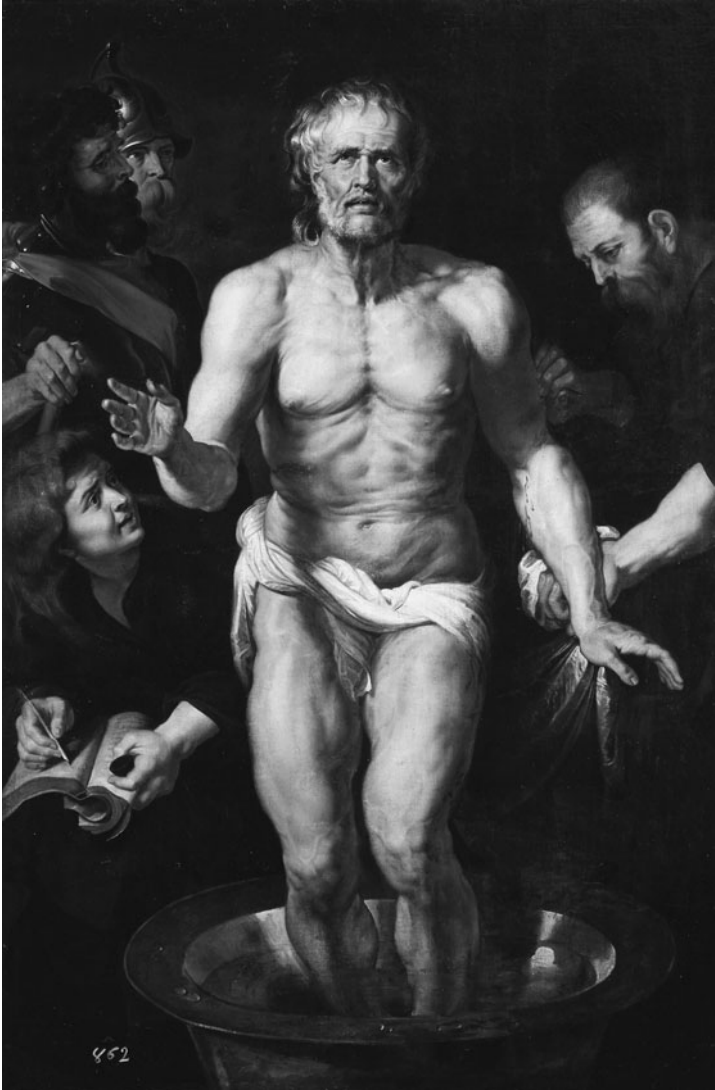


Fig. 1. *The Death of Seneca* by Sir Peter Paul Rubens. The Art Archive / Museo del Prado, Madrid / Gianni Dagli Orti.

steadfastness, goodness, and obedience to reason not passion. In the act of dying, then, Seneca was doing philosophy—not only verbally, by uttering thoughts for others to read, but practically by exercising *virtus* and enacting it for the friends and relations present with him.

Enactment for others is an important aspect of *virtus*. Tacitus tells us that Seneca, forbidden access to his will by the soldiers, told his friends that he was bequeathing to them the one thing available to him but also the finest, *imaginem vitae suae*, the image of his life. The phrase alludes, as Roland Mayer shows in the article reprinted here, to the *imagines maiorum* or portrait-masks of ancestors kept by noble families. In Roman ideology the purpose of these masks was not solely to record genealogy, but also to inspire the living to imitation and emulation of their ancestors' achievements.<sup>1</sup> Translating that practice into metaphorical terms, Seneca bequeathes the image of his life—including his death—in order to strengthen others by the memory and example of that image. Like Milton, he cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue; *virtus* needs to be manifested in the dust and toil of conflict, and manifested to others for its exemplary effect.

Seneca's use of the word *imago* implies an awareness of self-presentation and the effect of that presentation on others, issues which take us close to theatre. In the *mise en scène* of his death, Seneca consciously re-enacts the most famous of philosophical deaths, that of Socrates. The consoling of friends, the potion of hemlock kept ready, the final libation to the gods, all allude to the account of Socrates's death in Plato's *Phaedo*. This allusive and quasi-theatrical quality is there not for its own sake, but (to reiterate the point) for its protreptic effect: as Seneca himself imitates the greatest of exemplars, so others will be able to use his own example in their hour of need.

Rubens produces a comparably allusive effect in his *Death of Seneca* by evoking the image, familiar to his contemporaries, of a martyrdom—even of an *Ecce Homo* scene with the presence of the Roman soldiers, one of them clearly arrested by Seneca's words. For Rubens, closely associated at this time with the influential Neostoic circle of Justus Lipsius, the purpose of such allusiveness is to suggest

<sup>1</sup> Seneca's *Letter* 64.9 suggests that it would be good practice to keep portrait busts of great men (the context specifies moral-philosophical greatness) as spurs to one's own progress. In Rubens' painting *The Four Philosophers* a portrait bust of Seneca presides over Justus Lipsius' philosophical circle, clearly in such an inspirational role.

by his image, as Lipsius did by his writings, that there is a compatibility between Stoic and Christian teaching. But the rapport between Rubens and his subject goes beyond doctrine. There is also an affinity of *style* between Rubens' image and Seneca's writing (especially in the dramas), seen in the conscious seeking of impact and effect, in preference to the 'classical' criteria of moderation, order and proportion. The dominance in the picture of a single figure, the macabre emphasis on the physicality of death, the feeling of intensity and strain, the shock value, the ambivalent response created in the viewer—all of these can be paralleled in the Senecan tragedies.<sup>2</sup>

### SENECAN RENASCENCES

Seneca is one of those writers whose standing has varied drastically with varied times and outlooks. After declining from a peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, his reputation began to rise again only in the second half of the twentieth century. Readers of the tragedies began to find their strangeness fascinating rather than repellent. They found in them forceful depictions of human passions, and of the lust for domination over others. They found there dark humour, irony and paradox, a sense of a universe without meaning or order. They found violent disjunctions in form which seemed to echo in some sense the disjointed world of the plays. They found a strange blend of literary and psychological subtlety on the one hand, and sledgehammer power on the other hand. Many of these elements strike a chord in the modern imagination, which has its own sense of absence through the decline of Christianity, and is darkened by a history of two world wars, the cataclysmic dangers of nuclear weapons, and a seemingly unending series of genocides through the world.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For analysis of Seneca's dramas in terms of 'mannerist' and 'baroque' characteristics, see respectively Shelton 1979 on *Medea* and Segal 1984 on *Phaedra*. The definitive study of baroque prose style in Seneca, Lipsius, Montaigne, and Bacon is Croll 1966. On Rubens' connection to Lipsius through his brother Philip Rubens, see particularly Morford 1991.

<sup>3</sup> For a full and trenchant discussion of factors leading to the 'rediscovery of Seneca Tragicus' in the twentieth century see Calder 1998. Two important pioneering

The revival of interest in Seneca's philosophy springs from different roots. It is part and parcel of a 'practical turn' in the study of ancient philosophy, associated particularly with the names of Pierre Hadot, Michel Foucault and Martha Nussbaum. These philosophers have a fresh appreciation of those areas of ancient philosophy that are oriented not towards speculation and dogma, but towards the practical task of transforming and healing the self. They also assert the possibility that this practical orientation can be of contemporary value. As Hadot explains, the moral and meditative exercises which had formed part of philosophy were adopted and adapted by Christianity, and so became part of religion rather than philosophy. The collapse of religious belief among modern educated people left an obvious void, which could be filled by practices based once again on reason and philosophy, not religion. In a cosmopolitan and multicultural context, whether that of the Roman world of Seneca's time or today's globalized world, individuals are left to find their own moral path without the external forces of nationalism and religion to define identity and guide action. And Seneca's undogmatic approach, his concern with making moral progress rather than achieving perfection, his relaxed yet serious tone, his deployment of irony and humour (frequently self-directed), can appeal directly to a contemporary audience.

Seneca often asks those whom he addresses as teacher and healer to imagine themselves *in extremis*, faced by pain or death, the tyrant or the torturer. Despite the obvious rhetorical heightening, these perils reflect dangers faced by any prominent, independent-minded person under the autocracy of the emperors. Seneca himself went in danger of his life through Caligula's jealousy, suffered exile under Claudius, and was finally ordered to commit suicide by Nero. But although people living in the modern liberal democracies are not usually faced by such dangers, they do in many cases want to understand and honour the moral resources that enable individuals to maintain dignity and strength of spirit under oppression. Seneca's

studies of the tragedies were those of T. S. Eliot and O. Regenbogen, both published in the late 1920s. The immediate harbinger of the Senecan revival, however, was the remarkable essay of John Herington 1966 (unfortunately too long for inclusion here), which, like much of the work in Classics done at the University of Texas at that time, set the agenda for the next generation of critics.

repeated characterization of death as the ultimate guarantee of liberty (at his own death he made a libation to Jupiter Liberator) has its analogues in other ages among black slaves in the South, among members of the Resistance in France, and among political prisoners in the Gulag.

Will the current reassessment of Seneca establish his reputation and influence on a more stable basis than in the past? Such an outcome would surely be desirable and warranted. As philosopher, he turned ethics decisively inward, towards the goal of self-command, and devoted his efforts to helping his audience progress towards that goal. As prose writer, he developed a revolutionary style, informal and often conversational, well adapted to express the movement and progress of the mind thinking. As playwright, he composed verse tragedies whose echoes are heard at many of the greatest moments of western European drama, and whose complexity continues to challenge and fascinate. In the political sphere he created for himself a unique role as tutor and advisor to the emperor; for thirteen years he stood as an intellectual at the centre of power in Rome, itself the only world power of its time. It is difficult to think of many figures in the record of human history who can match this range of high accomplishment.

#### ASPECTS OF THE SELF

In what follows I shall introduce each of the articles contained in this volume. Often it will be useful to set the articles in the context of other critical work that could not be reprinted here. Of course I cannot begin to offer a full guide to the published criticism of Seneca, even over the past thirty years. Under the 'publish or perish' regimen, the volume of publication has become overwhelming even for the specialist. In this situation, bibliographies with summaries and evaluative comments are indispensable tools, and English-speaking scholars have reason to be grateful for the work of Motto (1971 and 1983) on the prose works, and of Coffey (1957) and Seidensticker and Armstrong (1985) on the dramas.

Miriam Griffin's article was a forerunner of her full-length biography of Seneca (1976). In the article she begins with that phrase 'the image of his life', quoted above, and examines critically the varied historical images which we receive from Seneca himself and from his contemporaries, favourable and hostile.<sup>4</sup> She steers clear of any tendency to idealize the man in reaction against his detractors, as Grimal (1978) does, or to attempt deep psychoanalysis, as Rozelaar (1976) does. Indeed she acknowledges the extreme difficulty of gaining a clear image of Seneca and his historical role, in part because his very survival at the imperial court depended on his maintaining room for manoeuvre about his political role and his reaction to events as they unfolded. Because of the ambiguities of his life and the biases of the historical sources, she reaches the following conclusion, perhaps startling for an historian: 'The literary portrait of himself as a moral teacher that Seneca has left in his essays and letters is rightly judged a more precious legacy than the historical *imago vitae suae*'.

This 'literary portrait of himself as a moral teacher' is the subject of Marcus Wilson's article. His essential point is that the portrait is one of a mind in action and in movement. From the examples of two of the *Letters*, Wilson shows how Seneca moves around the topic at hand, as if a single 'take' were insufficient for the complexities of moral evaluation. There are shifts and discontinuities of thought, which give a distinctive image: an image of Seneca as a person in the process of thinking, rather than having completed his thought—a person weighing, refining, correcting his meaning as he goes. These shifts and discontinuities challenge the reader to engage actively with the thought-process, while the epistolary genre sets up an informal, personal relationship between writer and reader: hence there is a sense of dialogue, of movement towards stronger moral understanding on the part of both Seneca himself and his addressee.

As a result of Seneca's renown as a prose stylist, there are many detailed studies of his literary style, and of the structure of his longer works.<sup>5</sup> Wilson appreciates and characterizes the literary qualities of

<sup>4</sup> The point that Seneca recounts episodes of his life, such as his vegetarian phase (*Letter* 108.22), for exemplary effect, rather than as autobiographical items, is frequently acknowledged, e.g. by Griffin 1976, 4 and by Albrecht 1999.

<sup>5</sup> On style one might cite particularly Currie 1966, Motto and Clark 1975, and Williams 2003, 25–32; on structure, Abel 1991. Lefèvre 1990 makes the intriguing

the *Letters*, but he simultaneously insists that style and structure are inseparable from content; for Seneca, literary style, moral character, and philosophy are closely interrelated. The style is the man. What Seneca's style reveals, however, is not a static picture of this man, but an image of his mind at work and in movement, in relationship to others, active and aiming at a goal. The energy and forcefulness of his writing, his deployment of humour and aphorisms, his shifts in tone and tempo, all register his sense of the significance of the matter in hand, and his desire to engage the reader.

Catharine Edwards' article, also about the *Letters*, begins by noting Seneca's leading role in a 'turn towards introspection' in the western literary tradition. She makes the point that the purpose of his self-scrutiny is not so much to discover the self as to transform the self, and that such self-transformation is at the same time other-directed (as we noted earlier in regard to *virtus*), towards helping others in their process of self-transformation.

Edwards' chief point, however, is to present Seneca's self-portrait in the *Letters* as problematic in various ways. What Wilson characterizes as challenging shifts and discontinuities of thought, Edwards regards as 'fissures and slippages in the picture of the authorial self'. It will be an interesting exercise for readers to decide, after looking at Edwards' examples of *Letters* 63.14 and 57.3 in context, which description is more justified. Finding a 'multiplicity of authorial voices' in the *Letters*, Edwards concludes that the Senecan self is 'fragmented, and riven with conflict'; she finds it impossible to identify Seneca's real self or real voice.<sup>6</sup> These claims are provocative, and challenge debate in a useful way. If the goal of Senecan philosophy is self-transformation, as Edwards acknowledges, what is the 'real' self? For Edwards the real self is the individual self, formed by individual experiences and possessing a voice distinct from any culturally determined

suggestion that the structure of the longer works may be explained in part by their oral presentation in public readings. Unfortunately he starts on the wrong foot by assuming their structures to be flawed.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards makes an intriguing comparison between Seneca, himself a 'man for all seasons', and Thomas More. It might be an inviting project to develop this comparison, to see how far it holds and does not hold—especially since Stephen Greenblatt's study of More (cited by Edwards) is one of the foundational studies of self-fashioning. Do Seneca's writings point to a 'profound conflict', such as Edwards attributes to More, between role-playing at court and philosophical activity?

voice. But this valuation clearly reflects modern individualism. One might argue that for Stoics the best and truest aspect of the self is the universal self, which is in accord with Nature and with universal Reason.<sup>7</sup>

At this point we move from the Senecan self to the self as an object of moral philosophy, though clearly these two things are closely related. The current emphasis on ‘philosophy as a way of life’ leads to an interest in those exercises or techniques designed to transform the self by repeated training. One such exercise is the daily self-scrutiny mentioned by Edwards. Another is the exercise discussed in Mireille Armisen-Marchetti’s article: the imaginative consideration of possible future troubles (*praemeditatio futurorum malorum*), intended to fortify the mind against such troubles if they should actually occur. This practice of self-preparation is exemplified in Aeneas’ words to the Sibyl at a pivotal moment of Vergil’s *Aeneid*: ‘No face of toil appears as strange or unexpected to me, maiden; I have foreseen and passed through everything in my mind already.’<sup>8</sup>

*Praemeditatio* was specifically Stoic: Epicureans deprecated the practice, on the grounds that thinking about future troubles leads to anxiety, not fortitude. Seneca sometimes seems to lean to the Epicurean position. Was he, then, an eclectic philosopher rather than an orthodox Stoic? The question has often been raised, not least because Seneca cites Epicurus with approval in many of the early letters. Armisen-Marchetti, like most recent critics, concludes that while Seneca sometimes appears to borrow from other schools, he does so without serious detriment to his Stoic orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See P. Hadot 1995, 206–13, identifying his own emphasis on the universalist aspect of the self as one of his more significant differences from Foucault. Charles Taylor 1989, 375–6 discusses ‘the idea which grows up in the late eighteenth century that each individual is different and original’. Individual differences are now thought to be definitive; ‘they entail that each one of us has an original path which we ought to tread; they lay the obligation on each of us to live up to our originality. . . Expressive individuation has become one of the cornerstones of modern culture. So much so that we barely notice it, and we find it hard to accept that it is such a recent idea in human history.’

<sup>8</sup> *Aen.* 6.108–10: *Non ulla laborum,/ o virgo, nova mi facies inopinave surgit;/ omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi.*

<sup>9</sup> Characterizations of Seneca as an eclectic thinker include Motto and Clark 1968 and Grimal 1970. Manning 1974 shows that Seneca was perfectly aware of the differences between Stoic and Peripatetic views on grief; he used Peripatetic arguments



In modern notions of selfhood an important element is the concept of the will. It has been claimed that this concept begins to emerge in Seneca, in his emphasis on 'willingness' (*voluntas, velle*) to improve the self, and becomes solidified in Augustine. Brad Inwood examines the relevant texts, and argues that willingness and desire do not point to anything as specific as the will as traditionally conceived. He suggests, however, that the traditional will is adumbrated in the Senecan practice of 'commanding' the self to take a certain course of action. After considering suicide because of persistent ill-health, Seneca 'ordered' himself to live out of consideration for his aged father. Inwood concludes that such a self-directed command 'is what most of us would call an act of will'.<sup>10</sup>

### THE TRAGIC SELF

While Seneca's prose writings had a wide influence on moral and political thinking in the Renaissance, his dramas had an even more profound influence on the tragic drama of the period. Tony Boyle argues that this influence extended beyond style and form into ideas, and in making this case he identifies some of the leading characteristics of Senecan drama itself. These include a fascination with power over others, to the extent that kingship can trump all other goals and all moral considerations; pursuit of revenge, itself an assertion of power over others; and the 'tragic frame' of a universe devoid of moral order, in which the amoral pursuit of power and revenge receives no check.

Accordingly there are radical contrasts between the kind of selfhood seen in Seneca's plays and the philosophical style of selfhood discussed above. The tragic figures align themselves with passion,

only in the context of consolation, a fact that reflects the importance accorded to considerations of genre. Schwaiger 2000 defends Seneca's orthodoxy and provides a guide to earlier discussions. Larson's study of Roman schools of philosophy (1992) softens the issue of orthodoxy by showing how close Stoics, Sextians, and Cynics were at this time in their emphasis on moral teaching and in their use of images.

<sup>10</sup> For Seneca's philosophical innovation and creativity within his cultural context, see Inwood 1993 and 1995a.

whereas Stoics align themselves with reason. The tragic figures seek power and control over others; Stoics seek power and control over themselves. The megalomania of the tragic figures expands into a cosmos empty of order; Stoics are confident of a cosmos guided by providential Reason, and attempt to conform themselves to it. The contrasts are so absolute as to produce sometimes a complete inversion, as when Oedipus says 'I abandoned the kingship gladly, but I keep the kingship over myself', or Medea proclaims 'I have always risen above Fortune in every form' (respectively *Phoenissae* 104, *Medea* 520). These statements sound entirely Stoic, but this 'autarchic sense of selfhood' (a phrase quoted by Boyle), is based in the tragedies on passionate intransigence, whereas in a Stoic it would be based on reason.

Because of these radical contrasts, critics have long debated the question how the tragedies relate to Seneca's philosophical writings. An early view, found already in medieval prefaces, was that the plays are didactic, offering examples of the destructive passions against which Seneca warns in the prose works. Criticism has now generally outgrown this view: the plays' imaginative involvement with passion, and more generally with a tragic worldview, is incommensurate with a Stoic purpose. Indeed, the very notion of Stoic tragedy is inherently improbable. Philosophy characteristically employs a rational mode of thought, even if we acknowledge the shifts in Seneca's thinking discussed above. Poetry and myth, on the other hand, are characteristically multivalent, working at various levels of meaning and tapping into various levels of the mind. Inevitably criticism (including this Introduction) which discusses Seneca's philosophy and dramas together runs the risk of implying that the philosophy has an interpretive priority over the plays. But tragedy, and high poetry generally, was historically the older tradition, and held great cultural prestige in its own right. Through this prestige the genre attracted leading public figures and writers at Rome, including Julius Caesar, Asinius Pollio, Augustus, Varius Rufus, Ovid, Pomponius Secundus.<sup>11</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Seneca, master of many culturally influential voices, was attracted to tragedy for cultural reasons, and then found

<sup>11</sup> Hine 2000, 7–8 gives references to these and other leading figures of the late Republic and early Empire who wrote tragedy.

himself held by the complexity of meaning and imaginative power of the genre.

The value of a psychoanalytic approach in explicating certain levels of selfhood and meaning in the dramas was demonstrated by Charles Segal in his study of the *Phaedra* (1986). In that book Segal employed a Lacanian approach, being particularly concerned with the relationship of words to the unconscious, and with the way in which a sense of self is constructed out of words. Segal was also interested in what one might think of as the primary and fundamental selfhood, that of the body, of bodily existence, from which various desires arise, and with which all verbal and conceptual notions of the self have to come to terms. In the article reprinted here, he explores the nexus of appetite, of devouring and being crammed full, in *Thyestes*, and the related nexus of enclosure within the body and womb in *Oedipus* and *Phoenician Women*. Segal is also concerned with correlations between the individual's body (with its concomitant psychological states) and the body of the exterior world, even of the cosmos. He notes that the realm of the underworld often corresponds to 'the darker hell of the soul': in *Oedipus*, Tiresias' unlocking of the physical barriers of the underworld corresponds to Oedipus' unlocking of the dark places from which he came, and the dark but undefined fear and guilt in his mind. Segal's writing attests to the need to understand mythic poetic drama at many levels, to shift registers from literal to metaphorical understanding; it attests also to the difficulty of finding critical discourse to speak about the body and the unconscious, which are by definition unknowable and unspeakable.<sup>12</sup>

The article which I wrote jointly with Siobhan McElduff combines Segal's psychoanalytical approach with a constructionist approach to

<sup>12</sup> Segal's influence is clear e.g. in Littlewood 1997, in Fitch and McElduff 2002, and in Schiesaro 2004, with his view that 'passion is the revelation of truths carefully hidden from the upper world of reason and power' (12). An approach which appears diametrically opposed to Segal's is that of Hook 2000, who argues that the selfhood of Seneca's tragic figures is fully constituted by the rhetorical text, and that there is nothing behind the rhetoric, no interior self such as can be glimpsed in the figures of Greek tragedy and more strongly in Hamlet. But Hook notes that 'my interpretation does not really engage Segal's reading at all, which remains powerfully, and hermetically, closed' (69). Clearly thought is needed about how these approaches can begin to speak to each other.

the 'autarchic sense of selfhood' in the tragedies. It studies the process of self-construction in the dramas, showing how the tragic figures seize eagerly upon any means to hand to construct a sense of identity and purpose. It may be a personal name, or a precedent provided by a person's own previous history, or by a family member or another mythical figure. Such attempts at self-definition are always *mis-*identifications, since they override any possibility of an authentic selfhood in favour of purely notional and verbal constructions. The very shrillness and desperateness of these attempts suggests that what lies behind them is a fear of being a 'nobody', a desire to prove that one is 'somebody' by constructing an identity, on however inadequate a basis, and by exercising power over others. These issues have great psychological resonance because each individual in any age is faced with the struggle to define identity and establish selfhood. They tap into the powerful dynamics of self-assertion, desire, imitation, conflict, and competition within the family and within society.

#### VARIED APPROACHES

One aim of *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* is to illustrate a diversity of critical methods. Any scholarly work entails a particular method and approach, whether consciously articulated or not. In this section, however, we shall be concerned with clearly defined approaches which have been influential in recent critical practice, whether about antiquity or later periods. Segal's psychoanalytical approach, just discussed, is an example, and so provides a lead-in. Two of the papers introduced here fall under the rubric of performance criticism, while three represent particular literary-critical approaches.

One of the strongest currents in recent writing about ancient drama has been an interest in performance, in seeing the text as akin to a musical score needing to be performed in order to be fully realised. In the case of Senecan drama, this approach has been complicated by doubts about whether Seneca intended his plays to be performed rather than simply read aloud in *recitationes*.<sup>13</sup> These

<sup>13</sup> On this question see some of the papers in Harrison 2000.

doubts were based in part on the presence in Seneca's plays of dramatic techniques which are not found in fifth-century drama, and which were therefore assumed to be alien to the ancient stage. However, Tarrant's epoch-making article of 1978 (not reprinted here for reasons of space) showed that many of these techniques belong to the tradition of performance drama as it had evolved since the fifth century. But the complications of the issue are shown by the fact that Tarrant himself at the time was inclined to see Seneca as 'abandoning the theatre for the more refined atmosphere of the recital hall' (1976, 8).

Patrick Kragelund deals with the issue of dramatic space, and with the common assumption that the action of Seneca's plays takes place 'in front of the palace'. He argues that this *a priori* assumption, because it frequently conflicts with indications in the plays themselves, has contributed to the view that Seneca paid no attention to location because he did not anticipate performance. Using the example of *Phaedra*, Kragelund shows that the encounter between Hippolytus, the Nurse and Phaedra is clearly indicated by the text as taking place not 'in front of the palace', but in the countryside outside Athens. Location in Senecan drama is, in fact, more varied, and more symbolically significant, than has previously been recognised. Kragelund confirms this point by the example of the *Octavia*, not Senecan but written in the Senecan tradition. Kragelund's article is a rarity in academic writing—engaging in style, apparently modest in scope but actually far-reaching in its implications.<sup>14</sup>

Critics who believe in the performability of Seneca's dramas have sometimes put their views to the test by mounting actual performances. Wilfried Stroh, for example, directed a production of *Trojan Women* (or *Troas*, as he believes the play was originally entitled) in

<sup>14</sup> Kragelund's examples are convincing, and there are many others scenes in Seneca's dramas that cannot be set 'in front of the palace'. However, it seems to me that location is not always so clearly defined as in *Phaedra* 406–735. Often, in fact, it is fluid and indeterminate—not, of course, qualities that are inconsistent with performance drama. Attempts by some critics to specify an exact location for each scene seem to me as inapposite as attempts to specify whether the chorus is 'onstage' or 'offstage' between the choral odes (Fitch 2002, 19, 341).

While Kragelund thinks in terms of full-scale performance in public theatres, Seneca may well have envisaged multiple possibilities, including public performance of excerpts (popular in his day), and private performances in the homes of great families.

Munich in 1993. His paper illustrates the creative process that can take place in such a production—a process of interplay between philology and performance, between work in the library or study and work on the stage. He conveys the participants' sense of discovery of aspects of the play that are not necessarily evident to a silent reader of the text, for example the way in which Agamemnon is cowed by Pyrrhus' threatened violence, or the sheer effectiveness onstage of the two silent roles, Polyxena and Astyanax. It is telling that the chorus—so often an embarrassment in modern productions of classical drama—became the most effective element of the Munich production, chiefly because Stroh insisted on the elements of music and dancing. For the present volume, Stroh adds a list of some stage performances of Senecan drama since 1993. The list shows that such performances are indeed beginning to happen at last, albeit slowly (and particularly slowly in much of the English-speaking world).

From performance we turn to specific literary-critical approaches. Donald Mastronarde's study of *Oedipus*, subtitled 'the drama in the word,' exemplifies the influence of structuralist linguistics, which entered practical criticism in English in the 1960s, though based on work done in linguistics early in the century. The linguist de Saussure had argued that language is a closed system which generates meaning through the internal relations of words to each other; there is no inherent one-to-one relationship between word and thing, signifier and signified, language and the outside world. The radicalism of this view is reflected in Mastronarde's proposal that Senecan drama is best understood by ignoring the usual questions of sources, dramatic unity, number of acts, characterization and so on, and instead treating the plays as poems, or as 'verbal paintings of almost static situations'.<sup>15</sup>

What Mastronarde studies is the interplay between words of similar denotation such as the adjectives *infandus*, *nefandus*, *dirus*, with the nouns *scelus* and *nefas*. His approach is reminiscent of Pratt's

<sup>15</sup> While Saussurian linguistics would apply to all literary texts and all language, Mastronarde suggests only that a linguistic approach provides 'a fuller understanding of Seneca's peculiar qualities as a Latin poet'. In this respect his approach looks like a modern, and much more favourable, version of Leo's view that the declamatory rhetoric of Seneca's tragedies displaces traditional elements such as action and characterization.

study of systems of figurative language (1963), but Mastronarde goes well beyond imagery. The 'structuralist' aspect of the linguistic approach is evident in Mastronarde's suggestion that elements of the drama 'fuse into one complex entity' through the interplay of verbal motifs; words generate a unity not found in the traditional categories of plot and action. But the deconstructive potential of the linguistic approach is also evident in Mastronarde's acknowledgement of 'the independent life assumed by individual words in their interplay'. Without Mastronarde's guidance, some readers might find the rich interplay of words to be centrifugal rather than centripetal, more akin to the associative free-flow of a dream than to a unifying system. This last remark is not meant to be disparaging: the radicalism of approaches like Mastronarde's and Segal's is essential to loosening older frames of thought and allowing new ways of understanding to emerge.

Gender studies, though prominent in recent criticism generally, have been surprisingly absent from critical writing about Seneca. Cedric Littlewood's article on *Thyestes*, subtitled 'the tragedy with no women?', is a notable exception. Littlewood shows that Thyestes is assimilated to a woman's status in various ways: by his powerlessness; by being the target of Atreus' gaze, which reduces him to an object; by a pattern of imagery which figures him as a wild beast, hunted by Atreus; and above all by containing his children within his body, in a parodic form of pregnancy, after the banquet. As for Atreus, Littlewood argues that his loss of manliness is signalled by his absence of self-control and by his choice of female models, Procne and Philomela, for his revenge. One might add Atreus' lack of certainty about whether he is the father of his children, and his concomitant loss of the golden ram, that evident symbol of potency and patriarchal power. Littlewood's nicely paradoxical conclusion is that the play with no women is a play with no men.

Eleanor Winsor Leach's article on the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia* taps into the broad current of reception theory. Much literary criticism proceeds on the assumption that the text is the sole generator of meaning; reception theory emphasizes that meaning must be actively constituted by a reader from the text. By using Wolfgang Iser's term 'implied reader' in her title, Leach aligns herself with Iser's view that a text encodes a particular kind of reader or audience. She sets out to identify the intended audience of the texts in question, as it is implied by the strategies Seneca employs. These

texts are important documents of imperial politics at the moment of Nero's accession: part of Leach's purpose is to show that analysis based in literary theory can illuminate the historical significance of texts.

Leach finds that the audience implied by both texts is the Roman upper classes, and chiefly the Senatorial class. She traces how such an audience would constitute the text of *Apocolocyntosis* in the presence of its many ironies, that is of indications that the words of the text mean something different from what they seem to say. *Apocolocyntosis* artfully manipulates this audience towards a more negative view of Claudius than it had previously held, winning sympathy for the new regime and simultaneously admiration for Seneca's skill.<sup>16</sup> The funeral eulogy ghost-written for Nero by Seneca showed a comparable use of irony by praising Claudius' wisdom, an irony that provoked amusement as it was meant to do. *De Clementia*, despite its fiction of private communication from advisor to prince, is similarly addressed to the Roman upper classes in Leach's view. By emphasizing Nero's absolute power, and the civil chaos that would ensue without it, Book 1 of the work aims to persuade those classes that their position is precarious and dependent on the emperor's good will. Book 2 offers philosophical arguments for clemency as the proper use of absolute power, and in doing so it advertises to the nobility that Seneca's role as Nero's philosophical tutor is a guarantee of the emperor's benign use of power.

## READING IN CONTEXT

The articles introduced in this section are concerned in various ways with the cultural, political, or social context of Seneca's writings. This concern is shared with Leach's article just discussed—a fact that

<sup>16</sup> Along with reader-response theory, Leach adopts the modern model of the solitary reader, constituting the text for himself or herself. It might be argued that *Apocol.*, with its Saturnalian atmosphere, is more likely to have been read aloud in social contexts as after-dinner entertainment. In that case the individual's response will have been influenced by that of the peer group. It is always worth bearing in mind that 'throughout antiquity books were written to be read aloud, and that even private reading often took on some of the characteristics of a modulated declamation' (Kenney 1982, 11, quoted by Tarrant 1985, 15).



demonstrates once again that the sections of this Introduction are convenient groupings, not exclusive categories.

Roland Mayer sets Seneca's use of *exempla* within Roman cultural traditions which regarded exemplary individuals as dynamic models, to be imitated and emulated. When introducing a young man of the elite to military or public life, it was customary to place him under the wing of a senior figure, who would act as a role-model. Romans also regarded exemplary figures, historical or contemporary, as practical tools with which to think about moral issues; Seneca develops this tradition in suggesting that we form our concept—or rather, tellingly, our *image*—of *virtus* inductively, from the examples of great men (*Letter* 120). Mayer suggests that it was in composing the *Letters* that Seneca came to consciousness, late in life, of his own possible role as exemplar, a consciousness articulated, as we have seen, in the scene of his death.

Robert Newman studies how Seneca appropriates Roman political vocabulary to the purposes of his moral philosophy. Within the republican value system as articulated by Cicero, *virtus* was a civic quality, demonstrated in actions performed for the benefit of the state; *gloria*, conferred by other leading citizens, was its reward. But in Seneca *virtus* becomes an entirely interior quality, namely the proper disposition of the soul in relation to externals. Glory necessarily, almost automatically, accompanies *virtus*; because of this inseparable connection, glory becomes a 'good' in itself. Nevertheless the traditional term *gloria* could not be entirely freed from connotations of glory bestowed by others. Seneca therefore employs another term, *claritas*, to convey the 'resplendence' inherent in *virtus*. Despite its interior orientation, *virtus* must still be demonstrated, so that its resplendence can be perceived and provide an inspiring example to others; *virtus*, then, retains some of its earlier connotations of social responsibility.

Some critics would apply the term 'humanist'—used paradoxically in a negative sense—to the two articles just discussed, meaning that these articles regard the exceptional individual, such as Seneca, as capable of moulding his society's values to his own purposes. By contrast, New Historicism regards social and historical processes as more powerful than individuals, and as being advanced *through* individuals, even without their awareness of the fact. The difference between these approaches is nicely exemplified by the contrast

between Newman's article and that of Habinek on Seneca's renown (2000, not reprinted here). Habinek is interested not so much in Seneca's philosophical redefinition of glory, as in the social reasons for the renown that accrued to him after death, and in the role that his exemplary status played in fashioning the social elite in a direction appropriate to the imperial system.

A *cause célèbre* for the conflict between the liberal and historicist approaches has been Seneca's view of slaves, as expressed particularly in the famous *Letter 47*. The liberal-humanist camp tends to assimilate ancient attitudes in an unhistorical fashion to modern ones, regarding Seneca as a forerunner of nineteenth-century humanitarian and abolitionist attitudes to slavery. Keith Bradley will have none of this; Seneca 'was not a Jeffersonian prototype whose egalitarian ideals and ownership of slaves led to a guilt-stricken conscience'. Furthermore, Bradley argues that, since Seneca had no interest in the abolition of slavery, his purpose in *Letter 47* was actually to preserve and advance that institution. The lenient treatment of slaves advocated by Seneca is merely, in Bradley's view, an alternative mechanism to harshness for keeping slaves compliant; Seneca has no interest in the amelioration of slaves' conditions *per se*. Here we seem to have moved beyond the notion of social processes taking place 'behind the backs' of prominent individuals (in Marx's formulation) towards a view of Seneca as Machiavelian—as consciously manipulating slave-owners and slaves so as to maintain slavery itself. Readers of *Letter 47* may feel that both representations of Seneca, as proto-abolitionist and as covert champion of the slave-owning system, are heavily coloured by modern ideology.<sup>17</sup> One other possibility, after all, is that Seneca took the institution of slave-owning largely for granted (as most people did in antiquity), and his concern was rather that differences in social status not distort the *virtus* and human-ness of slave-owners and slaves—a concern springing from moral philosophy, rather than from a political agenda.

<sup>17</sup> Studies that emphasize (perhaps overemphasize) the humanitarianism of Seneca's attitude to slavery, in addition to those criticised by Bradley, include Matilla 1971 and Watts 1972. On the comparable issue of the gladiatorial games, both Wistrand 1990 and Cagniard 2000 stress that Seneca, despite holding views that strike modern readers sympathetically, did not advocate abolition of the institution.

Wilson 2001 is in part a critique, from an avowedly 'traditionalist' perspective, of historicist readings of Seneca's *Letters* by Habinek 1992 and Too 1994. Despite the traditionalist label, Wilson actually employs a highly nuanced notion of genre in his 'reclassification' of the *Letters*.

Part of the difficulty of contextualizing Seneca's dramas lies in the uncertainty about when they were composed. There have been attempts to date them by reading their mythical plots as allegorical references to events at the imperial court. Robin Nisbet turns this procedure on its head. Seneca, he argues, would have *avoided* writing about Agamemnon, a triumphant ruler killed by his wife, shortly after the death of Claudius; similarly the reference to fratricide at *Thyestes* 40, though conventional in a passage about 'crime's increase', would have seemed dangerously topical in AD 55 after Britannicus' murder, and the play must therefore belong either before 55, or else several years later. The first three sections of Nisbet's article usefully summarise a position that is now widely held: the few pieces of evidence we have point to the years 49–54 as the main period of Seneca's playwriting activity; my stylistic evidence for the dating of the dramas suggests that *Thyestes* and *Phoenician Women* were written some years later than the other plays;<sup>18</sup> if most of the plays belong to 49–54, then these two plays probably belong to Seneca's last years. Nisbet's particular contribution in sections 4–7 is to strengthen this probability for *Thyestes* by showing in detail that several of the play's references to peoples outside the empire's borders are best understood in terms of the historical situation in the early 60s; he would date the play specifically to 62.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The stylistic evidence suggests that *Ag.*, *Oed.*, and *Pha.* are the earliest plays. Contra, Nisbet argues that the complex polymetric odes of *Ag.* and *Oed.* 'were surely not Seneca's first attempt at tragic choruses'. But this implies too strong a distinction between tragic choruses and lyric verse generally. Seneca will have begun to write lyric verse in boyhood, among other kinds of school exercises; if the principles underlying the polymetric odes are pre-Neronian (Fitch 1981, 305 fn. 22), Seneca may well have had experimented with them in non-tragic lyrics before starting to write his tragedies.

<sup>19</sup> A general point might be added: the unusual frequency in *Thyestes* of anachronistic references to foreign peoples of political concern to Rome (Dahae, Alans, Parthians, Sarmatians; Armenia, Hyrcania) could be read as reflecting Seneca's years of experience as Nero's political adviser. In his conclusion, Nisbet comments that Seneca 'understood at first hand the temptations of power that ruined Thyestes'. Similarly Tarrant 1985, 13 suggests that the depiction of Atreus' 'pathological tyranny' reflects Seneca's experience at Nero's court. The author of *Octavia* certainly understood *Thyestes* in this way, for his Seneca and Nero have unmistakable similarities to Thyestes and Atreus respectively.

For readings of the plays as 'imperial' see e.g. Calder 1976 and Henry 1985. They are sometimes called 'Neronian', but if the dating adopted by myself and Nisbet is correct, most of them predate Nero's accession in 54.

Whereas Nisbet is concerned with the historical context of Senecan drama, Elaine Fantham's article is concerned with its literary context. The influence of Ovid on the dramas is extensive, and has been extensively documented; Fantham takes as her subject the influence of Vergil and his Dido in Seneca's heroines, especially Phaedra. She shows how Seneca signals Vergil's presence through a particular simile and the associated use of the Vergilian word *intractabilis*. *Inter alia* she notes how Dido and Phaedra are connected by the element of self-deception about the possibility of marriage. One might add the use by both women of the loved one's sword, with evident sexual overtones, to commit suicide.

Fantham's article points to two important issues in the interrelations of texts. First, while focussing on Vergil's influence on Seneca, she acknowledges that often it cannot be separated from the influence of Ovid. For Seneca, one might say, Vergil cannot be read except with Ovidian colour; more generally, the reading of texts is always affected by the presence of later texts. Second, Fantham points out that Seneca transposes the Vergilian material into another genre, from epic narrative to tragic drama, with transformative effect; nevertheless, as she notes, the process of absorption is not complete, so that epic elements remain in the drama and signal the Vergilian presence.<sup>20</sup>

Another kind of transposition takes place when Seneca is refashioned in the context of a different culture—when Renaissance tragedy infuses Senecan elements with its own particular interest in the revenge motif, as Boyle shows, or when Rubens pictures the death of Seneca in the light of the deaths of Christian martyrs. In criticism too the image of Seneca and his writings is constantly modified in accordance with the interests of successive generations. Although reception studies can help us to avoid the more obvious distortions of our predecessors, and although critical self-awareness can help us to avoid importing contemporary viewpoints too anachronistically into the past, we cannot escape the particularity of our own viewpoints. This collection of articles shows how deeply the study of Seneca has been influenced in recent decades by contemporary

<sup>20</sup> On the transformation of Vergilian material in Senecan drama see the particular example studied by Smolenaars 1998, and the general study by Putnam 1992.

contexts of thought. It will be fascinating to watch how new concerns manifest themselves in Senecan studies in the years to come.

The papers that appear in this volume have undergone varying degrees of updating. Some authors have systematically revised and/or abbreviated their articles for the new context; some have provided a bibliography of recent items, others a postscript to explain how they see the issue some years after the original publication. Several of the papers, on the other hand, are untouched except for editorial changes to conform to the style of this series.

---

*Imago Vitae Suae**Miriam T. Griffin*

Although Seneca's immortality derives mainly from the style he created and the philosophy he transmitted, his conduct as a man has also earned him fame, and notoriety. Ring-burdened Seneca, 'in his books a philosopher', fawning while praising liberty, extorting while praising poverty, is one of literature's great hypocrites.<sup>1</sup> To a more sympathetic eye, he has been 'the sage tossing on his couch of purple' as he struggles with the temptations of a decadent age and a tyrannical prince.<sup>2</sup> Then again, approached in a spirit of robust common sense, he has had his genius diagnosed as a mere gastric disorder or a paranoiac abnormality.<sup>3</sup> This enduring biographical concern with Seneca is only fair, for he himself adopted, as a stylist, the maxim 'a man's style is like his life', and, as a moralist, the rule 'let our speech be in harmony with our life'.<sup>4</sup>

In his own lifetime, Seneca's moral and political behaviour won him admirers and disciples, but critics and slanderers as well. The historian Tacitus records a diatribe directed against him at the height of his power alleging sexual licence and the accumulation of excessive wealth by dubious means, all belying his philosophical pretensions (*Ann.* 13.42; cf. Dio Cassius 61.10). Yet, in addition to the inevitable crowd of political associates and dependants that he owed to his position close

<sup>1</sup> W.S. Landor, 'Epictetus and Seneca', *Imaginary Conversations*; Macaulay, 'Lord Bacon' (1837).

<sup>2</sup> Dill 1904, 13.

<sup>3</sup> The first view is that of Jerome 1923; the second that of E. Phillips Barker in *OCD*<sup>1</sup>, s.v. 'Seneca'.

<sup>4</sup> *Epist.* 114.1: *talis hominibus oratio qualis vita*; 75.4: *concordet sermo cum vita*.

to the Emperor, Seneca had a more intimate circle of friends who believed in him as a moral teacher. To these men he offered not only encouragement and the lessons of his own struggle for moral improvement, but himself as a model, such as Socrates had been to Plato (*Epist.* 6.5–6). It is thus with some verisimilitude that Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.62) makes Seneca offer on his deathbed, as his most precious legacy to his friends, the ‘image of his life’.

What picture of his life has Seneca left?<sup>5</sup> The historical tradition about him was formed by his own younger contemporaries. Among these was probably the author of the *Octavia*, a historical tragedy in which Seneca appears as the brave and virtuous adviser of a tyrant who will not listen.<sup>6</sup> That assessment is also found in Juvenal, who celebrates, in addition, Seneca’s generosity as a patron (8.211–14; 5.108ff.; 10.15–18). Thirty years after Seneca’s death, the poet Martial, who had come to Rome from a less civilized part of his native province, was still expressing his admiration (4.40.1; 12. 36). Another literary protégé, Fabius Rusticus, produced a history of the period that gave Seneca special prominence and credit (*Tac. Ann.* 13.20). But other historians produced more qualified portraits, recording the sordid charges of Suillius Rufus and others that have been preserved for us by the third-century historian Dio Cassius, for example that Seneca provoked Boudicca’s rebellion in Britain by his usury, that he encouraged his wife’s suicide attempt.

The definitive account of his period of power under Nero was produced by Tacitus, who was a child when Seneca died. In using his literary sources and in evaluating oral tradition, the historian had to look out for the various types of bias we have mentioned and to reckon with a change in literary fashion that branded Seneca’s style as corrupt. The chief exponent of that view was the Flavian professor of rhetoric, another Spaniard, Fabius Quintilianus. Tacitus, as is clear from the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, thought that Quintilian went too far in blaming Seneca for the decline of Latin eloquence, but he shared the change in taste and had to allow for it in his own reading of Seneca’s works.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Much material relevant to the verdict on Seneca as a man, in antiquity and the Middle Ages, can be found in Trillitzsch 1971. The collection starts with Seneca’s autobiographical references and ends with Erasmus.

<sup>6</sup> On the problem of authenticity and date see Coffey 1957 and Herington 1961.

<sup>7</sup> Quintilian 10.1.125.ff.; *Tac. Ann.* 13.3: Seneca had a ‘charming talent and one suited to the taste of his time’.

Suetonius, a less conscientious writer, made no attempt to escape the current prejudice (*Nero* 52). It is not surprising that Tacitus's portrait of Seneca in the *Annals* is at times agnostic or equivocal. What is more interesting is that this acute and cynical judge, well aware of literary pose and moral falsity, but knowing also the hazards and temptations of imperial politics, delivered on balance a favourable verdict.<sup>8</sup>

Even if Seneca had not been a moralist, his high political standing as one of the most influential *amici principis* ('friends of the Princeps') in the reign of Nero would still have attracted sharp criticism. For, like Maecenas and Agrippa before him, Seneca was a new man of non-senatorial family but personal talent who thereby rose to power under the Principate. The Civil Wars had been, as such periods tend to be, a time of social mobility, but even afterwards the new imperial system offered rapid promotion to those who could impress the Emperor and his favourites with their abilities. Yet Maecenas, eccentric and effete as he was, and Agrippa, who preferred not to use his undistinguished *nomen*, were at least born in Italy; Seneca was 'of equestrian and provincial origin'.<sup>9</sup>

His birthplace was the Roman colony of Corduba in Baetica,<sup>10</sup> the richest and most peaceful of the Spanish provinces. But, according to a distinction that apparently mattered to the Romans (though it cannot in fact have been rigidly maintained or, in particular cases, proved), he was not of Spanish blood, but of Italian immigrant stock, *Hispaniensis* not *Hispanus*. His family name Annaeus proclaims an ultimate ancestry in north-eastern Italy (Syme 1958, App. 80), but there is no telling when the family emigrated. From the beginning of the second century BC, when the Spanish provinces were organized, Italian veterans, traders, mine speculators, and political refugees settled there in considerable numbers. Corduba had been founded early as a community of Roman *émigrés* and was later reinforced by Augustus, who settled veterans there and gave the town the status of a Roman colony, with the grand title Colonia Patricia.<sup>11</sup> Seneca's lost biography of his father

<sup>8</sup> Ryberg 1942; Syme 1958, 551ff.; Trillitzsch 1971, 94ff.

<sup>9</sup> On Agrippa's *nomen*, Elder Seneca *Controversiae* 2.4.13; Tac. *Ann.* 14.53 (*equestri et provinciali loco ortus*).

<sup>10</sup> Martial 1.61.7ff.; cf. 'Seneca' *Epigram* 3 (Prato p. 18).

<sup>11</sup> The date when Corduba acquired colonial status and other points of detail and dispute on pp. 25–9 are discussed in Griffin 1972.



probably had something to say of his earlier ancestors;<sup>12</sup> without it, we know only that the first member of the family of literary consequence, Seneca's father, L. Annaeus Seneca, was himself born in Corduba and was well established there (Martial 1.6).

Father Seneca was a Roman *eques*, hence a man with a substantial census rating and the high social standing in his native city that normally went with it. It is likely that the principal source of his wealth was agricultural land, for the banks of the Guadalquivir on which Corduba stood were covered with olive groves and vineyards; and the *patrimonium* of his sons was administered by their mother Helvia during their long absences from Spain, a situation easiest to imagine if their wealth consisted of landed estates. He probably held no municipal office, nor did he avail himself of the opportunities created by the first Princeps for *equites* to serve Rome in a financial or administrative capacity. And, though he devoted a good deal of his life to the study of rhetoric, he was neither a teacher nor a practising advocate. The epithet Rhetor by which he is sometimes known has no ancient authority behind it, but derives from the work of a humanist scholar who realized, as many before him had not, that the works of the father and the son, transmitted together in the manuscripts, were in fact composed by different Senecas. To mark the distinction, he called the author of the works we call the *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae*<sup>13</sup> Seneca Rhetor.

Born between 55 and 50 BC, the Elder Seneca was prevented from going to Rome for his very early education by the dreadful Civil Wars started by Caesar and Pompey and continued by their followers throughout the decade of the forties (*Contr.* 1, pref. 11). Corduba, the effective capital of the province of Hispania Ulterior, wavered between the two sides, trying to save its wealth and status. Even after the battle of Philippi, Sextus Pompey menaced the sea between Spain and Italy until 36 BC, so that it was somewhat belatedly that this ambitious provincial finally found himself in Rome studying under an insignificant teacher from Spain called Marullus (*Contr.* 1, pref. 22). By that time he had been through his preparatory education with a *grammaticus* in Corduba, at whose school he exhibited the

<sup>12</sup> Haase frags 98–9 = Vottero 97, 1 and 2.

<sup>13</sup> The actual title is *Oratorum et Rhetorum sententiae, divisiones, colores*.

outstanding powers of memory to which we owe our most detailed knowledge of the declamatory schools (*Contr.* 1, pref. 2). As a schoolboy, he could repeat in reverse order single lines of verse recited by his more than two hundred fellow-pupils; in old age he was able to recall word for word many of the *sententiae* of famous declaimers that he had heard even on his first visit to Rome, including some by the boy Ovid. In Rome he enjoyed an early acquaintance with the great general, orator and historian Asinius Pollio, for Seneca tells us that he was admitted to Pollio's private declamations in the 30s BC (*Contr.* 4, pref. 2–4): in fact, the acquaintance could go back to the days when Pollio was governing Spain for Caesar and spending much of his time on literary pursuits in Corduba (Cicero *Ad Fam.* 10.31–3). Father Seneca's eventual decision to write history may owe something to Pollio, whose history he admired (*Suas.* 6.25), and whose frankness he apparently emulated. The son describes his father's work as 'a history running from the start of the civil wars, when truth was first put to flight, almost up to the day of his own death.'<sup>14</sup> The wars meant are doubtless the great civil upheavals of his childhood. The history probably ended with the reign of Tiberius, for its author died in 39 or 40 (Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 2.4–5), leaving the manuscript for his son to publish. He may never have done so, for we have no certain fragment of that work.

The Elder Seneca had returned to Spain around 8 BC, where he married a certain Helvia, who bore him three sons: Annaeus Novatus, known after his adoption many years later by his father's friend, the senator L. Junius Gallio, as L. Junius Gallio Annaeanus;<sup>15</sup> L. Annaeus Seneca, born in 1 BC or shortly before;<sup>16</sup> and M. Annaeus Mela, father of the poet Lucan. By AD 5 the father had returned to Rome with his sons and was continuing his visits to the rhetorical schools and supervising their education. He wished his sons to have senatorial careers, but he regarded the study of rhetoric as essential to the pursuit of any art, even philosophy to which, by the time the *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* were being composed, his youngest son was wholly devoted (*Contr.* 2, pref.).

<sup>14</sup> Haase frag. 99: *historias ab initio bellorum civilium, unde primum veritas retro abiit, paene usque ad mortis suae diem.*

<sup>15</sup> His full name after adoption is given by an inscription at Delphi, SIG<sup>3</sup> 801D, and one at Rome, *AE*, 1960, no. 61.

<sup>16</sup> Seneca *Tranq. An.* 17.7; *Epist.* 108.22 (cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 2.85.4).

That was after 37, and the old man was nearly ninety when he acceded to his sons' request to recall and compile for them the best sayings of the declaimers whom they had been too young to hear, giving his judgement of each (*Contr.* 1, pref.). By that time his sons were adult and the two oldest embarked on their careers as orators and senators; yet such was the 'old-fashioned strictness' of the old man<sup>17</sup> that in this work, intended from the start for publication, he scolds them for preferring rhetorical bagatelles to solid historical matter (*Suas.* 6.16) and castigates the laziness and effeminacy of their whole generation whose standards of eloquence were consequently in decline (*Contr.* 1, pref.).

A man of strong character and married to a woman from a strict old-fashioned provincial home (*Sen. Cons. Helv.* 16.3), Father Seneca maintained that same atmosphere in his. Helvia was discouraged from pursuing a natural taste for literature and philosophy because he thought these pursuits inappropriate for women, and young Seneca was successfully deflected from a youthful passion for a fashionable brand of ascetic philosophy involving vegetarianism (*Cons. Helv.* 17.4; *Epist.* 108.22). For the youngest son Mela, Father Seneca had the typical weakness of the patriarchs, openly proclaiming him the cleverest of the three and indulging in him a taste for philosophy and a lack of ambition he would have found intolerable in the older ones. But his devotion to them all was undeniable, and his second son was to describe him in old age as 'a most indulgent father', recalling how filial affection had deterred him from committing suicide in youth when he despaired of recovery from consumption (*Epist.* 78.2). Seneca was also indebted for his style to his father's training and example: he took over many of his turns of phrase and his literary judgements.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the sons were prevented from losing all feeling for their native Corduba when they moved to the capital. Father Seneca himself died in Spain despite long years spent in Rome, and, in the collection of declamatory material he made for his sons, he expresses his delight in writing about Spanish declaimers and especially in rescuing from oblivion those who had practised their art only in the province (*Contr.* 1, pref. 13, 20; 10, pref. 13). His sons were educated at Rome along with the son of one of these, a

<sup>17</sup> Seneca, *Cons. Helv.* 17.3: *antiquus rigor*.

<sup>18</sup> For a collection of parallel passages see Rolland 1906.

certain Clodius Turrinus (*Contr.*10, pref.16). The youngest son Mela married in Corduba and his son Lucan was born there;<sup>19</sup> his more successful brother when imperial adviser extended his patronage to several young hopefuls from the province (Syme 1958, 591–2).

To his mother Helvia, Seneca owed his early taste for philosophy, and to her family the start of his political career (*Cons. Helv.* 15.1; 19.2). For Helvia had a stepsister whose husband, C. Galerius, was one of the new imperial brand of *equites* and rose to be Prefect of Egypt (Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 19.2–7; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> G 25), the highest post then open to a non-senator and one which put him above many senators in power and influence. This aunt had brought Seneca to Rome as a child and now, towards the end of her husband's sixteen-year term of office under Tiberius, she invited him to travel to Egypt for his health. The voyage and the climate were reputed good for tubercular cases. He returned with his aunt in AD 31, an eventful voyage on which they were nearly shipwrecked, and his uncle died (*Cons. Helv.* 19). Seneca was then past thirty, five years older than the minimum age for holding the quaestorship, the first magistracy that carried senatorial rank. He records gratefully how, some time after their return from Egypt, his aunt canvassed all of her influential connections to secure his election to that office, presumably having first obtained from the Emperor for him the grant of the *latus clavus* which gave him the right to stand. To judge from their father's description of them shortly after 37 as preparing for the forum and magistracies (*Contr.* 2, pref.), neither Seneca nor his older brother Novatus had advanced beyond the quaestorship by Gaius's reign, so that it is possible that they were both around forty when they entered the senate.

Ill-health may have played some part in this slow beginning, for both brothers were tubercular. A temperamental distaste may also be involved: Novatus was a gentle man with little taste for flattery, according to his brother (*Nat. Quaest.* 4, pref. 10ff.), while Seneca was profoundly absorbed in natural science and moral philosophy. Before his visit to Egypt, he was drinking in with rapture the lectures of the Stoic Attalus, whose ascetic recommendations he put into practice. By AD 19 he was an enthusiastic adherent of the only

<sup>19</sup> Vacca, *Life of Lucan* (Rostagni, pp. 176ff.).

philosophical school to originate in Rome (*Epist.* 108.13–23), a basically Stoic sect with ascetic neo-Pythagorean elements. It may be significant for Seneca's late start that the founder, Q. Sextius, had himself been offered a senatorial career by Caesar the Dictator and refused (*Epist.* 98.13). After his return from Egypt in 31, any new ambitions Seneca may have had failed to flourish in the new political situation following the fall of Sejanus. The recall of his uncle Galerius precisely in 31 and his hasty replacement by a freedman suggests that, like that long-standing friend of the family Junius Gallio, the Senecas were somehow involved with the fallen praetorian prefect.<sup>20</sup> But it is also well to remember Tiberius's neglect of government in his last years: not many young *equites* were given the *latus clavus* in the last years of that bitter recluse's government.<sup>21</sup>

Seneca's works give, on the whole, a low estimate of Tiberius, showing him as a proud, ungrateful man, whose meanness was unworthy of a ruler and whose policy degenerated into a judicial reign of terror (e.g. *Ben.* 2.7.2–8; 3.26.1; 5.25.2). Seneca's youthful spell of vegetarianism, inspired by Sotion, a follower of the Sextii, had been brought to a hasty finish early in Tiberius's reign in AD 19, when abstinence from pork, on whatever grounds, was being construed as conversion to Judaism, and persistence in vegetarianism might have led to his being expelled from Rome as a proselyte.<sup>22</sup> Yet his references to Tiberius are moderate, especially when compared with what he has to say of his successor.

It was probably in the reign of Gaius that both Seneca and Novatus reached the next step on the senatorial ladder, the aedileship or tribunate, of which Seneca tells us nothing. He was becoming a successful orator, enough, it was said, to provoke the Emperor's jealousy and his very unflattering criticism of his style as 'sand without lime' (Suet. *Gaius* 53; cf. Sen. *Epist.* 49.2.). In addition, Seneca may have already published at least one scientific work, on earthquakes (*Nat. Quaest.* 6.4.2 = Vottero 1998, 31–3) and was beginning to find favour in high places. Various shreds of evidence

<sup>20</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 6.3. The family connection with Sejanus was suggested by Stewart 1953.

<sup>21</sup> This is an inference from Dio 59.9.5.

<sup>22</sup> Sen. *Epist.* 108.22; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.4; Josephus *AJ* 18.84; Suet. *Tiberius* 36; Dio 57.18.59.

suggest an early connection with the sisters of the Emperor and with Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus, an aristocrat, a writer of history and poetry, and, by virtue of his ten-year governorship of Upper Germany, a political power.<sup>23</sup> In 39 a conspiracy to put Aemilius Lepidus on the throne was exposed. As a result, Gaetulicus was killed and Gaius's three sisters sent into exile. Seneca may well have been casting about for new friends when he wrote the first of his *Consolations*, the one addressed to Marcia, a well-born woman of senatorial family and connections who carried on the literary interests of her father, Cremutius Cordus. His works, burned in the reign of Tiberius, had been republished with Gaius's permission, as a demonstration of his belief in freedom of speech, though the republication was a censored version (Suet. *Gaius* 16; Quintilian 10.1.104).

At last, in January 41, the tyrant was dead, murdered by a tribune of the praetorian guard with the co-operation of many senators and *equites*, but not, apparently, of Seneca. He may have been in the theatre on the fateful day and he published his approval of the deed years after, without however betraying any intimate knowledge of the assassination, and in fact implying the reverse by speculating at a distance about the motives of the conspirators (*Const. Sap.* 18; *Ira* 1.20.9). Seneca's friends Gaetulicus and Julius Graecinus were avenged (*Ben.* 2.21; *Epist.* 29.6), Gaius' two surviving sisters were recalled, but Seneca's misfortunes were only beginning. On the throne now was a better Emperor, but one less in control of what happened.

Seneca was now middle-aged, and not yet praetor, hence of little standing in the senate. He had given up oratory, perhaps at first to avoid the consequences of Gaius's jealousy, but finally for more fundamental reasons: his weak chest had probably always made speaking an effort and he no doubt realized, like his father (*Contr.* 1, pref. 7), that the virtual monarchy by which Rome was governed had diminished the importance of oratory as a source of power or a form of public service. Like one of his Sextian teachers, Papirius Fabianus, a declaimer turned philosopher, Seneca concentrated on natural science and took up the challenge set by Cicero to write philosophy

<sup>23</sup> Notably, Sen. *Nat. Quaest.* 4, pref. 15; Dio 59.19 (a story of dubious truth and significance); Dio 60.8.5–6; Tac. *Ann.* 12.8.2.

in Latin. His talents as an orator he was learning to employ as a castigatōr of vice; the spiritual comfort of Stoicism he was to administer to others—and himself. For in 41, Seneca lost a son, the only child he was to have. He apparently lost his wife as well.<sup>24</sup> Towards the end of the year, he was relegated to the island of Corsica and deprived of some of his property on a charge of adultery with Gaius' sister, Julia Livilla. Seneca himself tells us that he was tried before the senate, which declared him guilty and prescribed the death penalty; but that Claudius asked that his life be spared (*Cons. Polyb.* 13.2). Yet Tacitus says that Seneca was thought to nourish a grudge against Claudius for an injury (*Tac. Ann.* 12.8.8). These statements can only be reconciled by assuming that Claudius's clemency counted for little with Seneca because he felt that his conviction had been altogether unjust and would not have happened under a better Emperor. In his *Consolation to his mother Helvia*, Seneca offers the comforting picture of himself as an innocent victim sustained by his virtue and his philosophical beliefs. Even in the other *Consolation* he wrote from exile, that addressed to Polybius, he asks that the Emperor recall him as an act of *justice* or clemency.

It would seem then that Seneca was either innocent or at least not manifestly guilty; otherwise these works designed to win him sympathy would instead have exposed him to ridicule. The historian Dio Cassius makes out a plausible case for his being an innocent victim of Claudius' young wife Valeria Messalina, who was envious of Livilla and determined to be rid of her (*Dio* 60.8.5). Seneca himself alludes in a later work to some victims of Messalina and Claudius' most powerful freedman Narcissus, friends of Seneca's addressee Lucilius, who proved loyal to them under questioning (*Nat. Quaest.* 4, pref. 15). The passage is general but he may be including himself among the victims. Allegations of immorality involving royal princesses were a favourite weapon in the struggles concerning the succession. Reasonably, as actual liaisons of this kind could support or create claims to the throne, given a system of government that was in fact a hereditary monarchy, but could not be described as such and therefore could not rely on a law of succession or any other fixed

<sup>24</sup> The death of his wife is suggested by the fact that she is not mentioned in this work written from exile and containing a considerable amount of detailed information about his family.

system for deciding claims. In 41 Messalina had just produced an heir, and she may well have feared the influence on the susceptible Claudius of attractive nieces with the blood of Augustus in their veins. Julia Livilla she removed, but she met her match in Julia Agrippina, who may already have had enough sway over the uncle she was later to marry to cause his mitigation of Seneca's sentence: Tacitus says that she later recalled Seneca expecting him to be loyal and mindful of her favour.<sup>25</sup> Seneca spent nearly eight years on Corsica, reading works on natural history and the masterpieces of consolation literature (*Cons. Helv.* 1.2; 8.6). He analysed the native dialect (*Cons. Helv.* 7.9) and brooded on Ovid's last works,<sup>26</sup> doubtless drawing parallels between his own fate and the poet's eight years in dismal Tomis. Bidding for the sympathy of Polybius, he complains, like Ovid, that his Latin is becoming rusty (*Cons. Polyb.* 18.9); yet there were two Roman colonies on Corsica and he may have been accompanied into exile by a loyal friend (Martial 7.44; cf. Sen. *Epist.* 87), surely enough to keep him in practice. In any case, Seneca kept his style fresh by writing. To mention only works that survive, he composed or at least planned much of *De Ira*, and he applied his reading of consolations to the composition of two such works: one addressed to his mother Helvia, the other to the 'insolent and pampered freedman of a tyrant' (in Macaulay's words), Polybius, at the time looking after petitions and literary matters for Claudius. In the guise of a work consoling Polybius on the death of his brother, Seneca made a transparent appeal to be recalled to witness Claudius's imminent British triumph (13.2). The work that has come down to us contains praise of Polybius and of Claudius so exaggerated that some scholars have construed it as satire, intended or unconscious.<sup>27</sup> Such an apology overlooks both Seneca's important lapse from good taste in the funeral eulogy of Claudius, and the standards of adulation of his time, standards that already seemed shocking to Pliny half a century later.<sup>28</sup> One of the indictments that Dio Cassius brings

<sup>25</sup> *Ann.* 12.8.2: *memoria beneficii*.

<sup>26</sup> The end of the *Consolatio ad Polybium* is a distinct echo of such Ovidian lines as *Ex Ponto* 4.2.15ff.

<sup>27</sup> Intended satire: Alexander 1943. Unconscious satire: Momigliano 1934, 75–6.

<sup>28</sup> Tacitus *Ann.* 13.3 where *quamquam* shows that Tacitus thinks that Seneca did not intend the laughable effect produced by his exaggerated praises of Claudius; Pliny *Epist.* 8.6.



against Seneca is the composition of a book sent from exile praising Messalina and Claudius' freedmen, a book Seneca afterwards suppressed or repudiated. Dio's meaning, as transmitted through an excerptor, is not clear (61.10.2). Though the extant Consolation does not contain praise of Messalina, the identification with the work mentioned by Dio is hard to challenge: the opening chapters of the extant piece were lost early and may have been flattering to Messalina, and Dio's excerptor may have transmitted inaccurately some phrase of Dio's meaning that Seneca tried to suppress the work. In any case, Polybius was unmoved or already experiencing that decline in influence with Messalina that ended in his death. Other exiles came home for Claudius' triumph (Suet. *Claudius* 17.3), but Seneca had to wait until Messalina was dead and Agrippina married to Claudius.

The year 49 opened with the imperial nuptials, followed soon after by the recall of Seneca and his designation as praetor for the next year. Both improvements in his fortunes Seneca owed to Agrippina, though they were formally carried through by Claudius and the senate (Tac. *Ann.* 12.8; Suet. *Claudius* 12). Agrippina, according to Tacitus, thought an act of mercy towards a promising writer, who was widely regarded as an innocent victim of the previous wife, would divert attention from the sinister circumstances of her own marriage to Claudius. For it was an incestuous union by Roman law and darkened by the suicide of L. Junius Silanus, a descendant of Augustus betrothed to Claudius' daughter Octavia (Tac. *Ann.* 12.2–4;8). Silanus was surely not alone in seeing what Agrippina intended and would certainly achieve, namely, the betrothal of her son to Octavia as a first move towards his ultimate replacement of Claudius' son Britannicus as heir apparent. Seneca must have known that the price for his return to the literary life of the capital and the restoration of his property and status would be collaboration in the schemes of his benefactress. A late source (Schol. Juv. 5.109) records that he was hoping to go to Athens on his return. At most this reflects a vain wish at the time or a later defence of his motives for accepting recall, but it might simply be an attempt to explain why such an educated man had never been to Athens.

Seneca's older brother did go to Greece, probably as a result of Seneca's change of fortune. He is attested as proconsul of Achaëa in

51/2 by an inscription at Delphi (SIG<sup>3</sup> 801D), called there by his adoptive name. It is likewise as 'careless Gallio' that he has been immortalized by *Acts* (18.11–17) because of his reluctance to be embroiled in the religious quarrels of the Jews. It may also have been at this time that the youngest brother Mela gave up his single-minded devotion to philosophy to become a procurator of the imperial estates, a 'perverse ambition' in Tacitus' view, leading not only to wealth but to political power equal to that of consular senators by the safer route of remaining an *eques* (*Ann.* 16.17).

Seneca and Gallio went on to become suffect consuls in 55 and 56 in the reign of Nero, but still, as under Claudius, Seneca's power and significance owed little to his place in the senate. He became a courtier, exercising for the rest of his life those qualities that he himself describes in *De Tranquillitate Animi* (6) as necessary to life at court: control of one's temper, one's words, and one's wit. At the same time, Seneca was an extremely productive and popular author, developing the new anti-Ciceronian style whose roots are apparent in the pieces of declamation preserved by his father. From now on, the philosophical sentiments in his treatises laid him open to charges of hypocrisy, while the extreme reticence he preserves in them about his activities and position makes it tempting to think that he kept his life and his literary work rigidly separate. But the historical evidence we have about life at the court of Claudius and Nero does explain, at least in part, his preoccupation with the fragility of power and wealth, the possibility of sudden punishment and death, the appropriate time and reasons for committing suicide, and the right reasons for undertaking or abandoning a public career.<sup>29</sup>

His immediate task was to instruct Agrippina's son Domitius. By his adoption as Claudius' son in February 50, Seneca's pupil became Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus, and, by the three-year advantage in age he had over Britannicus, he became the expected heir to the throne. Seneca was to teach him rhetoric and, no doubt, to impart some of his own charm and polish. It was a difficult task. In his treatise *De Ira*, already complete or near completion in 49, Seneca shows his awareness of the difficulties involved in educating the children of

<sup>29</sup> The problem of the connection between Seneca's life and his philosophical writings is the theme explored in Griffin 1976 (1992).

wealthy and powerful families: such children will have their passions inflamed by flattery and indulgence if they are not disciplined and made to live on terms of equality with their peers (2.21.7–11). The mixture of praise and admonition with which Seneca was to address the eighteen year-old Nero (now Princeps) in *De Clementia* shows what psychological skill he must always have needed in teaching his royal pupil. Tacitus makes Seneca claim to have exercised *libertas* in his dealings with Nero, but the historian's own phrase *honesta comitas* ('honourable affability') is probably nearer the truth (Tac. *Ann.* 13.2). Nero declaimed in Greek and Latin and acquired some skill in *ex tempore* speaking, but his artistic and athletic interests never allowed him to reach the standard of eloquence required for major speeches as Princeps. Seneca was generally believed to have written these (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3; 13.11; 14.11). According to Suetonius, Agrippina banned philosophy from Nero's curriculum, but she could not have included in that ban the practical moral instruction traditionally associated with teaching in rhetoric (Suet. *Nero* 52; Plin. *Epist.* 3.3.4). In fact, an anecdote in Plutarch shows that Seneca was thought to have given his pupil counsel of this sort, teaching him on one occasion to bear the loss of a costly and irreplaceable marquee with self-restraint (Plut. *De cohibenda ira* 461F). Seneca was adaptable. Stoicism, he explains in *De Clementia* (2.5.2), is not, as widely believed, a harsh doctrine unsuitable for rulers. What advice he gave Agrippina and her son on practical politics no doubt represented a considerable bending of Stoic doctrine.

Until Nero's accession in October 54, Seneca was simply his teacher, his *magister* or *praeceptor*; from then on he was also one of his principal *amici*. In fact, he never held any official position apart from the magistracies and senatorial seat which, as we have said, were not the source of his power. No historian mentions any occasion on which Seneca spoke in the senate or was even present, and the unwillingness of the Neronian senate to vote on measures put to them by the consuls without prior reference to the Emperor suggests that Seneca, whose views would be taken to carry imperial sanction, rarely attended meetings (Tac. *Ann.* 13.26; 14.49; 15.22). One of his enemies, it is true, accused him of sponsoring the first senatorial decree of the reign (one cancelling an edict of Claudius that had encouraged informers, Tac. *Ann.* 13.5; 13.42), but it is likely that even this showpiece of senatorial liberty was supported from behind the

scenes. It was, in fact, from the equestrian order that most of Seneca's political associates and the friends to whom he addressed his essays were drawn. In some cases, the two categories just mentioned overlap, for many of Seneca's friends were favoured with governmental positions. To Pompeius Paulinus, the father of his second wife (whom he probably married on his return from exile) and Prefect of the Corn Supply from about 49 to 55, Seneca addressed *De Brevitate Vitae*. To Annaeus Serenus, who held the important command of the night-watch from about 54 until some time before 62, Seneca dedicated a group of three dialogues in which Serenus is depicted as a pupil in three stages of moral development: a sceptic in *De Constantia Sapientis*, a struggling convert in *De Tranquillitate Animi*, and a confident Stoic in *De Otio*. To the obscure Lucilius Junior, who attained the unimportant post of procurator in Sicily shortly before 62, Seneca sent more works than to anyone else: some are lost, but *De Providentia*, the *Naturales Quaestiones* and the great *Epistulae Morales* survive.<sup>30</sup>

Seneca's most important political associate was an *eques* who received no philosophical treatise and needed no patronage. Sextus Afranius Burrus from another civilized western province, Gallia Narbonensis, was, like Seneca, a protégé of Agrippina. Though the inscription recording his career, found at his home town of Vaison, gives as his earlier posts only a military tribunate followed by procuratorships of the properties of Livia, Tiberius, and Claudius (*ILS* 1321), Burrus had apparently acquired a considerable military reputation before he was elevated by Claudius in 51 to the sole command of the praetorian guard. According to Tacitus, this step consolidated Agrippina's power, for she, at one stroke, secured control of the guard and rid herself of two allies of Britannicus who shared the post before (*Tac. Ann.* 12.42).

<sup>30</sup> The table of contents of the Codex Ambrosianus (on which the text of the dialogues principally depends) starts *In primis ad Lucilium De Providentia*. Roszbach plausibly suggested that the *In primis* was copied inadvertently from a longer table of contents prefixed to a lost complete collection of the dialogues where it signified that Lucilius was the principal addressee. It would follow that Lucilius was the addressee of a large number of dialogues from which the Codex A selected one. Some of these are lost; others may be among those surviving in a fragmentary state with the name of the addressee missing.

The harmony of Seneca and Burrus was as fortunate as it was remarkable. Tacitus's description of their collaboration in handling Nero recalls Seneca's argument in *De Ira* that spoiled and well-born pupils must be alternately goaded with the spur and held in with the reins. They were in their different ways equally influential, Burrus through his military position and his strict morality, Seneca through his instruction in rhetoric and his agreeable, though upright, personality, supporting each other so as to be able to restrain the Emperor's susceptible youth by licensed pleasures should he spurn virtue (*Ann.* 13.2). But Burrus was more than Nero's reins: of the two advisers he alone had the chance of building up considerable independent power which the Princeps needed and feared. It was he, for example, who calmed the praetorians and the urban populace after Nero's murder of Agrippina, thereby removing the threat of a popular rising (*Tac. Ann.* 14.7; cf. 14.13). Therefore it is not surprising to find that Tacitus dated the serious decline in Seneca's influence to the death of Burrus (*Ann.* 14.52). Tacitus is our most detailed source for the activities of Seneca and Burrus. His account was based on three contemporary sources who could survey their doings from close-range but different standpoints: the senior senator Cluvius Rufus, the equestrian officer and procurator Pliny the Elder, and the young protégé of Seneca, Fabius Rusticus (*Ann.* 13.20). Tacitus and Dio both credit the two *amici* with virtual control of imperial policy in the early years, but they differ on the nature of the control and the policy. According to Dio, Seneca and Burrus sponsored reforms through legislation (Dio 61.4.2); according to Tacitus, they worked behind the scenes, so much so that Seneca could be credited by some with all of Nero's good actions, by others with all of his crimes (*Ann.* 14.52; 15.45), and their work concerned not so much the substance as the manner of government. Dio presents no example of a reform carried out to support his view and, in an attempt to give it any plausibility, he has to make Seneca and Burrus give up their interest in government impossibly early, in 55 (Dio 61.7.5). Tacitus, on the other hand, can offer a picture of their role that he illustrates and that fits the political character he attributes to Nero's early reign, that is *civilitas*, a return after Claudius to proper forms and procedure, particularly as regards relations with the senate. There is no doubt that Tacitus' picture must be preferred, with due allowance for the

possibility that he has exaggerated the importance of Seneca and Burrus. For Tacitus was clearly fascinated by Seneca, largely because Seneca displayed that combination of talent and flexibility, that exercise of political skill without display that always attracted the historian (Syme 1958, 545). There may also be a family connection, for Seneca's works show him to have been an admirer and possibly a friend of Julius Graecinus, the grandfather of Tacitus's wife. But there was also the Senecan style which had captivated his generation in youth. For Seneca's doctrine, however, Tacitus cares nothing—only the philosopher's enemies allude to that in the *Annals*—but, despite the reaction in taste, Tacitus shows his thorough knowledge of Seneca's works by his deliberate echoes of their language and thought.<sup>31</sup>

One of the scenes in which these allusions are particularly apparent is the dialogue between Seneca and Nero in *Annals* 14.53–6. The year is 62. Seneca, his power broken by the death of Burrus and the growing influence of one of the new praetorian prefects, Ofonius Tigellinus, asks for permission to surrender some of his wealth to Nero and to retire from life at court. Seneca is made to compare his services to Nero with those of Agrippa and Maecenas to Augustus. Now Seneca himself, in a work written during his period of greatest influence with Nero, makes some significant remarks about the relations of these two senior *amici* with the Princeps. Augustus, in a fit of temper, reported to the senate all the sordid details of his daughter Julia's erotic adventures, then repented, saying, 'None of these disasters would have happened to me, had either Agrippa or Maecenas been alive.' Seneca comments bitterly, 'There is no reason to believe that Agrippa and Maecenas regularly told him the truth; had they lived, they would have been in the ranks of those who concealed it. It is a custom of kings to praise those absent in order to insult those present, and to attribute the virtue of free speech to those from whom they no longer have to hear it' (*Ben.* 6.32, 2–4). This anecdote, like the parallel drawn by Nero in the retirement dialogue between Seneca and Lucius Vitellius (*Tac. Ann.* 14.56.1), suggests that one function of Seneca and Burrus was to counsel the

<sup>31</sup> E.g. *Ann.* 13.27 echoes Sen. *Clem.* 1.24.1; *Ben.* 3.16.1; 3.14.1–2. *Ann.* 14.53–4 echoes *Ben.* 2.18.6ff.; 1.15.5; 2.33.2.

Princes on his personal affairs where they touched politics, and to invent and impose on the public an official version of such events.

This side of Seneca's and Burrus' activity is abundantly illustrated by Tacitus. Their first task was to curb the political influence of the overbearing Agrippina and to end the Claudian pattern of excessive influence by wives and freedmen, while publicly showing honour and respect to the dead Emperor and his widow in order to quiet the anxieties of those who had flourished under the old régime and were worried by Nero's succession. In controlling the adolescent Princes, Seneca and Burrus, somewhat indulgent and detached, had an unwilling ally in Nero's aggressive and tactless mother. She humiliated him by the respect she showed to the freedman Pallas, and by her assertion of equal imperial authority. She thwarted his youthful impulses by confining him to an unloved wife selected by her for political reasons. She tried to bully him by threatening to support his rivals to the throne. It was Seneca who, with great presence of mind, averted Agrippina's design of mounting Nero's tribunal to receive ambassadors, prompting Nero to rise and descend the dais with a courteous gesture of welcome. It was Seneca who covered up Nero's affair with the freedwoman Acte by inducing his protégé Annaeus Serenus to act as a decoy. Seneca and Burrus averted a complete break between mother and son in 55, when Agrippina, having stampeded Nero into murdering Britannicus by supporting his claim to the succession, was reported to have put her influence behind another rival. Seneca warned Nero against incestuous relations with his mother and, with Burrus, managed public opinion after the clumsy matricide which they had refused to execute (*Tac. Ann.* 14.2; 14.10–11). Their innocence of the murder is clearly attested by Tacitus and is more credible than the story in Dio Cassius making Seneca an accomplice.<sup>32</sup> For Seneca and Burrus must have appreciated that their power depended on the continued existence and influence of Agrippina, from whom they provided a refuge. It was a dangerous game they played, and her ultimate destruction in 59 considerably diminished their control over the Emperor, who found others more polite about his chariot-racing, singing, and poetry.

<sup>32</sup> *Tac. Ann.* 14.7; Dio 61.12, noting his reliance on authorities that he regards as trustworthy.

Throughout the period ending with Burrus's death, and even for some time afterwards, Seneca had an opportunity to exercise patronage. We have already mentioned some of the friends who may have achieved office through him. The careers of his brothers Gallio and Mela continued; his nephew Lucan was recalled from his university course in Athens to assume the quaestorship five years before the legal age.<sup>33</sup> His brother-in-law Pompeius Paulinus reached the consulship and went out to govern Lower Germany (*Tac. Ann.* 13.53). The young relative of Seneca's uncle, P. Galerius Trachalus, was launched on a senatorial career (*PIR<sup>2</sup>* G 30). And Seneca was also thought to have a hand in appointments that were made for reasons of state rather than for the gratification of his dependants (*Tac. Ann.* 13.6, 14; *Plut. Galba* 21.1).

The advisory functions so far described were shared by Seneca with Burrus. But it fell to Seneca alone, if not always to invent, then at least to advertise the formulae justifying what was done. Lucius Vitellius had persuaded the senate, not merely to accept but to advocate Claudius' marriage to Agrippina, and he may well have influenced that Emperor's pronouncements on the Jews, for he was experienced in Eastern politics (*Tac. Ann.* 12.5–6; *Jos. AJ* 20.12). Seneca went farther and actually wrote Nero's official speeches: a funeral eulogy of Claudius; an accession speech addressed to the praetorian guard and one to the senate; speeches to the senate on clemency in 55 (*Tac. Ann.* 13.3; *Dio* 61.3.1); and perhaps the humiliating letter to the senate in which the Emperor spun a tale of remorse and suicide to explain his mother's end, but, by including a list of her crimes in justification, virtually confessed to her murder. Tacitus notes that Seneca was generally thought to be the author of this letter, and that it brought him no credit.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, it accords ill with Seneca's own condemnation of Augustus' unrestrained communication to the senate on the subject of Julia, and it forms a contrast to the brief edict issued by Nero on the death of Britannicus, which simply expressed grief and excused the haste with which the obsequies were performed. But whoever wrote that edict—and it might have been Seneca—had an easier task. For the murder of

<sup>33</sup> Suet. *Lucan* 11.2–3; 11–12 (Rostagni, pp. 143, 145).

<sup>34</sup> *Tac. Ann.* 14.11. Quintilian 8.5.18 confidently attributes the letter to Seneca.



Britannus was carried out secretly and could be dissimulated. But Nero's ex-teacher Anicetus, prefect of the fleet at Misenum, had bungled Agrippina's death. The ship carrying her home from an affectionate meeting with her son was to have collapsed entirely, killing her in the process. But she survived the shipwreck, which attracted spectators who also saw guards surrounding the villa afterwards (Tac. *Ann.* 13.17.1; 14.8). Some explanation had to be offered. Even so, Seneca may have chosen words that were inappropriate to the occasion; he had already done so in writing the funeral encomium on the dead Claudius. Here Seneca had proceeded according to the traditional formula, praising Claudius's ancestors and his scholarly talents, turning then to his achievements as Princeps, first in foreign policy, then in governing the Empire. But he chose to attribute to Claudius qualities (*providentia, sapientia*) that could only remind the audience of the deceased's absent-mindedness and gullibility, thereby inadvertently raising a laugh (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3).

This funeral speech must have seemed particularly absurd to those of the inner court circle who had heard Nero's own jokes about Claudius's stupidity and cruelty, particularly after they attended the recitation of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, in which all of Claudius' vices and weaknesses were exposed to ridicule. Some scholars have tried to deny that this cruel satire, which has offended the taste of modern readers more than it offended or even interested his ancient or post-classical critics,<sup>35</sup> is by Seneca, but the manuscripts all attribute it to him and the arguments against his authorship are very weak. Although the humour may seem in conflict with Seneca's usual philosophical or tragic solemnity, we know from a letter of Pliny that he wrote light verse and from Tacitus that he was believed to put on comic imitations of Nero's singing (Plin. *Epist.* 5.3.5; Tac. *Ann.* 14.52.3). Indeed the extant dialogues contain satirical descriptions of current *mores*. Dio actually affirms that Seneca wrote a farce on Claudius' consecration called the *Apocolocyntosis*, the title being, he explains, a pun on the word for consecration. A description similar to Dio's, that is 'Divi Claudii apotheosis per satiram', is prefixed to our best manuscript of the work, so that, although the

<sup>35</sup> Note that Pliny (*Panegyricus* 11.1) seems to blame Nero alone for the ridicule of Claudius' consecration.

title 'Apocolocyntosis' is not preserved there nor in the other manuscripts (which call it 'Ludus de morte Claudii'), the identification with the skit Dio mentions can hardly be doubted. The title 'Transformation into a Gourd' is probably a pure play on the word *apotheosis*, with perhaps additional comic overtones because gourds may have been used as dice-boxes and Claudius was addicted to the game: the fact that no actual transformation of this kind takes place can hardly seem an argument against identification to anyone with enough humour to enjoy the piece.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the contrast with Seneca's earlier praise of Claudius in the *Consolatio* to Polybius and the funeral *laudatio* may not be morally edifying, but it is all too explicable and Seneca alludes to it himself. Before the other courtiers who had themselves laughed in private at the consecration they solemnly celebrated in public, Seneca enjoyed parodying his own work from exile: there (15–16) Claudius had been made to complain of the misfortunes of Augustus and his own relatives; in the *Apocolocyntosis* (10.4–11.1) Augustus blames Claudius for the sufferings of his. In the *Consolatio* (17.4) the thought of Caligula moves Seneca to exclaim 'pro pudore imperii'; in the satire (10.2) the thought of Claudius moves Augustus to say 'pudet imperii'. Seneca even makes a joke of his well-known hostility to Claudius, through whom he had lost not only his integrity but also nine years of his cultured and witty life: he piously borrows the historians' cliché, 'There will be no concession made to resentment or partiality' (1.1).

Claudius died on 13 October 54 and was probably buried soon after. But the consecration need not have followed immediately.<sup>37</sup> Seneca may have taken advantage either of the abandoned mood that accompanied imperial funerals or of that traditional at the Saturnalia in December, for the presentation of his farce. The criticism of Claudius includes those charges mentioned in earnest in Nero's accession speech to the senate: the power of his freedmen, the venality of his court, the monopoly of jurisdiction by the Princeps,

<sup>36</sup> An excellent summary by Coffey 1961 of the problems concerning authorship, date, title and purpose of the preserved work is still worth consulting. See also Eden 1984, 1–13.

<sup>37</sup> Furneaux *ad loc.* rightly pointed out that the notice of the vote of *caelestes honores* to Claudius immediately after his death, in Tacitus *Ann.* 12.69, is proleptic, the real notice of *consecratio* coming in 13.2.

and his neglect of proper procedure. The highpoint of the indictment of Claudius is a speech by Divus Augustus who vetoes his deification at the council of the gods on the grounds of his folly and cruelty. But there are also trivial criticisms: Claudius' voice, his walk, his pedantry. The ridicule of Claudius is relieved principally by the praise of Nero, which similarly combines the serious promises of a new type of government with trivial praise of Nero's good looks and voice.

Many scholars have thought that the *Apocolocyntosis* has a serious political aim, that by attacking Claudius's deification Seneca either made an attack on Agrippina, who was the priestess of Claudius' cult and the obstacle to the reform of his methods of government, or on Britannicus whose claim to the succession was inadvertently strengthened by his father's elevation.<sup>38</sup> There are difficulties in seeing the work as aimed at Agrippina: whereas at court Claudius' poisoning was the subject of jokes, the *Apocolocyntosis* seems to credit an official version of his death as being due to fever (6) and taking place at the time Agrippina had announced (2.2; 4.2) and not earlier as some said it did—which seems odd in a work attacking Agrippina. But then Messalina is treated surprisingly charitably,<sup>39</sup> and that is odd for an attack on Britannicus. It is unlikely, in fact, that the farce is a serious attack on the consecration. Coins show *divi Cl. f.* still advertised in 55 (and on one rare one of 56), while official inscriptions carry the filiation even later, and the spirit of amnesty advertised by the deification was carefully preserved in appointments. The mistake is to take a work in which almost nothing is serious too seriously. Even Augustus is laughed at here for the self-magnification of the *Res Gestae* and his obsession with his family (10). It is probably more appropriate to laugh than to read between the lines.

The policy of civil harmony without reprisals was stated explicitly in Nero's opening speech to the senate. There too Nero promised to follow the example of his predecessors, notably Augustus, and sketched his formula for government. He repudiated the worst Claudian abuses (judicial irregularities, control by freedmen, venality of the

<sup>38</sup> For earlier discussions, see Coffey 1961. Since then, a powerful if ultimately unconvincing case for the work being an attack on Britannicus and his party has been argued by Kraft 1966.

<sup>39</sup> This point was made forcibly by Baldwin 1964, who used it as an argument against Senecan authorship. But Messalina was old news in late 54.

court) and stated the principle of divided responsibility between Princeps and senate (Tac. *Ann.* 13.4). That must not be taken too literally: similar promises were regularly made by new Principes. Since Tacitus tells us that Nero was true to his promises in his early years, we can tell from his account of those years what was being promised: not, clearly, a true constitutional dyarchy with the Emperor running the army and military provinces and the senate in sole control of Italy and the public provinces. That was in practice impossible, given the financial and military system which was retained. Nero was promising merely to accord the senate and its members as much responsibility as was possible given the system, and to show that body the kind of respect it had not known under Claudius. More things were done through the senate, and the Princeps was generous, approachable and merciful (Tac. *Ann.* 13.5; Suet. *Nero* 10).

A year or two after Nero delivered his accession speech, at the end of 55 or in 56, Seneca published his only work of political philosophy. Dedicated to the Princeps and containing a discussion of the qualities necessary in a ruler, *De Clementia* must have seemed a public, if not an official, statement. The author says that his purpose is to delight Nero by holding up to him a mirror in which he can see his virtue. Yet this is a eulogy that is also an exhortation: the Emperor is warned that his clemency must be maintained and his own security and glory are adduced as incentives. There are lessons for the reading public too: the blessings of the *laetissima forma rei publicae* are enumerated and Seneca explains that the Principate is indispensable to the survival of Rome. The Roman people will avoid disaster, he says, 'as long as it can bear the reins; once it breaks them or refuses to submit to them again after they have given way, this unity and the structure of this great Empire will shatter into pieces' (1.4.2). Seneca also reassures the public and defends himself by denying the common view that Stoics disapprove of clemency (2.5ff.). The mixture of eulogy, admonition, and reassurance found in this work is perfectly intelligible in the contemporary political context. For it was widely believed that Nero had arranged the death of Britannicus in 55. Many were prepared to justify the murder on the ground that rule was indivisible; some very powerful *amici*, who probably included Seneca, were bribed to acquiesce in the killing. Seneca would probably have practised dissimulation in any case, seeing that his own retirement would certainly mean the

domination of Agrippina and perhaps his own death. More important, Nero's general political behaviour was still up to the standards of his early promises: his relations with the senate were good, and he had only just started the unconventional behaviour that was to offend all but the Roman *plebs* and his Greek subjects. *De Clementia* was designed to commit Nero to the clemency he had so far shown outside the palace, and to reassure the literate public that the murder of Britannicus and the tensions at court between the Princeps and his mother, the Princeps and his advisers, did not foreshadow a change in the character of the government.

Clemency had first become a mainstay of political propaganda with Julius Caesar, and Augustus and his successors had adopted it as an imperial virtue. The elevation of clemency to the position of chief imperial virtue by Seneca suits the political climate after Britannicus's murder, but the quality had received emphasis from the very start of the reign because of the cruelty of Nero's predecessor. It figured prominently in the accession speech to the senate and in that announcing the restoration to the senate of Plautius Lateranus (*Tac. Ann.* 13.11). Yet *De Clementia* does not simply repeat the principles of the accession speech. Seneca presents a picture of the state as an organism whose soul is Nero, and he constantly uses the words *princeps* and *rex* interchangeably. In one passage (1.8.1), Nero is called king by implication. Much of the counsel Seneca offers was found in the Hellenistic treatises on kingship that were written by philosophers of all schools. But the Romans were for historical reasons sensitive to the word *rex*, which they regarded as synonymous with the Greek word for tyrant rather than that for king.<sup>40</sup> Seneca's use of it here can hardly be due to carelessness in translating from or thinking in Greek. Rather he is outlining a political ideology more realistic and more positive than the negative resignation of the senate: the Principate should not be regarded as a second-rate Republic, but as the ancient and venerable institution of monarchy; there can be no constitutional safeguards, for the only guarantee of good rule is the character of the ruler; his education and his advisers are vitally important, and his subjects have a clear duty to obey him as long as he looks after their welfare.

<sup>40</sup> Cicero *Rep.* 2.47–9; 52. For the survival of this sentiment under the Principate, see, for example, Sen. *Ben.* 6.34.1; Lucan 7.440ff., 643; Tac. *Ann.* 3.56.2; Pliny *Pan.* 55.7.

Seneca was a realist in the realm of political practice as well as in theory. His advice resulted in the maintenance of the forms and authority the senate valued, and champions of senatorial liberty were well satisfied while his influence lasted.<sup>41</sup> According to Tacitus, the turning point of Nero's reign came early in 62<sup>42</sup> with the death of Burrus and the consequent loss of influence by Seneca. In the popular view, the death of Agrippina marked the turning point,<sup>43</sup> when Nero, with two murders to his credit, and the check of maternal discipline gone, gave free rein to his artistic and sporting enthusiasms, even cultivating philosophers other than Seneca. Certainly, from 59 on, Seneca and Burrus found it harder to discipline Nero, and there were men who encouraged his emancipation. Ofonius Tigellinus, Nero's evil genius (according to Tacitus), now came into his own. A friend of Nero through his breeding of racehorses, Tigellinus became prefect of the night-watch after Seneca's protégé Annaeus Serenus died with his officers at a banquet featuring poisonous mushrooms (Plin. *NH* 22.96). Among the new favourites were such senior senators as Aulus Vitellius, who inherited his father's talent for obsequiousness, Petronius, who became Nero's arbiter of taste, and born courtiers like Cocceius Nerva and Eprius Marcellus.

Burrus' control of the praetorian guard had given the advice of both Seneca and himself persuasiveness and weight. When he died early in 62, he was succeeded by Tigellinus and Faenius Rufus, but the power lay with the first. Seneca now asked leave to withdraw from court and to surrender a large part of his property and money. Nero refused, and Seneca remained, to outward appearances, a favoured *amicus*. His friends continued to profit from his position: his brother-in-law was appointed by the Princeps to a special financial commission (Tac. *Ann.* 15.18); his younger brother continued to manage imperial estates; his friend Lucilius did the same in Sicily and was hoping in 64 for later employment at Rome (*Epist.* 19.8). But

<sup>41</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.49 (AD 58): Thrasea Paetus regards a modest role in the Neronian senate as compatible with his policy of *libertas senatoria*.

<sup>42</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.51–2. The time of year is inferred from the number of incidents that Tacitus shows must be fitted between Burrus's death and the death of Octavia on 9 June 62 (Suet. *Nero* 57).

<sup>43</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.67. Tacitus opens Book 14, Dio Book 61 with the murder of Agrippina.

Seneca no longer had a say in important appointments or in Nero's conduct; and he reduced his style of life and his public appearances, pleading ill-health and devotion to study (Tac. *Ann.* 14.56 *ad fin.*). He represents himself in his Letters to Lucilius as travelling in Campania and Latium. Yet the Campanian trip in the spring of 64 might be more official than it at first appears, for Seneca makes vague allusions in these letters to his involvement in *occupationes* (tasks) and *officium civile* (public duty) (*Epist.* 62; 72; cf. even later 106). Nero was at that time performing at the theatre in Naples, and Seneca may have been performing among the crowd of courtiers that Nero brought in with him to fill the seats (Tac. *Ann.* 15.33–4).

Seneca knew that appearances had been sufficiently preserved for him to be blamed for Nero's crimes. After the great fire in July of 64—which is not mentioned in Seneca's letters covering that period, perhaps because of the danger involved in mentioning or seeming to mention its cause—Nero pillaged temples in Greece and Asia to replace the treasures lost in the fire. Seneca was concerned to avoid all implication in this sacrilege, according to Tacitus, and so once more asked to retire, this time into the country, and to be allowed to return the greater part of his wealth. This time Nero's financial difficulties induced him to accept the money, but he again refused leave to retire.<sup>44</sup> Seneca then withdrew to his room and lived like an invalid. But not permanently, for, though his own letters covering this last period of his life are lost, Tacitus notes that he was again in Campania in the spring of 65 (Tac. *Ann.* 15.60).

That April Seneca died by imperial command, though he was allowed, as were most men of his rank, to take his own life. Officially, he was punished as one of the participants in the conspiracy against Nero's life, whose head, or figurehead, was C. Calpurnius Piso. The question of his guilt or innocence is one that can hardly be answered conclusively, but it nevertheless merits consideration, for it clearly affects the picture we have of him. Here, as so often, our historical sources do not agree. Dio Cassius, according to his Epitomator, asserted confidently that Seneca and the praetorian prefect Faenius Rufus were members of a plot to murder Nero, the other participants including a centurion of the guard, Sulpicius Asper, and a military tribune, Subrius

<sup>44</sup> Tac. 5.45.3; Dio 62.25; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.64.4.

Flavus. He does not say what man or what system was to replace Nero (Dio 62.24.1). Tacitus states that Nero had no evidence that Seneca was in the Pisonian conspiracy. He simply used the story of an exchange of letters between Seneca and Piso (the only evidence he could collect even under threat of torture) to rid himself of a man whose disapproval he resented. For Tacitus, the death of Seneca was to be counted among Nero's crimes (Tac. *Ann.* 15.61). Writing between Tacitus and Dio, Polyaeus (*Strateg.* 8.62) records that Epicharis, whose role in the conspiracy is also recorded by Tacitus, was persuaded to join the conspiracy by Seneca and was the mistress of his brother Mela.

No one doubts that Tacitus's account is not only the most copious and detailed but also the most well-informed—he could still profit from discussions with eye-witnesses (Tac. *Ann.* 15.73)—and careful. But, despite his belief in Seneca's innocence, Tacitus transmits evidence that has led readers to be dissatisfied with his verdict. He himself suggests that Seneca may have known the conspirators' plans, for he says that he returned to his villa near the city on the very day set for the murder of Nero 'by chance or deliberately' (*Ann.* 15.60: *forte an prudens*).<sup>45</sup> Tacitus also allows that the conspirator Antonius Natalis who accused Seneca may have been a go-between for Piso and Seneca (Tac. *Ann.* 15.56), who admitted to an exchange of messages with Piso that prove at least that they were normally on friendly visiting terms, for Piso had complained through Natalis at not being permitted to call on Seneca. The reply he was accused of giving—that their mutual interests would not be served by frequent meetings but that his safety depended on that of Piso—Seneca denied, for it could be construed as treasonable: the phrase about safety was reminiscent of the oath of loyalty taken to the Princeps by soldiers and civilians.<sup>46</sup> If Seneca did actually use these words,

<sup>45</sup> For the day, see Treves 1970.

<sup>46</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.60: *respondisse Senecam sermones mutuos et crebra conloquia neutri conducere; ceterum salutem suam incolumitate Pisonis inniti*. Compare *ILS* 190; Suet. *Gaius* 15.3; Epictetus 1.14.15. Alexander 1952 tried to show that Seneca's reversal of the terms *salus* and *incolumitas* in his paraphrase of Natalis's charge against him (*Ann.* 15.61) was designed to make his message to Piso seem less treasonable. But the two terms seem to be used almost interchangeably of the Princeps. In fact, the parallels just cited use *salus* (which Alexander thought more innocuous), and a temple of *Salus* was dedicated after the detection of the conspiracy. We probably have to do with a mere verbal variation by Tacitus.



however, he could at least have been trying to discourage Piso's attempt by warning him against taking risks. Again, Seneca's presence in Campania could have given him information, for it was there that Epicharis tried to corrupt the commander of the imperial fleet at Misenum (Tac. *Ann.* 15.51). (If even part of Polyaeus's account is right and Epicharis was connected with Mela, then the possibility of Seneca's knowledge is even stronger.)

Finally, Tacitus's account includes two remarks which were widely circulated at the time and which bear on Seneca's involvement. Subrius Flavius, one of the praetorian officers who was most active in the conspiracy, was quoted as saying that it would not remove the disgrace to replace a lyre-player with a tragic actor, alluding to Piso's stage performances (Tac. *Ann.* 15.65; cf. 15.67.1). That suggests that he had someone other than Piso in mind to succeed Nero. Tacitus reports the rumour that the candidate was Seneca and that he knew of the plan, a rumour echoed in Juvenal's lines, 'If a free vote were given to the people, who would be so depraved as to waver in his preference for Seneca over Nero?' (*Sat.* 8. 211–14), and receiving some support from the last words of another praetorian as reported in Suetonius and Tacitus: Sulpicius Asper was asked by Nero why he wished to kill him and replied that there was no other way in which he could help the Emperor's vices. This idea that it is justified to kill a man vicious beyond redemption occurs at least twice in Seneca's works (*De Ira* 1.6.3; *Ben.* 7.20.3).

On the basis of these pieces of evidence, it has been claimed that Tacitus was wrong to deny Seneca's guilt. Seneca was at least the ideological inspiration behind the conspiracy, if not ambitious on his own behalf: it was by prior arrangement that he arrived in Rome on the day when Nero was to be killed, coming from Campania where he had worked with Epicharis. But none of this evidence is conclusive. Seneca could have known of Piso's plans through Piso himself, or through Faenius Rufus with whom he probably had a connection going back to the early days of his co-operation with Burrus.<sup>47</sup> He may have come to his villa fearing for the safety of his property and his household in the turmoil he expected. The praetorian officers in the conspiracy may well have found some of the effete members of

<sup>47</sup> Faenius Rufus, like Burrus and Seneca, was originally a protégé of Agrippina.

the conspiracy uncomfortable partners and have hoped some other man than Piso could be put in to replace Nero: perhaps the praetorian prefect Fabius Rusticus or Lucius Silanus whom Piso feared. The echoes of Seneca's philosophy need not mean much: the idea that the death penalty is the only remedy for incurable vice is found in Plato and was doubtless a philosophical cliché by the time of Seneca.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, other ideas of Seneca's do not fit the picture of Seneca the tyrannicide: he regarded the murder of Caesar as a folly, yet the whole plan of the conspiracy was modelled on that assassination (Sen. *Ben.* 2.20; Tac. *Ann.* 15.5); as we have seen, he took no part in the murder of Gaius though he regarded it as justified; finally, he had a horror of civil war (*Ben.* 1.10.2; *Epist.* 73.9–10), which was always a risk in such plans.

We have then no evidence strong enough to invalidate Tacitus' belief in Seneca's innocence. His sympathy for Nero's adviser would not have ruled out a portrayal of him as a conspirator, even one who falsely protested his innocence, for Tacitus, though he disapproved of Piso, apparently approved of the plan to remove Nero, and even of one of the conspirators who at first lied and declared his innocence (Tac. *Ann.* 15.51.1; 15.67.1). There are features of Tacitus' narrative that are best explained, not by the determination of his source (probably Fabius Rusticus) or himself to tell one story rather than another, but by the source's need to put a favourable interpretation on the true story, that is the fact of Seneca's non-participation, which would be well-known to Fabius and to Seneca's other friends whom he must have counted as his most devoted readers. Thus those members of Seneca's family who were implicated, Lucan and his father, emerge disgracefully from Tacitus's account: Lucan bargains for his life with that of his mother and then goes on to supply other names; Mela provokes Nero by greedily trying to recover Lucan's estate and then tries to incriminate another man in his will. By contrast, Seneca's older brother Gallio is treated sympathetically (Tac. *Ann.* 15.56–7; 16.17; 15.73). A simpler explanation could be found for this contrast by supposing a split between Lucan and his uncle which involved their intimate friends, Fabius Rusticus taking

<sup>48</sup> Plato *Gorgias* 473–80; 525b and elsewhere in *Republic* and *Laws*. Compare Cicero *De Finibus* 4.56.

one side, the poet Persius and doubtless more taking the other.<sup>49</sup> Yet it is likely that a split between Seneca and Lucan, however temperamental in origin, would involve differences on a political issue like the conspiracy, for their works show Lucan as a great admirer of Brutus and Cassius while Seneca deplored Caesar's murder. Rusticus' troubles may again lie behind the savage way in which Faenius Rufus, a protégé of Agrippina like Seneca and Burrus and probably a political associate, is handled by Tacitus: he could hardly be right to join the conspiracy if Seneca stayed out.

Tacitus points out that Seneca's will showed the contempt for wealth and pomp that he preached. His death too fits his teaching: he had long been prepared for it, keeping a supply of hemlock by him (cf. *Epist.* 70.18); he showed no fear or undue haste and, like Socrates, he waited until the order was given (cf. *Epist.* 70.8–12). His last words that he dictated were widely circulated and known to Tacitus' readers. They were probably, like Thræsea's later on, philosophical in content, to judge from the contrast Tacitus draws between them and the blunt reproach of Nero's vices uttered by Subrius Flavus (*Tac. Ann.* 15.67). Seneca's suicide was certainly theatrical, but in the atmosphere of Nero's later years it was a source of inspiration to courage. Thræsea copied it, likewise pouring a libation to Jupiter Liberator, for death was, according to the Stoics, the avenue to freedom provided by Providence (*Tac. Ann.* 16.34–5). Thræsea, like Seneca, offered himself as an *exemplum* to his friends. Over four centuries later, the philosopher Boethius in prison found Seneca's end an inspiring example and paid him the honour of comparing his death to that of other philosophical martyrs including Socrates himself.

But what of his life? 'You talk in one way, but live in another': this is the charge that Seneca tried to answer in *De Vita Beata* and that which his biographers and readers have been pondering ever since. Almost all of Seneca's literary activity belongs to his mature years. From the publication of the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, probably in 39, he poured out a tremendous quantity of prose and verse. Because of his reticence about everything but his spiritual life and philosophical ideas, most of his works can only be dated within broad

<sup>49</sup> Persius, according to the *Life* by Valerius Probus (Rostagni pp. 167ff.), was educated with Lucan, but only met Seneca once and thought little of him.

limits,<sup>50</sup> but we do know that, aside from his two overtly political works (*Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*), many of the tragedies with their hatred of tyranny and cruelty belong to his period of political power, as well as many of the shorter dialogues (*De Brevitate Vitae*, *De Constantia Sapientis*, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, *De Otio*, *De Vita Beata*), and probably part of *De Beneficiis*. All of these works, like those written when Seneca was losing or had lost power in 62 and later (*Naturales Quaestiones*, *Epistulae Morales*), are full of condemnations of flattery and collaboration with tyranny, and of diatribes against sexual licence, wealth, and luxury. Yet Seneca's enemies claimed that he was guilty of all of these vices.

We have already discussed the servile adulation of Emperor and freedmen in the *Consolatio ad Polybium*. It is perhaps fair to Seneca to remember that Ovid had appealed to Augustus at greater length and that both he and Seneca showed some courage in claiming innocence, particularly as they were subjected to greater suffering than Cicero, whose laments from exile were more querulous and pathetic than theirs. On the other hand, Cicero did not publish his own laments and Seneca did, whether or not he later tried to withdraw the work from circulation. The flattery of *De Clementia* can be excused as the only vehicle of instruction possible under an autocracy,<sup>51</sup> but that in the *Apocolocyntosis* exceeds this purpose, while that in the *Naturales Quaestiones* (7.21.3; 7.17.2; 1.5.6) does not serve it at all. Yet Seneca, in his philosophical works, while certainly expressing admiration for those who exercise freedom of speech before rulers (*Tranq. An.* 14.3; *Ben.* 5.6.2–7) and claiming to use it himself before Nero (*Clem.* 2.2.2), never demanded, and, in fact, condemned the ostentatious provocation of those in power. He stated that *contumacia* ('stubborn arrogance'), that trait so often ascribed to senators with Stoic sympathies, was incompatible with life at court (*Tranq. An.* 6.1). For him, what counted was the giving of honest advice where it was needed (*Ben.* 6.29–30). As a good Stoic,

<sup>50</sup> Discussions of the chronology of the prose works are to be found in Giancotti 1957 (for the twelve dialogues of the Codex Ambrosianus); Griffin 1976 (1992), 395–401; Abel 1985.

<sup>51</sup> The method is avowed in *Clem.* 2.2; cf. Thrasea's use of the technique in Tac. *Ann.* 14.48.

he thought that personal humiliation did not touch the soul and was sometimes acceptable as a means to an end (*Const. Sap.* 14.2; 19.3), and, as a shrewd critic of facile heroics, he advised against offending rulers, even to the point of disguising political withdrawal as retirement for health reasons (*Epist.* 14.7; 19.2, 4; 68.1, 3–4; 73). The last he certainly carried into practice.

Equally pragmatic was his willingness to compromise with evil during his years of influence. Some might have thought the balance between the good he could do and the evil he must countenance had tipped with the murder of Britannicus or—where popular opinion put the turning point of the reign—with Agrippina's murder. But Tacitus agreed with Seneca: it was 62, with the return of *maiestas* trials and the perversion of Seneca's doctrine of clemency that mattered more. Yet Seneca should at least have realized that the lesson of *De Clementia*, that the Princeps was absolute in power and controlled only by self-restraint, was a dangerous one for a Princeps like Nero. To that extent, Seneca was, as Dio called him, a *tyrannodidaskalos* ('an instructor in tyranny').

In his writings, Seneca condemned adultery by the husband or wife. For his sexual life, we have no evidence aside from the charges of adultery and pederasty traceable to Suillius Rufus. These were based on Seneca's conviction for adultery in 41, and were probably no more than slander. It is notable that most of Agrippina's political protégés were alleged to have enjoyed her favours (*Tac. Ann.* 12.7; 12.65; 15.50.5). Otherwise, Seneca's *Letter* 104 (1–5) proclaims a deep affection for his wife Pompeia Paulina, which accords well with the value he set on marriage in *De Matrimonio* and appears to be confirmed by his wife's wish to die with him and her later devotion to his memory (*Tac. Ann.* 15.64).

The principal reason for regarding Seneca as a hypocrite has always been that he enjoyed great wealth while praising poverty. As Suillius Rufus asked: what philosophical doctrines had taught him to amass 300 million sesterces in four years of friendship with the Emperor? Tacitus makes Seneca offer to surrender his wealth in 62 because it brought him a bad name and gave the lie to his claim to be satisfied with little. Undeniably, Seneca was very rich. He inherited a respectable fortune from his father, and he received from Nero estates in Egypt, capital that earned him interest, and money to buy at least one

extra villa.<sup>52</sup> His position of influence brought him substantial legacies. Nor was he entirely passive in acquiring wealth: his skill in viticulture and the profits he thereby derived are well attested,<sup>53</sup> and the stories that were told of a financial killing in Britain suggest, at least, that he was a cunning investor. Seneca was accused of a luxurious style of life, and it is more than likely that he lived up to his position at court. Tacitus notes that, like other great men, he was greeted and escorted each day by a crowd of clients and dependants. These he treated generously, dining them well and sending them gifts, as Juvenal and Martial attest, comparing him with Calpurnius Piso and Aurelius Cotta (Martial 12.36; Juvenal 5.109). Seneca was on friendly terms with Piso, whose taste for high living and culture he may well have shared, in the period before his retirement. The general picture is clear, though one need not accept details like the five hundred tables of citrus wood that Dio says graced his banquets. Finally, he probably acquired some of his wealth by acquiescing in crime, especially if he was among those whom Nero bribed into silence after the murder of Britannicus.

There are obvious things that can be said in Seneca's defence. First, that he was generous with his own wealth, and probably encouraged Nero's liberality. Next, that he kept to certain ascetic habits acquired (under the influence of Attalus) in youth, such as abstinence from oysters, moderation in wine, rejection of soft mattresses (*Epist.* 108.15–16; 23), and was able to practise extreme frugality as regards food after 64. That he requested a simple funeral in a will written when he could have afforded an ostentatious one.<sup>54</sup> Finally, that Seneca did actually hand over a large part of his wealth to Nero to help in the reconstruction of Rome (Dio 62.25.3; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.64.4).

And yet, the discrepancy between words and deeds remains, and an even more interesting problem. For Seneca could have justified almost all of his actual practices in Stoic terms, and, in doing so, have strengthened the moderate view of Stoicism he advertised in *De Clementia*. In fact, he did so in one work, *De Vita Beata*. For all

<sup>52</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.42; Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 14.3; *Epist.* 77; Tac. *Ann.* 14.53.5–6. Pliny *NH* 14.49ff. shows that the villa at Nomentum was acquired between 61 and 64.

<sup>53</sup> Sen. *Nat. Quaest.* 3.7.1 *Epist.* 86.14ff.; Pliny *NH* 14.5!; Columella *RR* 3.3.3.

<sup>54</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.45.3; cf. Sen. *Epist.* 83.6; 87.1–5; 123.3; Tac. *Ann.* 15.64.

Stoics, although virtue was the only good and vice the only evil, some positive value attached to such things as health, beauty and wealth, and some undesirability to their opposites. Though none of these ‘indifferents’ affected a man’s happiness, which was acquired by virtue alone, it was emphasized by some Stoics, notably Panaetius, that wealth was useful as the material of virtuous acts, and that it could add a certain joy to life. This view Seneca took over in *De Vita Beata*, going as far as to say that even the wise man would actually prefer to have some wealth with his virtue, providing it was not acquired at another’s expense or by sordid methods. The wise man would like to have a splendid house and ample resources for generosity to individuals of every degree (23.5–24.3). There are traces of this positive view in Seneca’s other works, and in *De Beneficiis* (5.4.2–3; 1.15.5–6; 2.18.5; 2.21.5) he specifically allows gifts from men in power if they are of good character, explaining that under duress even that condition is waived (2.18.7; 5.6.7). Tacitus used this argument in composing Seneca’s request to retire in *Annals* 14.53.

But the usual attitude to wealth in Seneca’s works is more negative. In addition to spiritual detachment from it (which he could claim to have demonstrated by its surrender), Seneca often praises poverty in itself, declaims against efforts made to acquire wealth, and suggests that men would be better off without it (notably, *De Tranquillitate Animi* 8). He constantly urges the need to prepare for poverty by frugal living, and inveighs at excessive length against luxury as an unnatural outgrowth of the passions. The problem is twofold, for the well-attested popularity of Seneca’s works suggests that not only Seneca, but his readers as well, preferred to write and talk about wealth in this negative way. Many of his readers were men of considerable property, but they felt bored with or guilty about it, or anxious under a régime which required the Emperor to spend a lot of his personal fortune and did not authorize him to tax wealthy citizens in Italy.

Perhaps an even more important consideration was the opportunity offered by the theme of the evils of luxury—for so long a standard *topos* in the rhetorical schools—to a virtuoso preacher like Seneca. Even Quintilian, who disliked his style and its influence, had to admit that Seneca was an exquisite lambaster of vice. He added that a more disciplined style would have earned the author the admiration of the learned rather than the love of boys (10.1.130), a point to which

Seneca had already supplied the answer in Letter 108 to Lucilius. There he recalls how, even in the theatre, verses condemning avarice and urging contempt of wealth win applause, because people accept the condemnation of vice if put with poetic or rhetorical effect and not in coldly analytic argument. The most promising pupils, he adds, are the young, who are easily roused to love of virtue by an effective speaker, learn most readily, and are most easily persuaded to put what they have learned into practice. Seneca then strengthens the case for rhetorical teaching aimed at the young, by recounting the tremendous impact made on him by the first philosophy lectures he heard and by testifying to the lasting effect some of them had on him.

In this same Letter, Seneca also admits to his swift return from the more extreme ascetic practices to ordinary life (*Epist.* 108.15). This frankness and modesty about his own moral achievements throughout his works is the only effective answer to the charges of hypocrisy and the only one Seneca himself ever offered. In *De Vita Beata*, for example, he says of the Middle Stoic views he presents: 'I do not offer this defence for myself, for I am sunk in vice, but for a man who has achieved something' (17.4). In the *Letters*, he hopes for a place among those on the lowest level of spiritual progress (75.15), and he describes the *Letters* themselves as conversations between one moral invalid and another (27.1). Accordingly, when Seneca urges Lucilius to moderate his grief at the death of a friend, he confesses to his own weakness on a similar occasion and explains what self-examination has taught him (63). Again, in the famous Letter 47 advocating kind treatment of slaves, Seneca criticizes men who seize every pretext for being angry with their slaves. Lucilius, he says there, is a good master, but Seneca shows himself, in an earlier Letter (12), to be guilty of just this fault: he visits his suburban villa after a long period of absence and, noting signs of decay which remind him of his own advanced age, relieves his irritation by scolding his slaves for neglecting the property. But he recognizes and admits his error, and incidentally reveals his former and customary kindness to his slaves and their habit of speaking frankly to him. It was this tenderness, this insight into weakness, this awareness of how hard it is to be good, that doubtless made Seneca an effective teacher for those who, once stirred by his style, tried to follow the Stoic way. The opening chapters of *De Tranquillitate Animi* show him administering moral



therapy to a friend who came and described the symptoms of his relapse and wished to try once more to be cured. For his disciples, contemporary and later, Seneca's power as a healer of souls has more than made up for his shortcomings as a model of virtue. The literary portrait of himself as a moral teacher that Seneca has left in his essays and letters<sup>55</sup> is rightly judged a more precious legacy than the historical *imago vitae suae*.

<sup>55</sup> For the place of the *Epistulae Morales* in the development of autobiography see Misch 1950 vol. 2, 418ff.

## Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius: A Revaluation

*Marcus Wilson*

Invenio tamen translationes verborum ut non temerarias ita quae periculum sui fecerint; invenio imagines, quibus si quis nos uti vetat et poetis illas solis iudicat esse concessas, neminem mihi videtur ex antiquis legisse, apud quos nondum captabatur plausibilis oratio: illi, qui simpliciter et demonstrandae rei causa eloquebantur, parabolis referti sunt, quas existimo necessarias, non ex eadem causa qua poetis, sed ut inbecillitatis nostrae adminicula sint, ut et dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem adducant.

(*Ep.* 59.6)

I find metaphors in your writing, but not uncontrolled and so self-defeating. I find there the use of images. If anyone denies us the right to employ images in our prose by decreeing that they are allowed only in poetry, then he seems to me unfamiliar with our early prose authors whose language was not yet governed by the need to please good opinion. In expressing themselves naturally with a direct view to proving their point, they are full of these forms of comparison. I consider such devices indispensable, but not for the same reasons as do the poets. They work as a buttress for human weakness and they are effective in engaging both author and audience with the central issue at hand.

Seneca dismisses the idea that philosophical writing should eschew literary techniques: they reinforce the reader's commitment to self-improvement and offer a short cut to understanding. Such faith in the compatibility of philosophical content with literary presentation is, among Roman authors, no exception but the rule as the dialogues of

Cicero, as the hexameters of Lucretius will eloquently attest. Quintilian, like Seneca a product of Roman culture in the first century AD, when considering the range of literature which students ought ideally to read (*Inst. Orat.* 10.1.27–35; 123–31) assigns the designated works to four main subdivisions: oratory, poetry, history and philosophy. Seneca himself says that if the writer of philosophy possesses literary ability he should use it: *si tamen contingere eloquentia non sollicito potest, si aut parata est aut parvo constat, adsit et res pulcherrimas prosequatur* ('If eloquence can be attained without too much trouble, if it comes naturally or costs little effort, let it be used, let it be directed to this most splendid of all subjects,' *Ep.* 75.5). For philosophy does not reject the help of individual talent: *non mehercules ieiuna esse et arida volo, quae de rebus tam magnis dicentur; neque enim philosophia ingenio renuntiat* ('I would not want discussions of such important matters to be feeble and dry; for philosophy does not spurn genius,' 75.3). Trim modern distinctions between philosophy and literature are out of place in the discussion of Seneca's philosophical texts.

One of those philosophical texts, in fact the most substantial to survive, is the collection of one hundred and twenty-four epistles all addressed to the same recipient, Lucilius.<sup>1</sup> These are not ordinary letters. They convey little news, little of the detail about current social and political activity that we find in the extant correspondence of Cicero or the younger Pliny. Seneca carefully distinguishes his epistles to Lucilius from the kind of letter Cicero wrote to his friend Atticus:

nec faciam quod Cicero, vir disertissimus, facere Atticum iubet, ut etiam si rem nullam habebit, quod in buccam venerit, scribat. numquam potest deesse quod scribam, ut omnia illa quae Ciceronis implent epistulas trans-eam: quis candidatus laboret; quis alienis, quis suis viribus pugnet; quis consulatum fiducia Caesaris, quis Pompei, quis arcae petat; quam durus sit faenerator Caecilius a quo minoris centesimis propinqui nummum movere non possint. sua satius est mala quam aliena tractare, se excutere et videre quam multarum rerum candidatus sit et non suffragari.

(*Ep.* 118. 1f.)

I shall not do what Cicero, the most fluent of men, tells Atticus to do, that is to write even if he has nothing in his mind he wants to say. In writing to you

<sup>1</sup> The complete collection does not survive. Aulus Gellius quotes from a twenty-second Book giving examples of Seneca's criticisms of Ennius, Cicero, and Virgil (*Noct. Att.* 12.2).

I never run out of ideas even though I bypass all those things with which Cicero fills his letters: which candidate is in trouble; who is contesting on borrowed funds, who on his own resources; who, in his bid for the consulship, is depending on Caesar or Pompey or his own cashbox; what a cruel usurer is Caecilius who won't lend even to his relatives at less than 12 per cent interest! It's better to pay attention to your own ailments than someone else's; to take yourself apart; to see the number of things for which you are yourself running and vote for none of them.

Seneca's epistles reflect not the outside world so much as the condition and workings of his own mind. They are predominantly introspective, concerned much more with ideas than with events. Insofar as they show affinities with other letters in the ancient world, they are with the type sometimes written by philosophers and rhetoricians like Plato, Epicurus, and Isocrates or early Christians like Paul or Clement of Rome.<sup>2</sup> This type of letter serves to communicate publicly as well as privately; it concerns itself primarily with the forceful presentation of a point of view, a set of arguments, the tenets of a philosophy or religion. It is evident that Seneca's epistles were composed from the outset with a view to their eventual publication.<sup>3</sup> The reliance on familiar history

<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, no neat division between the two sorts of letter, public and private: private letters may become public; a letter may be written as both a personal and a public communication. Seneca is familiar with the letters of Epicurus (see e.g. *Ep.* 18.9). The question whether Plato's epistles are authentic is not an issue here since it was believed in Roman times that they were written by Plato (see *Cic. Tusc. Disp.* 5.35.100; *De Fin.* 2.14.45; *Plut. Dio* 8; 21; 52). The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are regularly epistolary in form. On the use of the epistle for literary and philosophical purposes, see Cancik 1967, 46–61.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to imply that the correspondence is wholly fictional. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that it is fictional: H. Peter, *Der Brief in der römischen Literatur* (Leipzig 1901) 225ff.; Bourguery 1911; Cancik 1967, 4ff.; Maurach 1970, 21; Griffin 1976, 350, 416–19. Others have taken the contrary viewpoint, e.g. Albertini 1923. The question is still hotly disputed: see Grimal 1978, 219ff.; P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell'impero* (Rome 1983) 196–9; Abel 1981; id. 1985, 745ff. It is unprofitable to think in terms of a sharp distinction between a) 'genuine' and b) 'fictional' correspondence. There are, in this context, degrees of 'genuineness'. Letters intended from the outset for publication may nevertheless have been sent to the addressee; letters sent in the course of regular correspondence may later be revised, expanded, supplemented with other material prior to publication. Whether the *Epistles to Lucilius* were actually sent to him or not is a question more important for the biographer than the critic; for in either case it is apparent that Seneca had eventual publication in mind; in either case the letters present a programmed introduction to Stoic ethical thought—whether designed initially for Lucilius or for the wider public. See the comments of Russell 1974, 76.

and mythology for analogies and examples, the infrequency of private allusions to persons and events known to Seneca and Lucilius but not to outsiders, the universalizing treatment of ethical problems, the subordination of news about the author's life and habits to what is morally significant, the consistent quality and rhetorical sophistication of the language all anticipate a general readership. Most modern commentators see Seneca's use of epistolary form as the result of a deliberate choice of genre.<sup>4</sup> The role of Lucilius is more like that of Memmius in the work of Lucretius, than Atticus in the letters of Cicero; he supplies a focus for the author's teaching and incitement. Seneca states in *Epistle* 8.2 that in his retirement he is 'conducting business with future generations by writing what might be of benefit to them' (*posterorum negotium ago; illis aliqua quae possint prodesse conscribo*). The epistles, themselves written after his retirement, are part of this business he is conducting with the future.<sup>5</sup>

*Epistle* 46, which acknowledges the receipt of a book, comes as close as any in the collection to a semblance of ordinary correspondence:

Seneca Lucilio suo salutem.

Librum tuum, quem mihi promiseras, accepi et tamquam lecturus ex commodo adaperui ac tantum degustare volui; deinde blanditus est ipse ut procederem longius. qui quam disertus fuerit, ex hoc intellegas licet: levis mihi visus est, cum esset nec mei nec tui corporis sed qui primo aspectu aut Titi Livii aut Epicuri posset videri. tanta autem dulcedine me tenuit et traxit, ut illum sine ulla dilatione perlegerim. sol me invitabat; fames admonebat; nubes minabantur; tamen exhausti totum.

Non tantum delectatus sed gavisus sum. quid ingenii iste habuit, quid animi! dicerem, quid impetus, si interquievisset, si ex intervallo surrexisset; nunc non fuit impetus sed tenor, compositio virilis et sancta; nihilominus interveniebat dulce illud et loco lene. grandis, erectus es; hoc te volo tenere, sic ire. fecit aliquid et materia; ideo eligenda est fertilis quae capiat ingenium, quae incitet.

De libro plura scribam cum illum retractavero; nunc parum mihi sedet iudicium, tamquam audierim illa, non legerim. sine me et inquirere. non est

<sup>4</sup> Cancik 1967, 46ff.; Maurach 1970, 20ff.; Coleman 1974, 288, n.1; Griffin 1976, 350. See also Russell 1978, 78f.

<sup>5</sup> Russell 1978, 71 is wholly convincing in his argument that Seneca is referring in 8.2 to the *Epistles* themselves, not to another work in progress. The remainder of *Epistle* 8 is full of the *salutares admonitiones* ('beneficial advice') that Seneca says here he is writing down for posterity.

quod verearis; verum audies. o te hominem felicem, quod nihil habes propter quod quisquam tibi tam longe mentiatur! nisi quod iam etiam ubi causa sublata est, mentimur consuetudinis causa. vale.

Seneca to Lucilius, greetings.

I got your book as you promised. I opened it casually intending only to dip into it. The book itself coaxed me into going farther. Just how eloquent it was you can tell from this: it seemed to flow evenly as if not something drawn from your being or mine but which at first sight might seem to have been produced by Titus Livy or Epicurus. It held me and drew me in with such charm, I read it all without a break. The sun called me out; hunger chided; clouds threatened. Still, I took it all in from beginning to end.

I wasn't just pleased; I was overjoyed. What talent it had! What character! I might have said 'what impact' if it had relaxed from time to time, if it had surged up on occasion. What it had was not impact but steadiness, the kind of style that's strong and pure. Nonetheless, there was now and again a sweeter, more gentle note. You are stately, upright. I want you to hold on to this; go on in this direction. Your material also helped. To choose a fruitful topic which can capture and stimulate your talent is most important.

About the book, I'll write more when I've read it again. For the present, my opinion is unsettled, as if I'd not read it but only heard it. Give me time to examine it properly. There's no need to worry, you'll hear the truth. You are a lucky man, you who give no-one any reason to tell you lies at long distance! Unless it's a fact that when reasons are lacking we lie out of habit. Goodbye.

This epistle opens forcefully, the first word of the Latin, *librum* ('book') indicating the main subject right at the start. In the second sentence Seneca personifies Lucilius' book, insisting that it 'coaxed' (*blanditus est ipse*) him into reading on. In the ensuing sentences, the personification is maintained: it is the book, not the author, that is called 'eloquent' (*disertus*); it is the book that holds (*tenuit*) and draws (*trahit*) the reader with its charm (*dulcedine*). Then, in three short clauses of identical structure, conjoined without connectives, the device of personification is applied to other objects: the sun which summons Seneca outside (*sol me invitabat*); the hunger which chides him (*fames admonebat*); the clouds which threaten (*nubes minabantur*). Strange weather this! Seneca thinks rhetorically; he is evoking his state of mind in reading the book, not offering his friend an accurate report on local atmospheric conditions. The level of energy in the writing is very high, maintained by an oscillation between first

and third person verbs and between compound verbs referring to Seneca himself (*adaperui*, 'I opened'; *degustare*, 'to dip into'; *perlegerim*, 'I read it all') and shorter, vigorous verbs (*tenuit*, 'it held'; *traxit*, 'it drew') referring to the book. With *exhausi* ('I took it in') at the end of the paragraph, Seneca returns to the first person compound verb and at the same time restores the 'tasting' metaphor introduced earlier by the infinitive *degustare* ('to dip into'). Personification persists into the second paragraph where the book is endowed with both talent (*ingenii*) and character (*animi*). The moral quality of the living text is defined by the style of Lucilius' writing: it has 'steadiness' (*tenor*) and is both 'strong and pure' (*virilis et sancta*) though not incapable of something 'sweeter, more gentle' (*dulce illud et loco lene*—note the alliteration). At this point, Seneca surprises the reader by switching suddenly from the third to the second person: *grandis, erectus es* ('You are stately, upright'). As previously the book was given the qualities of a person, now, in a reversal of the effect of personification, Lucilius is treated as having the qualities exhibited by the book. The character of the work is the character of the author. The *ingenium* ('talent') earlier belonged to the book (*quid ingenii iste habuit*, 'what talent it had!'); now it is the property of the man: *quae capiat ingenium, quae incitet* ('which can capture and incite your talent'). The second paragraph is also remarkable for the way it reveals Seneca's mind thinking about and refining his meaning as he goes. He begins with an antithesis rejecting one description of his feelings (*delectatus*, 'pleased') for another, stronger one (*gavisus*, 'overjoyed'). Having exclaimed about the book's talent (*quid ingenii*) he appends another exclamation about its strength of character (*quid animi*). He goes back to consider why he didn't use the word *impetus* ('impact'). The reason for this omission he clarifies through another antithesis: *non fuit impetus sed tenor* ('what it had was not impact but steadiness'), then immediately redefines this new term *tenor* ('steadiness') as *compositio virilis et sancta* ('the kind of style that's strong and pure'). He adds a qualification, saying there was at times a sweeter note (*dulce illud*), then, as if not quite satisfied with the description *dulce* ('sweet'), supplements it with another: *et loco lene* ('more gentle'). Lucilius is called *grandis* ('stately'), but Seneca follows this immediately with a second epithet as though through the combination of the two words

*grandis, erectus* ('stately, upright') he can capture accurately an aspect of Lucilius' bearing for which no single word will do. 'Hold on to this' (*hoc te volo tenere*), he urges; he then changes the metaphor to reiterate the message: 'Go on in this direction' (*sic ire*). Another thought occurs to Seneca: Lucilius' material was well chosen. Seneca stresses the active participation of the material by making it the subject of the verb (*fecit aliquid et materia*, 'your material also helped'). This observation is recast as a piece of advice for the future: *ideo eligenda est fertilis* ('to choose a fruitful topic is most important'). A fruitful topic is able to capture one's talent (*quae capiat ingenium*). But the verb *capiat* ('capture') is not sufficient, so by the aid of anaphora (*quae ... quae*) another verb (*incitet*, 'incite') is brought in not to supplant but to complement it. The prose reflects the activity of the mind as it responds to the stimulus of Lucilius' writing. Significantly, it is the style of the prose, the character of the author, to which Seneca primarily responds, not the specific subject matter which he mentions only at the end and seems to regard as little more than a catalyst for the release of Lucilius' *ingenium* ('talent'). We're never told what the book is about.

With the third paragraph there is a marked change in tone, almost as if it were written some hours later. Seneca steps back and distances himself from his earlier overriding enthusiasm. As in paragraph one, Seneca's first words refer to the book (*de libro*, 'About the book') but this time only to dismiss it, intimating that it is no longer the prime focus of his thoughts: *plura scribam cum illum retractavero* ('I'll write more when I've read it again'). The first and second paragraphs charted the dynamics of Seneca's evolving response to Lucilius' work, a process of emotional involvement plus struggle for intellectual clarification, of definition then redefinition, of a progressive refinement of description of his impressions. In apparent recognition of this, Seneca warns in the third paragraph that his estimation of the book is as yet inconclusive and provisional (*nunc parum mihi sedet iudicium*, 'for the present, my opinion is unsettled'). The outward appeal of the book earlier led Seneca to personify it as a fluent and charming speaker (*blanditus est ipse*, 'it coaxed me'; *quam disertus fuerit*, 'how eloquent it was'; *tanta autem dulcedine me tenuit et traxit*, 'it held me and drew me in with such charm'). This same quality now seems rather to stand in the way of a more considered appraisal of its



merits: *tamquam audierim illa, non legerim* ('as if I'd not read it but only heard it'). Nevertheless, he writes, Lucilius will hear the truth (*verum audies*). The book is not referred to again. The epistle could have ended here. It does not. Seneca goes on to reflect not about the book but about frankness and the degree to which human beings have become habituated to dishonesty. Though he's still addressing Lucilius, the form of expression moves closer to the aphoristic, inviting the reader to extract ideas, from the text, of general moral application: lucky the man who makes no-one feel obliged to tell him lies;<sup>6</sup> when reasons are lacking, we lie out of habit. The end of the epistle is more meditative; Seneca seems to be writing less for Lucilius, more to himself. Use of the inclusive first person plural verb *mentimur* ('we lie') makes of the last sentence a general comment on human nature; but Seneca's 'we' includes Seneca. He seems to be questioning his own sincerity in praising so lavishly Lucilius' book earlier in the epistle. This is the final twist in a letter that persistently turns back upon itself to revise or re-interpret what was said before. The Seneca who wrote paragraphs one and two is accused by the Seneca of paragraph three of having been less than frank.<sup>7</sup>

Two remarkable features of this epistle are its reliance on discontinuity and its attitude to style. With the third paragraph, continuity has been broken. Before, Seneca's attention was fixed firmly on the book; he seemed engrossed in it, excited by it. Now he is dispassionate; he reserves judgement; he is concerned with other, wider moral considerations. Fundamental to the effect of *Epistle 46* is this abrupt discontinuity of mood, tone and theme. So striking is the discontinuity, it makes Seneca's reaction to Lucilius' book displace the book itself as chief source of interest for the reader: questions about

<sup>6</sup> This seems a deliberate recollection of 20.7: *o quando ille veniet dies, quo nemo in honorem tuum mentiatur* ('Oh when will the day come when no-one will compliment you with lies!').

<sup>7</sup> Note that in the previous epistle, Seneca is fully alert to the difficulty of returning an impartial judgement on the literary work of a friend. In this case, it is Lucilius who is to give an opinion on Seneca's books: *ceterum quod libros meos tibi mitti desideras, non magis ideo me disertum puto quam formosum putarem, si imaginem meam peteres. indulgentiae scio istud esse, non iudicii. et si modo iudicii est, indulgentia tibi imposuit* ('The fact that you want my books sent to you doesn't make me think I'm eloquent any more than it would make me think I'm good looking if you asked to see my picture. I know this shows not your judgement but your indulgence. Even if it is the result of judgement, indulgence imposed it on you', 45.3).

Lucilius' writing give way to questions about Seneca's. The identification, here, of Lucilius with his book (*grandis, erectus es*, 'You are stately, upright') provides a particular application of the principle Seneca will enunciate fully in *Epistle* 114: *talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita* ('as a man's language is his manner of life').<sup>8</sup> *Epistle* 46 is both concerned with and a demonstration of Seneca's ideas about how qualities of style and qualities of character intermesh.

'Sand without lime' (*harena sine calce*), progression by 'leaps and bounds', a body dismembered (*un corps en pièces*), 'the dry chips of short lung'd Seneca', to read him is like dining on 'nothing but anchovy sauce'.<sup>9</sup> Criticism of Seneca's prose style is littered with fanciful metaphors more memorable usually for their wit than convincing for their aptness. Some of the most preposterous are also the most persistent. Fronto, dogged pursuer of the wild analogy, likens the movement of Seneca's thought to that of a horse, trained to trot, unable to let itself go full pelt in a more natural gallop: *verum sententias eius tolutares video nusquam quadripedo concitas cursu tendere* (149).<sup>10</sup> From this passage is derived the ridiculous notion found in some modern criticism of 'the Senecan amble'.<sup>11</sup> Fronto further compares Seneca's writing to eating olives at the dinner table by tossing them into the air and catching them in the mouth (*oleas suas in altum iaciat, ore aperto excipiat*), to soft, feverish plums (*Senecae mollibus et febriculosus prunulis*) and to a sewer into which some silver coins have accidentally rolled (*laminae interdum*

<sup>8</sup> On the close connection between style and moral qualities, see also *Ep.* 40. Style should be controlled, not brazen (*oratio pressa, non audax*, 14); it should preserve a sense of nobility of character (*salva dignitate morum*, 8); some effects of style are a brand of shamelessness: *non potest tibi ista res contingere aliter quam si te pudere deserit; perfrices frontem oportet et te ipse non audias . . . non potest, inquam, tibi contingere res ista salva verecundia* ('It's impossible for you to do that without losing your sense of shame. You'd have to rub your face to avoid showing blushes and try not to hear your own words . . . It's impossible, I repeat, for you to do that and keep your modesty intact,' 13).

<sup>9</sup> These analogies come from Caligula, Jortin, Balzac, Abraham Cowley, and Macaulay. Cowley is quoted by Motto and Clark 1975, 1, from the *Ode on Wit* line 52; Jortin and Balzac are quoted by Williamson 1951, 131, 146. For Caligula see Suet. *Cal.* 53; for Macaulay, his letter to T. F. Ellis, 30 May 1836.

<sup>10</sup> References are to pages in the edition of M. P. J. Van den Hout, *M. Cornelii Frontonis Epistulae* (Leiden 1954).

<sup>11</sup> It's most unfortunate that Williamson 1951 chose this misleading title for his confused but influential book.

*argentiolae cloacis inveniuntur*, 149f.). More perceptive and appreciative is Lipsius' image of Senecan style as a fighter prepared for combat: *et pugnae atque arenae omnia, non delectationi aut scaenae parata* (quoted by Williamson 1951, 111). Better still is the image used by Seneca himself (when writing about Fabianus, *Ep.* 100.6), revived by Aper in Tacitus' *Dialogue on Oratory* (22.3f.), of style as a house that you live in. This at least pays due regard to the utility of prose and to *versatility* as a prime attribute of serviceable style. You make use of different rooms for different purposes.

What is 'Senecan style'? Different usages of the phrase need to be distinguished. It has become a kind of shorthand for 'abrupt, pointed sentences' just as 'Ciceronian style' has become shorthand for 'lots of lengthy periodic sentences'.<sup>12</sup> This is caricature. In this sense of the words, it can truly be said that Cicero's style is not consistently Ciceronian nor Seneca's Senecan. On a much higher plane of sophistication are attempts to define 'Senecan style' in terms of a diversity of traits and tendencies which together mark off Seneca's writing from that of other authors.<sup>13</sup> He seeks, characteristically, to startle his reader into thought, not to reassure him. In keeping with this aim, he tries to imply more by his language than he states explicitly. Consequently there is a reduction in the importance of those syntactic forms which make relations between ideas, phrases, sentences explicit or predictable, notably subordination of clauses and connective devices both within and between sentences. Ideas, phrases, sentences are rather juxtaposed. Vocabulary and rhetoric are governed by the need to augment connotation and to surprise. Words are imported from poetry, from colloquial speech (see Summers 1910, xlii–liv). The subject of the verb changes continually. The verb itself is shifted back and forth between first, second, third person; between indicative, imperative, jussive subjunctive. The metaphorical potential of words is exploited to the limit. Personification abounds. Paradox jolts the reader's attention; *emphasis* accentuates significance; antithesis

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Williamson 1951, who uses the epithets 'Ciceronian' and 'Senecan' in this way: 'In our period the Ciceronian and the Senecan again define the extremes of style between which other styles must in turn be defined' (57).

<sup>13</sup> For accounts of Seneca's style see Summers 1910, xlii–xcv; Currie 1966, 76–87; Motto and Clark 1975; Coleman 1974; Traina 1974; Herington 1982; A. Setaioli, 'Seneca e lo stile', *ANRW* II.32.2 (1985) 776–858.

contrasts ideas or things superficially similar; *sententiae* distil from particular circumstances general principles and suspend, by way of their finality, continuity. The result is forcefulness rather than grandeur; accent on the clash rather than harmony of images and ideas; a sense of the mind thinking rather than having thought. This too, though, is simplification. It fixes to a formula, albeit a complex one, an art to which variation and flexibility are of the essence. Seneca composes in a wide range of genres each demanding a somewhat different deployment of stylistic resources: political satire, philosophical treatise, scientific treatise, *consolatio*, tragic drama, epistle. The *Epistles* especially are marked by frequent modulation of style between passages of high rhetorical intensity and other passages of more relaxed temper. Trying to define 'Senecan style' in the abstract is of limited value. The style has to be seen in action, adjusting in manner of action as it is called upon to discharge one task, then another. Senecan style is not uniform.

We have seen how, for Seneca, style reflects moral character: *talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita* ('as a man's language is his manner of life'). It should be noted also how closely, in his eyes, moral character and philosophy are related. Philosophy is in no sense a theoretical discipline but a way of life, a particular mode of thought and conduct. Philosophers are expected to practise what they preach (*faciant quae dixerint*, 108.38) like Demetrius, of truth a witness more than a teacher (*non praeceptor veri sed testis est*, 20.9). Philosophy directs us to act, not discourse (*facere docet philosophia, non dicere*, 20.2); it is, as it were, the law of life: *philosophia non vitae lex est?* (94.39). The paramount aim of philosophy is to shape virtuous character: a philosopher is a person who teaches virtue—*quaeritur utrum doceant isti virtutem an non; si non docent, ne tradunt quidem. si docent, philosophi sunt* ('The question is whether they teach virtue or not. If they don't, then they don't bestow anything. If they do, they are philosophers', 88.4). Lucilius is urged to relate whatever philosophical writings he reads immediately to ethics (*quicquid legeris ad mores statim referas*, 89.18). Seneca refers approvingly to those Stoics who insist on the indissoluble bond between the practice of virtue and philosophy (89.8): *nec philosophia sine virtute est nec sine philosophia virtus. philosophia studium virtutis est, sed per ipsam virtutem ... cohaerent inter se philosophia virtusque* ('There is no

philosophy without virtue and no virtue without philosophy. Philosophy is the pursuit of virtue through exercise of virtue ... Virtue and philosophy coalesce one into the other'). So, for Seneca, philosophy and moral character intermesh no less than do moral character and style. To reveal his philosophy requires that he reveal himself as a moral being, reveal how his mind works, reveal his 'manner of life' (*qualis vita*), which is, in turn, mirrored in his style (*talis oratio*). These correlations hold together the *Epistles to Lucilius* as a work. The style in which Seneca writes, the elements of literary and stylistic analysis, of autobiography and diary are all philosophically significant.<sup>14</sup>

'For Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius, if one marks them well, are but Essays, that is, dispersed Meditations, though conveyed in the form of Epistles.' Bacon's tendentious comment has become modern critical axiom: 'The opening for Seneca was to create the Latin philosophical essay'; 'Seneca's practice of writing essays as epistles'; 'Seneca's letters are a series of carefully organised essays on specific themes'; 'Seneca's *Letters* are moral essays, not real letters'; 'The *Epistulae Morales* are essays in disguise'.<sup>15</sup> Editions like Summers' still popular *Select Letters* (1910), in effect, create essays out of the epistolary material through anthologizing and the imposition of titles upon each epistle or part-epistle chosen for inclusion: 'Life's Tediuous Road' (*Ep.* 107); 'Evil Communications' (7); 'Old Age' (12); 'Lessons from the Wrestling School' (80). Translators adopt similar methods. The result is that, until recently, much modern criticism of the *Epistles* proceeded upon a basic misapprehension about genre.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> On the philosophical significance given to autobiography, consider *Ep.* 108. Seneca's recounting of his own early philosophical education illustrates a general point about the openness of the young to philosophy: *haec rettuli ut probarem tibi, quam vehementes haberent tirunculi impetus primos ad optima quaeque, si quis exhortaretur illos, si quis incenderet* ('I've been telling you these things to demonstrate how enthusiastically young beginners charge towards the highest type of studies if only someone encourages them, if only someone ignites their interest', 23).

<sup>15</sup> J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age* (London 1964) 184; Williamson 1951, 194; Coleman 1974, 288; K. Quinn, *Texts and Contexts: The Roman Writers and their Audience* (London 1979), 213; Campbell 1969, 21. See also Griffin 1976, 419 and Motto and Clark 1975, 3f.

<sup>16</sup> Summers 1910 includes, for instance, *Epistles* 44 and 47 but not 45 or 46. Of some epistles he includes part (e.g. 82). His selection gives a very distorted picture of the *Epistles to Lucilius*. Of translators, Campbell 1969 anthologizes; R. M. Gummere,

Seneca's epistles are not essays, are nothing like essays. The individual epistle has none of the self-sufficiency of the essay, for subjects are introduced, then, more often than not, put aside to be resumed later in the collection. Topics are explored discontinuously over a series of epistles: travel in 28, 57, 104; ill health in 54, 65, 67, 104; friendship in 9, 35, 48.2f.; grieving for the dead in 63, 99; suicide in 24.24–26, 30.15, 58.32–36, 70, and 77. Furthermore, individual epistles are themselves often thematically discontinuous: see, for instance, the changes of direction at 58.6, 16 and 25; 76.7; 83.8; 87.11. Thirdly, the relationship between author and addressee is a constituent part of every epistle and so gives to the collection a unity and continuity which single epistles often lack. Concurrently, the relationship between text and reader (other than Lucilius himself) is more oblique than is usual in the essay. Seneca is writing ostensibly for Lucilius, not the reader who must approach the correspondence as an outsider who eavesdrops, as it were, on a private discussion—Seneca likens the epistle to conversation (65.1f.; 67.2)—between Stoic adviser and his philosophical apprentice. What might seem overly didactic and technical if spoken directly to the reader is justified by the relationship of the correspondents: the form forestalls objections from the reader that one point is self-evident or another irrelevant, because the argument is intended for Lucilius who may not find them self-evident or irrelevant at all. We experience Stoicism as revealed to someone else rather than pressed upon us. We aren't lectured at; we aren't even addressed. To put it another way, epistolary form dramatises the philosophy<sup>17</sup> by presenting it in a manner close to speech within the context of a developing relationship between two persons who draw upon it for answers to problems and for moral direction as their circumstances change: as Lucilius faces lawsuits (24.1), retirement from public life (19.1–8; 22.1–3; 68), the death of a friend (63); as Seneca confronts old age (12; 26.1–5; 67.1f.; 76.2f.), illness (54;

*Seneca: Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (London and New York 1917) adds (usually inappropriate) essay-type headings. The work of Cancik 1967 and G. Maurach, 'Über ein Kapitel aus Senecas Epistelcorpus', in *Seneca als Philosoph* (Darmstadt 1975) 339–60, has now established beyond question the need to consider the relations between epistles and also the movement of the collection as a whole.

<sup>17</sup> On the 'dramatic' element in Seneca's prose writings see Hijmans 1966 and Traina 1974.

65.1f.) and the nearness of his own death (26.4–7; 54.4f.; 61; 93.6f.). Seneca insists that a philosophical text must be studied in its entirety, not in extracts. ‘Examine it as a whole’ (*sed totum corpus videris*), he urges Lucilius (100.8) who is reading Fabianus’ work on ‘Civic Duty’ (*Fabiani Papiri libros qui inscribuntur Civiliū legisse te cupidissime scribis*, 1). In 33.5 he writes, *depone istam spem, posse te summatim degustare ingenia maximorum virorum; tota tibi inspicienda sunt, tota tractanda. [continuando] res geritur et per lineamenta sua ingenii opus nectitur, ex quo nihil subduci sine ruina potest* (‘give up the hope that you can dip into the thought of outstanding men in abridged versions. You have to examine it as a whole, understand it as a whole. It has its own sequence, and the work of genius is interwoven with its own unique structure; nothing can be subtracted from it without destroying it’). Seneca’s *Epistles* ask to be read as epistles, not essays; collectively, not selectively.

*Epistle* 82 combines internal discontinuity in thematic focus and mode of discourse with multiple links to other parts of the collection. As it begins, the epistolary character of the text is particularly in evidence:

Seneca Lucilio suo salutem.

Desii iam de te esse sollicitus. ‘quem’ inquis ‘deorum sponsorem accepisti?’ eum scilicet qui neminem fallit, animum recti ac boni amatorem. in tuto pars tui melior est. potest fortuna tibi iniuriam facere; quod ad rem magis pertinet, non timeo ne tu facias tibi. i qua ire coepisti et in isto te vitae habitu compone placide, non molliter. male mihi esse malo quam molliter—‘male’ nunc sic excipe quemadmodum a populo solet dici: dure, aspere, laboriose. audire solemus sic quorundam vitam laudari quibus invidetur: ‘molliter vivit’; hoc dicunt, ‘mollis est’. paulatim enim effeminatur animus atque in similitudinem otii sui et pigritiae in qua iacet solvitur. quid ergo? viro non vel obrigescere satius est? deinde idem delicati timent cui vitam suam fecere similem. multum interest inter otium et conditivum! ‘quid ergo?’ inquis, ‘non satius est vel sic iacere quam in istis officiorum verticibus volutari?’ utraque res detestabilis est, et contractio et torpor. puto, aequae qui in odoribus iacet, mortuus est quam qui rapitur unco. otium sine litteris mors est et hominis vivi sepultura.

(*Ep.* 82.1–3)

Seneca to Lucilius, greetings.

I’m no longer anxious about you. ‘What immortal,’ you want to know, ‘is standing surety for me?’ One that never plays anyone false: a soul in love

with goodness and right. The better part of you is safe. Fortune can still do you harm; what is more to the point, I'm not worried about your harming yourself. Continue on this course you've started upon and settle yourself into a peaceful way of life, not a soft one. I prefer a troubled to a soft condition. Understand my use of the word 'troubled' in its popular sense: harsh, painful, difficult. We're used to hearing some people's lives praised and envied in these words: 'He's got it soft.' By this it's implied: 'He *is* soft.' Bit by bit the soul is emasculated till it dissolves into a state resembling the idleness and inertness in which it lies. What do you think? Isn't it preferable for a man even to be hardened? Soon these pleasure-lovers come to be terrified of the very thing to which they've made their lives akin. So much for the difference between retirement and interment! 'What?' you retort, 'Isn't inactivity preferable to being pulled here and there by the tides of public occupation?' Stress and indolence—both are objectionable. I say the man is dead who reclines in perfumed luxury no less than the corpse being dragged away with a hook. Retirement without literary work is a living death, a being buried alive!

The first sentence is short, emphatic (with the verb placed first) and surprising. Why is Seneca no longer *sollicitus* ('anxious')? What has changed? The implication is that a letter has arrived from Lucilius containing some important news to which Seneca is reacting. Exactly what has happened is not, at any point, explicitly declared. The reader is left to infer the situation from Seneca's advice about how to handle it. Clearly, the predominant theme with which he is concerned in this passage is *otium* ('retirement'), and how it should be used. Sørensen is right to suggest that Lucilius has finally fully disengaged himself from public life to devote himself to the study of philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Thus, this epistle looks back to earlier epistles in

<sup>18</sup> Sørensen 1984, 191. In 22.3 Seneca advises Lucilius to withdraw gradually from his public activities: *leni eundum via, ut quod male implicuisti, solvas potius quam abruptas* ('take a gentle path so as to untie rather than tear what you've knotted together so badly'). There are hints in 69 that Lucilius has begun this process; but in 72.3 Seneca is still urging Lucilius to free himself completely from *occupationes* ('business commitments'). He reiterates the point at the close of the epistle: *non debemus occupationibus indulgere. excludendae sunt* ('we shouldn't indulge these business distractions. They should be shut out', 11). Lucilius, clearly, is not yet settled firmly into a life of *otium*. *Epistle* 82 indicates that at long last he is. The problem Seneca is concerned with has changed: it's no longer the need to avoid *occupationes* but how to live now you have attained *otium*. After 82 Seneca does not press Lucilius to retire as he did in earlier epistles. We are meant to understand that he has retired. For a slightly different interpretation, see Griffin 1976, 348–50.



which Lucilius was encouraged to retire: ‘If you can, remove yourself from those business distractions; if you can’t, wrench yourself away. We’ve dispersed enough of our time already. Let’s begin, in old age, to pack up our baggage’ (*si potes, subduc te istis occupationibus; si minus, eripe. satis multum temporis sparsimus; incipiamus vasa in senectute colligere*, 19.1); ‘Now you see how you need to extricate yourself from those showy and pernicious business activities . . . get rid of those public duties of yours’ (*iam intellegis educendum esse te ex istis occupationibus speciosis et malis . . . id age, ut te istis officiis exuas*, 22.1; 3) ‘I agree with your plan. Conceal yourself in retirement. But at the same time, conceal your retirement itself’ (*consilio tuo accedo; absconde te in otio. sed et ipsum otium absconde*, 68.1); ‘One must resist business commitments; they’re not to be extended, but cleared out of the way’ (*resistendum est occupationibus; nec explicandae sed submovendae sunt*, 72.3). The opening of 82 is not self-sufficient; it makes full sense only when read in the light of earlier epistles. It is impossible here to disregard the importance of Lucilius as addressee and the sense of an ongoing correspondence. The theme of *otium* (‘retirement’) arises out of the correspondence itself: it was the subject of earlier epistles; it seems to have been the subject of Lucilius’ latest letter to Seneca. In addition, Lucilius is brought before the reader more vividly as Seneca’s interlocutor.<sup>19</sup> Seneca asks Lucilius questions: ‘What do you think? Isn’t it preferable for a man even to be hardened?’ (*quid ergo? viro non vel obrigescere satius est?*). Lucilius asks Seneca questions: ‘What immortal, you want to know, ‘is standing surety for me?’ (*quem inquis deorum sponsorem accepisti?*); ‘What?’ you retort, ‘Isn’t inactivity preferable to being pulled here and there by the tides of public occupation?’ (*quid ergo? inquis non satius est vel sic iacere quam in istis officiorum verticibus voluntari?*). This is more like a dialogue than an essay.

As the epistle proceeds it takes on a life of its own. Lucilius is kept more in the background. Though he is still addressed, he ceases to be an actor and becomes part of the audience. His specific situation is the catalyst for a whole chain of ideas and associations of which the proper use of *otium* was only the first. Seneca now asserts that wherever a person may go, causes for worry will accompany

<sup>19</sup> On the role of Lucilius as *adversarius*, see Motto and Clark 1975, 3.

him (4). Wherever you hide, human woes will screech about you: *quacumque te abdidideris, mala humana circumstrepent*. Retirement alone is not enough, for while it saves you from harming yourself, it cannot shield you from *fortuna* ('fortune'): *potest fortuna tibi iniuriam facere* (1). The only sure protection is philosophy, an idea Seneca presents by way of allegory:

philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis murus, quem fortuna multis machinis lacessitum non transit. in insuperabili loco stat animus qui externa deseruit et arce se sua vindicat; infra illum omne telum cadit.

(*Ep.* 82.5)

Philosophy needs to be built up around you as an impregnable wall which, though often hit by siege artillery, gives no opening to fortune. The soul occupies an insurmountable position, having abandoned everything outside, and defends itself in its own fortress. Every missile falls short of it.

Having dealt with *otium*, Seneca dismisses it to move on to a new topic. *Otium*, he implies, is only a partial remedy for Lucilius' ills; *philosophia* offers a complete cure. He explores this new theme of the necessity of philosophy. Certain people—there is no suggestion that Lucilius is one of them—claim to be able to overcome pain and the fear of death without philosophy's aid (*haec quidam putant ipsos etiam sine philosophia repressisse*, 7), but when it comes to the crunch, they can't:

magna verba excidunt, cum tortor poposcit manum, cum mors propius accessit. possis illi dicere: facile provocabas mala absentia; ecce dolor, quem tolerabilem esse dicebas; ecce mors, quam contra multa animose locutus es; sonant flagella, gladius micat:

nunc animis opus, Aenea, nunc pectore firmo.

(*Ep.* 82.7)

Their big talk stops abruptly when the torturer orders them to stretch out their hands, when death approaches nearer. Now you can say to them: 'It was easy to jeer at absent evils. Look, here is pain which you were accustomed to say was bearable. Look, here is death about which you used to speak so boldly so often. The whips crack. The sword flashes:

Now Aeneas, there's need for courage, now for strength of heart.'

The language here is very powerful: the details of the torturer, the whips, the swordblade; the personifications of death, of pain; the

repetitions (*cum ... cum*, 'when ... when'; *ecce dolor ... ecce mors*, 'Look, here is pain ... Look, here is death'); the culminating quotation from *Aeneid* 6 (261) recalling the moment when Aeneas first steps into the unfamiliar world of the dead. Seneca brings home to the reader the urgency of the need for philosophy by evoking this nightmarish scene designed to disturb, to shatter complacency. He makes his point by means of shock. But compare this passage with the beginning of the epistle. Subject has changed (from *otium* to the fear of pain and death); style has modulated (from the conversational to highly emotive evocation of scene); intensity has soared to a sudden climax. No one could have predicted the direction the epistle has taken.

Now that the reader is disturbed, his defences down, Seneca changes course again. After the horrific comes humour:

Zenon noster hac collectione utitur: 'nullum malum gloriosum est; mors autem gloriosa est; mors ergo non est malum.' profecisti! liberatus sum metu! post hoc non dubitabo porrigere cervicem. non vis severius loqui nec morituro risum movere?

(*Ep.* 82.9)

Our Zeno makes use of this argument: 'No evil is glorious; but death is glorious; therefore death is not an evil.' You've saved me! I'm freed from fear! From now on I'll not hesitate to stretch out my neck for execution. Don't you want to speak more seriously to the dying instead of making them laugh at you?

Humour is a common ingredient in the epistles.<sup>20</sup> Seneca especially likes to make fun of the games of logic played by some other philosophers (e.g. 48.6f.; 49.8). Here in 82 the humour relaxes the tension enabling a modulation in tone and style to take effect. The middle part of this epistle is quiet, rational, analytical. The reader is put at ease. The prose argues sociably with him; it doesn't attack him. This middle section is where Seneca seeks to elucidate the importance of some fundamental tenets of Stoic philosophy. What he gives the reader is not an exposition but a critique. Zeno's argument is dismissed as a joke; but while Seneca sees no value in these hair-splitting technicalities of logic, he can also take time to explain in detail how they mislead:

<sup>20</sup> On Seneca's use of humour in the *Epistles*, see Motto 1970, xv–xvi. The influence of Horace's verse epistles is likely.

'nihil' inquit 'indifferens gloriosum est; mors autem gloriosum est; ergo mors non est indifferens.' haec interrogatio vides ubi obrepat: mors non est gloriosa, sed fortiter mori gloriosum est. et cum dicis 'indifferens nihil gloriosum est,' concedo tibi ita ut dicam nihil gloriosum esse nisi circa indifferentia; tamquam indifferentia esse dico (id est nec bona nec mala) morbum, dolorem, paupertatem, exilium, mortem. nihil bonum per se gloriosum est, nihil tamen sine his.

(*Ep.* 82.10f.)

'Nothing that is indifferent,' he says, 'is glorious; but death is glorious; therefore death is not indifferent.' You see where this syllogism cheats: death is not glorious, but to die bravely is a glorious thing. When you say, 'Nothing that is indifferent is glorious,' I'll go along with you on that score, but I would add that nothing is glorious unless it has to deal with indifferent things. By 'indifferent' (that is neither good nor evil) I'm talking here about disease, pain, poverty, exile, death. None of these is glorious in itself; but there can be no glory without them.

Ultimately, this type of syllogistic 'proof' is rejected entirely: *ego non redigo ista ad legem dialecticam et ad illos artificii veterosissimi nodos. totum genus istuc exturbandum iudico, quo circumscribi se, qui interrogatur, existimat et ad confessionem perductus aliud respondet, aliud putat* ('I don't reduce those questions to a set of dialectical laws and the tangled knots of tedious trickery. I think we should throw out that whole procedure whereby someone is asked questions and made to feel he's been led into a trap; whereby he is seduced into agreement with a proposition and ends up saying one thing in answer when he really thinks something else,' 19). This wholesale dismissal of philosophical quibbling connects 82 by theme to many other epistles: 45.5–13; 48; 49.8–10; 83.8–12; 85; 87.41; 88.42–5; 102.20; 106.11; 111; 117.18–20 and 25.<sup>21</sup> The worthlessness of syllogistic reasoning is a matter Seneca comes back to again and again. He condemns it not

<sup>21</sup> Cancik 1967, 35–9 points out the thematic links between 82 and some other epistles, especially 85 and 87. But he overemphasizes book divisions and underestimates the extent of the thematic connections.

Seneca's attacks on syllogistic logic are part of a wider campaign against useless research and erudition more generally. See, for instance, his remarks in 88 about the trivial questions which occupy some literary scholars (6f.) and other specialists. In 108 Seneca contrasts the ways the philosopher and philologist approach the same text. He rejects the approach of the philologist (35) in a way that resembles closely his rejection of the methods of the logician.

just because it is ineffectual, but because it is harmful (*utinam tantum non prodessent! nocent*, 48.9). Such puzzles shrink the mind and weigh it down; they don't sharpen the intellect, they debilitate it (*minuunt et deprimunt nec, ut putatis, exacuunt, sed extenuant*, 117.19; *frangunt animum*, 82.22). Seneca seeks repeatedly to impress this upon Lucilius, to subvert his predilection for logical demonstrations. One of the most striking aspects of the *Epistles to Lucilius* is this preoccupation with the methodology of philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

The second of the two syllogisms Seneca ridicules (9f.) involves the Stoic concept of 'indifferents'. This too is allowed to take on a thematic life of its own; Seneca explains its significance at length, especially in relation to virtue (12–14). To illustrate his explanation he draws on history (death for Cato was glorious, inglorious for Decimus Junius Brutus, 12f.) and everyday experience (the same room during the day is bright, dark at night; the same metal placed in a furnace is hot, cold when immersed in water, 14). Seneca then asserts, paradoxically, that there are degrees of indifference: *est et horum, Lucili, quae appellamus media, grande discrimen. non enim sic mors indifferens est, quomodo utrum capillos pares an inpaes habeas* ('There are big differences between "indifferents" as we call them. For death is not a matter of indifference in the same way as whether or not you have your hair cut evenly,' 15). This discussion too relates closely to others in the *Epistles* concerned with 'indifferents' and the nature of the 'good': 66.5ff.; 71; 74.17f.; 76.11; 94.7f.; 109.12; 117.8f.; 118.11. In the end, Seneca argues that death should be regarded as indifferent because such a belief is psychologically conducive to virtue (17f.). It makes for courage when confronted by death to be convinced that it is of no consequence: *numquam ad virtutem exsurget, si mortem malum esse crediderit; exsurget, si putabit indifferens esse* ('never will the mind rise up to courage if it thinks death is an evil; it will rise up if it thinks it's indifferent', 17).

In the first half of the epistle death is one of several conspicuous images.<sup>23</sup> Dissipated *otium* resembles death in life: *aeque qui in odoribus*

<sup>22</sup> In addition to the letters concerned to discourage interest in trifling logical puzzles, see also *Epistles* 89, 94, and 95.

<sup>23</sup> Other prominent images include hardness (*dure, aspere, laboriose ... obrigescere*) and softness (*molliter ... molliter ... molliter vivit ... mollis est ... effeminatur ... delicati*) in 2; and the siege analogy and personification of *fortuna* in 5.

*iacet, mortuus est quam qui rapitur unco* ('the man is dead who reclines in perfumed luxury no less than the corpse being dragged away with a hook,' 3). Pain and death are the two threats which pursue the individual wherever he may conceal himself (*quae latebra est, in quam non intret metus mortis? quae ... quam non dolor territet?* 'What hiding place is there where fear of death may not enter? Where ... pain may not intimidate?' 4; *ecce dolor ... ecce mors*, 'Look, here is pain ... Look, here is death,' 7). Both syllogisms take death as their subject: *mors ergo non est malum* ('therefore death is not an evil,' 9); *ergo mors non est indifferens* ('therefore, death is not indifferent,' 10), and the subsequent examination of the doctrine of indifferents similarly highlights the issue of the place of death within that category: *mors inter illa est, quae mala quidem non sunt, tamen habent mali speciem* ('Death is one of those things which, though they're not evils, appear to be evils,' 15). The image of death seems to swell in prominence, to occupy Seneca's mind more and more until, in the second half of the epistle, as intensity starts to climb again towards a second climax, it moves to the forefront of thematic concern. Again Virgil is used to depict the sorts of terrors death is thought to hold in store:

multa enim de illa credidimus; multorum ingeniis certatum est ad augendam eius infamiam; descriptus est carcer infernus et perpetua nocte oppressa regio, in qua

ingens ianitor Orci  
ossa super recubans antro semesa cruento  
aeternum latrans exsanguis terreat umbras.

etiam cum persuaseris istas fabulas esse nec quicquam defunctis superesse quod timeant, subit alius metus: aequae enim timent ne apud inferos sint quam ne nusquam.

(Ep. 82.16)

Many things do we believe about death. Many strive by their talent to magnify death's evil reputation. They describe the infernal dungeons, the place sunk in everlasting gloom where

Orcus' immense watch-dog,  
sprawled in gore-bespattered cave on bones half gnawed  
with ceaseless baying appals the bloodless dead.

Even when you persuade them these are just stories and there's nothing left after death to be frightened of, another dread steals over them: fear of going to hell is matched by fear of going nowhere.

To instil in the reader a sense of the urgency of this problem, Seneca particularizes it, drawing for this purpose upon history. As paradigm for all human beings is the situation of the soldier faced with the prospect of imminent death in battle:

do tibi Fabios totum rei publicae bellum in unam transferentes domum. Laconas tibi ostendo in ipsis Thermopylarum angustiis positos: nec victoriam sperant nec reditum; ille locus illis sepulchrum futurus est . . . non trecentis sed omnibus mortalibus mortis timor detrahi debet.

(*Ep.* 82.20, 23)

Consider the Fabii, a single family which took over a whole war on behalf of the state. Consider the Spartans in position in the narrow pass at Thermopylae: they have no hope of victory, no hope of returning; that place will be their tomb . . . It's not just the three hundred whose fear of death must be removed, but all mankind.

The philosopher is in the position of military commander whose task it is to inspire the ranks with courage to perish willingly: *quid dicis quo inflammati in media pericula inruant? qua oratione hunc timendi consensum, quibus ingenii viribus obnixam contra te persuasionem humani generis avertis?* ('What do you say to inflame them so they rush into the midst of perils? By what sort of language do you turn aside this consensus of fear? What kind of talent is able to overcome the obdurate conviction of the entire human race?' 23). In this context, Zeno's syllogism sounds feeble and absurd. Seneca contrasts it with Leonidas' inspiring words to his men:

dices: 'quod malum est gloriosum non est; mors gloriosa est; mors ergo non malum?' o efficacem contionem! quis post hanc dubitet se infestis ingerere mucronibus et stans mori? at ille Leonidas, quam fortiter illos adlocutus est! 'sic,' inquit, 'commilitones, prandete tamquam apud inferos cenaturi.' non in ore crevit cibus, non haesit in faucibus, non elapsus est manibus: alacres et ad prandium illi promiserunt et ad cenam.

(*Ep.* 82.21)

Will you say, 'Whatever is evil is not glorious; death is glorious; therefore death is not an evil?' Oh what stirring words! Who, after listening to that,

would hesitate to throw himself against the enemy's weapons and die defending his ground? But Leonidas, how courageously he spoke to them. 'Eat your lunch, comrades,' he said, 'You're dining tonight with the dead.' They didn't choke on their food; it didn't stick in their throats or fall from their hands. Eagerly they accepted both invitations, to lunch and to dinner.

Desperate circumstances call for inspiration, not logic. Juxtaposition of Zeno's 'proof' with Leonidas' speech to his men accentuates the weakness of the one, the extraordinary power of the other. Through their mortality, Seneca implies, all humans are in such desperate circumstances. There is no time to wait on the outcome of the logicians' debates. Scorn of death, we should note, is a theme to be found running through the *Epistles* as a collection: 4.3ff.; 22.16f.; 24; 26.9ff.; 49.10f.; 54.7; 61; 77; 102.26ff. *Epistle 82* concludes with an extremely forceful passage of writing: six consecutive rhetorical questions (23) lead up to a culminating *sententia*: *magnis telis magna portenta feriuntur* ('You need mighty weapons to strike down mighty monsters'). The *portenta* ('monsters') are an apt image for the various fears harboured by men and women about death. The generalizing *sententia* is then illustrated by a particular 'historical' anecdote (24): Roman legions in Africa during the first Punic War were menaced by a giant serpent which they only managed to destroy by crushing it with mill-stones. Bluntness and weight succeeded where the sharp points of arrows and other missiles failed. The end of the epistle develops this image of logic as a sharp but feeble weapon:

et adversus mortem tu tam minuta iacularis? subula leonem excipis! acuta sunt ista quae dicis; nihil est acutius arista. quaedam inutilia et inefficacia ipsa subtilitas reddit. vale.

(*Ep.* 82.24)

Against death do you throw such puny darts? You think you can fend off a lion with an awl! Those arguments of yours are sharp; so is a stalk of grain. Some things are rendered useless and ineffectual by their very subtlety. Goodbye.

First Seneca puts a rhetorical question; then, in an exclamation, he evokes a particular imaginary situation: attack by a lion on someone armed with nothing better than an awl; next, an apparent concession (*acuta sunt ista quae dicis*, 'Those arguments of yours are sharp') is



followed by insistence that the concession was insignificant (*nihil est acutius arista*, 'so is a stalk of grain'). The last sentence is designed to leave the reader pondering: it is an emphatic, general reflection, practically a *sententia*; there is a suggestion of paradox (subtlety is normally something useful and efficacious); there is a clever use of ambiguity in the word *subtilitas* ('thinness', 'fineness', 'subtlety'); there are no parting pleasantries; a simple *vale* ('Goodbye') preserves epistolary convention without diminishing, in any way, the resonance of Seneca's closing words. The line of thought is to continue, not on the page but in the reader's mind.

*Epistle 82* is polythematic. It deals with *otium*, the necessity of philosophy, the futility of syllogistic proofs, the doctrine of 'indifferents', the fear of death and the best means of countering this fear. Through each of these themes the epistle is tied to other epistles and ultimately to the movement of the whole collection. The same themes are found in other epistles but approached from a different angle, explored in a different context. Many of Seneca's literary techniques are evident in 82: his use of potent imagery, evocative description, historical anecdote, poetical quotation, the writings of earlier philosophers, Lucilius' letters (actual or hypothetical) to initiate or change the direction of discussion; his willingness to allow dependent ideas independent thematic life; his juxtaposition of conflicting modes of thought, feeling, style: the intense and the relaxed; the shocking and the comic; logic and rhetoric; personal address and public message. The individual epistle is not an autonomous literary (or philosophical) production, but part of the wider enterprise which is the collection. Nevertheless, individual epistles do show artistic unity and completeness of a sort. This unity is not dependent on theme but wholly appropriate to epistolary form: it consists in the reproduction of a viable train of thought convincing in psychological terms if not logically systematic. *Epistle 82* is not restricted to a single theme; it treats no theme comprehensively. It preserves, however, a distinctive image of Seneca's mind.

In the *Epistles to Lucilius*, Seneca put together a whole album of such images. Epistolary form is the perfect literary vehicle for Senecan prose. Both create an impression, above all, of a mind alive. Like Seneca's prose, a series of epistles facilitates quick movement between ideas, juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, treatment of ideas separately

without subordination or explicit connectives. Frequent shifts in mood, tone, emotional intensity; preference for the natural associations of the mind over formal rules of composition; reconsideration from a new viewpoint of subjects already considered; continual breaks in continuity which invite the reader to think before going on, which call for an active intellectual and emotional response—all these effects are generated by epistolary form no less than by Senecan style. They enliven the reader's mind. The result is an original, vital work of literature which is also, in its own terms, a genuine work of philosophy. A man's use of language, argues Seneca, shows his life (*talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita*, 114.1). Literary qualities of the text become an expression of philosophy understood as a mode of life and thought. Philosophical doctrines are turned into literary motifs woven through the written text. It succeeds because philosophy and literature are combined in the man and the man has turned himself into the work.

---

## Self-scrutiny and Self-transformation in Seneca's Letters

*Catharine Edwards*

The idea of a collection of letters from a Roman senator to his equestrian friend might encourage the reader familiar with the Letters of Cicero to expect a certain kind of self-revelation.<sup>1</sup> Seneca, like Cicero, was one of the most prominent men in Rome in his own time. We might expect his letters to tell us his views on the emperor Nero, for instance, or what his motives were for retiring from public life (as he had done by the time he came to write the Letters). But readers of Seneca's Letters, at least in modern times, have often felt disappointed at his failure to provide information about himself and the world he lives in.<sup>2</sup>

Some passages in the Letters appear to convey particular personal details, such as Seneca's recollections of his father's disapproval of

This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Triennial Meeting of the Hellenic and Roman Societies held in Oxford, July 1995. I am very grateful for the thought-provoking comments offered by Christopher Gill, Miriam Griffin, Keith Hopkins, Oswyn Murray, Malcolm Schofield and Richard Sorabji. Some more recent bibliography has been added for this new edition.

<sup>1</sup> Seneca explicitly refers to Cicero's correspondence with Atticus at *Ep.* 21.4; 97; 118. On self-revelation in Cicero's Letters (e.g. *Ad Att.* 4.3), see Misch 1950, II, 363 and now Beard 2002. On self-construction through letters more generally, see Edwards 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Griffin, for instance, in her biography of Seneca, comments that for the historian, he 'is a most uncooperative author' (1976, vii). For he 'did not discuss his political career or his policies, although he wrote voluminously and in the first person' (1976, 1). Cf. Brown's comments on Augustine's *Confessions* (1967, 28).

vegetarianism (108.22).<sup>3</sup> Other passages might be read as commenting on Seneca's political career, for instance:

People may often have thought that I withdrew from public life because I had had enough of politics and was disappointed by the unfortunate and thankless position I occupied. Yet in the retreat to which I was driven by fear and exhaustion my ambition sometimes revives.

(56.9)

However much we may want to interpret such remarks as rare glimpses into the personal experience of one of Neronian Rome's most complex characters, even these few plausible details are hardly to be trusted.<sup>4</sup> Seneca's Letters, ostensibly addressed to a fellow member of the Roman elite, Lucilius, present themselves as offering one side in a philosophical dialogue between the author, an older man well versed in Stoic philosophy, and his correspondent, a somewhat younger man (though also a senior Roman administrator), keen to make philosophical progress. Apparently realistic anecdotes in such a context are never gratuitous. As Miriam Griffin comments, regretting the lack of help offered to the historian by Seneca's Letters, details of this kind invariably serve philosophical purposes; Seneca describes incidents from his own life as *exempla* (1976, 4).

While many biographies have been written on the basis of Cicero's Letters, it would be virtually impossible to write a conventional biography based on those of Seneca (Griffin's own work draws extensively on other sources). Nevertheless there is a sense in which Seneca's Letters can be seen as offering a detailed picture of the authorial self. Seneca himself presents letter-writing as a self-revelatory activity. He writes to Lucilius: 'For writing to me so often I thank you; you are revealing your self to me in the only possible way'—*te mihi ostendis* (40.1). What kind of self-revelation is meant here?

<sup>3</sup> Other passages which have been treated as self-revelatory include Seneca's description of his physical illnesses (78); of the physical inconveniences associated with aging (83.3–4); of visits to particular places such as Baiae (56) and Scipio's villa (86); his discussion of his feelings for his wife (104.3–5); his account of the influence over him of his teacher Attalus (108). For a different approach to 86 in particular, see now Henderson 2004.

<sup>4</sup> 1976, 10ff. Griffin has been rightly critical of scholars who attempt to make extensive inferences about Seneca's life from his work, though she herself incorporates some details given by Seneca as 'facts' about his life, e.g. flirtation with vegetarianism (1976, 40) and abstinence from delicacies (1976, 42).

The authorial self the reader is offered in Seneca's Letters is turned not towards the outside world of Roman political life but rather inwards. Seneca indeed explicitly turns the Ciceronian model inside out:

itaque in antecessum dabo nec faciam, quod Cicero, vir disertissimus, facere Atticum iubet, ut etiam 'si rem nullam habebit, quod in buccam venerit scribat'. numquam potest deesse, quod scribam, ut omnia illa, quae Ciceronis implent epistulas, transeam: quis candidatus laboret; quis alienis, quis suis viribus pugnet; quis consulatum fiducia Caesaris, quis Pompei, quis arcae petat; quam durus sit faenerator Caecilius, a quo minoris centesimis propinqui nummum movere non possint. sua satius est mala quam aliena tractare, se excutere et videre, quam multarum rerum candidatus sit et non suffragari. hoc est, mi Lucili, egregium, hoc securum ac liberum, nihil petere et tota fortunae comitia transire.

(118.1–3)

So I shall pay you my reply in advance but without doing what the eloquent Cicero tells Atticus to do: 'Even if you have nothing to say, write whatever comes into your head.' For there will always be something for me to write about, even if I pass over all the kinds of news with which Cicero fills his letters: which candidate is having problems, who is competing on borrowed funds and who on his own; which candidate for the consulship puts his faith in Caesar, which in Pompey—and which in his own treasure chest; what a merciless usurer Caecilius is, who cannot be made to lend a penny to his friends at less than one per cent a month. But it is better to consider one's own troubles rather than another's—to scrutinize oneself, see for how many pointless things one is a candidate, and not vote for any of them. This, my dear Lucilius, is a noble thing, which brings peace and freedom—to canvass for nothing, and to pass by all fortune's elections.

Roman public life, the primary concern of Cicero's Letters, the context in which and from which the Ciceronian persona takes its meaning, is transcended, transformed into a vocabulary of image and metaphor through which the would-be philosopher's inner life can be articulated.

Seneca, in the composition of his Letters, responds not only to the Latin literary tradition of Cicero but also to the Greek tradition of philosophical letters. The thirteen letters attributed to Plato had been in circulation for many centuries. They relate largely to Plato's activities as political advisor in Sicily. The Letters of Epicurus, founder of another philosophical school in the third century BC, were well known to Seneca who often quotes from them. These too are,

however, like the Platonic letters, essays in letter form, with little reference to the interior life of the author as an individual.<sup>5</sup> Although there was a strong philosophical tradition of concern with the well-being of the soul in the works of Plato, the Epicureans, and Stoics particularly, there is very little in the way of what might be termed self-scrutiny in any extant philosophical letters from before Seneca's time. Seneca by contrast makes extensive use of the potential of the letter form to explore the notion of the self.

This concern was not, however, peculiar to Seneca in this period. Though Seneca's Letters offer the earliest surviving extended (even if not systematic) engagement with ideas of the self from a Stoic perspective, soon afterwards were to follow the works (in Greek) of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Charles Kahn writes of 'the development of an introspective consciousness and its articulation in volitional terms in the last half-century AD' (1988, 255–9). Michel Foucault has described this phenomenon as 'souci de soi', 'care of the self', observing: 'What stands out in the texts of the first centuries ... is the insistence on the attention that should be brought to bear on oneself ... an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts' (1986, 41).<sup>6</sup> Foucault goes on to comment on the developing intensity of focus on 'the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct and purify oneself, and find salvation' (1986, 42). These concerns are insistently returned to in Seneca's Letters, as he explores strategies for dispensing with other occupations and devoting oneself to oneself (Foucault in this context quotes a phrase from *Ep.* 17.5, *sibi vacare*, which one might translate as 'to make time for oneself'). Seneca then is one of the foremost figures in a more general turn towards introspection. Indeed, writing in Latin, Seneca was to have a far greater influence on the western tradition of introspection than was Epictetus. Augustine, for instance, did not read Greek with much facility but he was familiar with Seneca's work.

Seneca's Letters thus have a particular importance in what one might term the history of autobiography. They may even be read as, in a sense, a Latin prequel to Augustine's *Confessions*, a text generally

<sup>5</sup> For the influence of Epicurus' Letters on Seneca, see Griffin 1976, 3–4.

<sup>6</sup> On this aspect of Seneca's writing, see now Veyne 2003.

regarded as the first truly autobiographical work in the western literary tradition. Stoic philosophy allows scope for a notion of human will which in many ways anticipates that to be found in Augustine. Kahn observes: 'The spiritual journey which Augustine reports in his *Confessions* is to a large extent his exploration of the concept of the human will and its responsibility for evil ... When Augustine and Aquinas go to work, they draw not only on the theological tradition but also on the Stoic theory of assent, the Latin vocabulary that links *voluntas* to *voluntarium* and free choice, and the late pagan preoccupation with our inner life of self-examination and the effort towards self-perfection that we have illustrated from Seneca and Epictetus'.<sup>7</sup>

Seneca, like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, presents himself as a Stoic (though one who draws extensively on the work of other philosophical traditions). Some of the characteristics of Stoic thought—very much the dominant philosophical school in the Roman empire at this time—certainly help to explain the concern with self-scrutiny which develops in the first and second centuries AD. The Stoics may be seen as having a special place in the history of the self<sup>8</sup>—insofar as one takes the notion of 'self' to relate to first person experience, a first person outlook on the world.<sup>9</sup> The Stoic self is essentially individual. In Stoicism, as A. A. Long observes, 'our natures are such that we fashion our own selves'—a process which requires self-interrogation and self-reflection (1991, 117).<sup>10</sup> The goal of this self-fashioning is, to use Long's words, 'learning to take the norms of nature as one's own' (1991, 118).

The essential individuality of the self in Stoicism is to be connected with the particular process by which human beings were thought by Stoics to make judgements. Humans, like animals, experience representations (a term which denotes sense impressions, the way things

<sup>7</sup> Kahn 1988, esp. 248ff. on significance of Latin terminology.

<sup>8</sup> Long comments on his 'innovative approach to the self' (1991, 103). See too Kahn 1988, 253ff.; Engberg-Pederson 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Long 1991, 103.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kahn: 'The life of the committed Stoic is thus a continual process of self-definition, of identification with the inner world that is "in our power", of deliberate detachment from the body and from the outer world that lies beyond our control' (1988, 253).

appear to the individual). The representations an individual experiences are particular to that individual. Humans, as rational agents, have the power to give or withhold assent to these representations—that is to say they do not have to act on the impulses they feel.<sup>11</sup> While in Stoic thought representations are largely conditioned by a combination of what is out there in the world and the individual's previous experience, individuals can, as part of the rational process of determining whether or not to give assent, redescribe representations (Long 1991:109). They thus have power to use representations correctly (or incorrectly). Human rationality, in Stoicism, is manifested in the individual's exercise of control over his or her own disposition towards the world.

Stoic notions of human rationality, then, might be seen as predisposing philosophical discussion to focus on the human individual's inner life. Earlier Stoic writing seems to have concentrated on the disposition of the Stoic sage, the ideal figure, whom aspiring Stoics should seek to emulate. Panaetius, however, a Stoic thinker of the second century BC who lived in Rome, seems to have shifted the focus onto the situation of the aspirant Stoic, a person still a long way from the perfection of the sage. Panaetius explicitly allowed scope for individual differences in his ethical teaching, stressing the responsibility of each individual for developing their own moral character.<sup>12</sup> This is an idea explored by Cicero and by Seneca himself, who writes in *De tranquillitate animi*:

Our duty ... will be, first to examine our own selves, then the business we shall undertake, and lastly those for whom or with whom we are undertaking it. Above all it is necessary for a man to gauge himself accurately, because we tend to think that we are able to do more than we really can ... Some men because of their modesty are quite unsuited to public life, which calls for a confident front; some because of their unbending pride are not fitted for the courtroom; some do not have their anger under control; ... some do not know how to restrain their sense of humour and cannot resist making a foolhardy joke.

(6.1–2)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Taylor 1989, 137. On the importance of the Stoic notion of assent in development of theories of the will, see Kahn 1988, 245–6.

<sup>12</sup> Misch 1950, 195ff. Cf. Long and Sedley 1987, I, 427–8 and Cic. *De off.* 1.107–17. This issue is discussed by Gill 1988.



There is a strong sense here of the different qualities of different individuals.<sup>13</sup> Thus in Stoicism there is a preoccupation with the disposition of the individual which, at least from the time of Panaetius, might attend particularly to an individual's distinctive character traits. Yet, as has often been noted, this potential for a focus on self-examination is not seriously developed until the first century AD.

The question of why such a development took place at this particular time is one that has been extensively debated. One answer might be to see the increasing interest in self-scrutiny as a response to a developing need for self-generated individual identity at a time when throughout the Roman empire social structures were becoming more fluid, causing the disruption of traditional relationships.<sup>14</sup> I shall not be directly concerned here with the vast question of how social structures in general may have changed in the context of the Roman empire. However, I hope that an examination of Seneca's strategies for representing the self in the Letters may indirectly cast light on this issue. Although the 'self' of Seneca's Letters may aspire to transcend historical circumstance, I want to argue that the Senecan self is strongly rooted in its historical context. I shall conclude my discussion with a brief look at Seneca's own position at the court of the emperor Nero in relation to his exploration of the nature of the self in the Letters.

I have so far been speaking of 'the self' in the singular, but the notion of a collection of correspondence implies the involvement of at least two selves, the author and the addressee. Thus the life of the self in this context cannot be completely interiorized. Rather there is, as Foucault describes, an interplay between care of the self and help of the other (1986, 53). There is also, at least so it seems, a concern with the particularity of the other, his status as a person long known and dear to the author.<sup>15</sup> Georg Misch, in his *History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, emphasizes the difference between Seneca's perspective and

<sup>13</sup> For Panaetius' influence on Seneca, see Brunt 1975 Appendix 12. Christopher Gill (1994) argues that concern with the specific qualities of individuals was not a major strand in Panaetius' thought.

<sup>14</sup> As Keith Hopkins has observed to me.

<sup>15</sup> As Foucault emphasizes, texts written under the principate regularly represent the interplay between care of the self and help of the other as 'blending into preexisting relations', constituting an 'intensification of existing social relations'.

Hellenistic writing which ‘proceeded from the typical man and not from the personal contact between individuals’ (1950, II, 420).<sup>16</sup>

In a collection of letters destined for publication, the responses of a wider audience are also a consideration (Seneca explicitly anticipates that his letters will bring Lucilius the fame that Cicero’s letters brought Atticus). Misch’s discussion goes on to describe Seneca’s Letters as a ‘uniting of inner experience with a self-portrayal that looks outward’ (1950, II 422). ‘The self-portrayal’, he writes, ‘retains some of the characteristics of its rhetorical origin, and the literary produce emerging from self-scrutiny is at the same time intended for the public. When Seneca retreats into his solitary conscience, he reveals to others ... a spiritual act, which he would have them imitate; and he directs the energy which he gains from introspection alike towards himself and his friend and toward the depraved world in general. This double aspect appears in his epistles for the first time as a characteristic of literary confessions; it will reappear in Augustine’s *Confessions* and in modern times, especially in Rousseau’ (1950, II, 421). We are again reminded of Seneca’s importance as a precursor of Augustine.

Misch’s discussion here refers primarily to introspection on the part of the author of the letters. The collection begins, however, by focusing on the need for Seneca’s correspondent to devote time to himself. Seneca exhorts Lucilius: *vindica te tibi*—‘claim yourself for yourself’ (1.1). A little later, Seneca sets out the ideal of self-scrutiny, here too in the second person: ‘Examine yourself, scrutinize and observe yourself in various ways; but above all consider whether you have advanced in philosophy or merely in years’ (16.2). Many other letters focus on the development of the inner life of Seneca’s correspondent (for instance 28.10 and 35.1).

Self-scrutiny is sometimes presented as a ritualised daily activity. Letter 83 purports to be a response to Lucilius’ request that Seneca give a detailed account of his day-to-day life. ‘I shall ... do as you ask and shall happily relate to you in my letters what I am doing ... I shall keep watching myself continually and—which is a very useful habit—review each day. For what makes us so bad is this, that none of us looks back on his own life’ (83.2). A more detailed account of daily self-examination appears in Seneca’s treatise *De Ira*:

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Foucault ‘this activity devoted to oneself ... constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice’ (1986, 51).

faciebat hoc Sextius, ut consummato die, cum se ad nocturnam quietem recepisset, interrogaret animum suum: ‘quod hodie malum tuum sanasti? cui vitio obstitisti? qua parte melior es?’ desinet ira et moderatior erit, quae sciet sibi cotidie ad iudicem esse veniendum. quicquam ergo pulchrius hac consuetudine excutiendi totum diem? . . . utor hac potestate et cotidie apud me causam dico.

(3.36.1–3)

Sextius used to do this, and when the day was over and he had retired to bed he would put these questions to his soul: ‘What faults of yours have you cured today? What vice have you resisted? In what way are you improved?’ Anger will cease and become more controllable when it finds it has to appear before a judge every day. Can anything be more excellent than this practice of thoroughly examining the whole day? . . . I have adopted this strategy and every day I plead my cause before myself as judge.

One of the most arresting descriptions of the process of self-examination in Seneca’s Letters makes similar use of this juridical metaphor: ‘Show yourself up,’ exhorts Seneca, ‘investigate yourself; play the part, first of the accuser, then of the judge, finally of one who pleads for the defendant. At times be hard on yourself’, *te ipse coargue, inquire in te; accusatoris primum partibus fungere, deinde iudicis, novissime deprecatoris. aliquando te offende* (28.10). The procedures of the Roman law-court are transferred into the mind of Lucilius, providing a model through which his self-scrutiny may be dramatised. This is, I think, a good example of the translation of the rituals of Roman public life into metaphors for the articulation of one’s relations to oneself of the kind Seneca adumbrates in his allusion to Cicero’s Letters.

The object of this minute self-scrutiny, as Foucault has emphasized, is not punishment, nor is there much emphasis on cultivating feelings of guilt.<sup>17</sup> Rather the goal is self-transformation. Seneca praises Lucilius, because ‘leaving all else aside, you concentrate only on making yourself each day a better man’, *ut te meliorem cotidie facias* (5.1). Lucilius’ progress in transforming himself is charted. Seneca comments at the opening of Letter 31: *Agnosco Lucilium meum; incipit, quem promiserat, exhibere*, ‘Now I recognise my Lucilius! He is starting to reveal himself as the man he promised to be’.

<sup>17</sup> The limits of this metaphor are emphasized by Foucault (1986, 61ff.).

This letter continues with an extended discussion of the process of self-transformation. At 31.11 Seneca repeats the traditional Stoic admonition that we should cease to judge human achievement by those attributes which lie under the control of Fortune. Rather individuals should be judged by their souls—*animus*. Seneca quotes the words Virgil gives to Evander, addressing Aeneas: *te quoque dignum/ finge deo*, ‘Make yourself too worthy of a god’ (*Aen.* 8.364–5). The term *fingere* has the sense of to mould or fashion.<sup>18</sup> Here we might well be reminded of Long’s emphasis on the place of self-fashioning in Stoicism (1991, 117).

The idea of the self as something which may be the product of hard work, not given but made, comes across strongly in Letter 52:

quaedam ingenia facilia, expedita, quaedam manu, quod aiunt, facienda sunt et in fundamentis suis occupata. itaque illum ego feliciorum dixerim, qui nihil negotii secum habuit, hunc quidem melius de se meruisse, qui malignitatem naturae suae vicit et ad sapientiam se non perduxit sed extraxit.

(52.6)

As regards people’s characters, some are pliable and straightforward, but others have to be worked on, hand-finished so to speak, and are concerned with the establishment of their own foundations. So I should refer to one who has never had any trouble with himself as more fortunate; but the other, I feel, has done better by himself, for he has conquered the twistedness of his own nature, and his road to wisdom has been not gentle but steep.

The self here is envisaged as a construction. A struggle allows the possibility of a victory (*vincere*)—with the self as both victor and defeated.

Lucilius then is being urged to take responsibility for himself. But the role of his advisor is also important. The Letters repeatedly emphasize the significance of philosophically informed friendship as the context for self-improvement. Seneca himself claims some credit for Lucilius’ spiritual transformation: ‘I claim you for myself. You are my creation.’ *adsero te mihi; meum opus es* (34.2). A primary indication of a good man is his ability to spend time with himself,

<sup>18</sup> NB the same word is used to mean to play a part in *Ep.* 28.10. Other words used include *formare* (50.5, cf. 112.) In 34, Seneca goes on to describe the good man as *perfectum*—‘complete’. This word of course has an etymological link with ‘making’. On the range of vocabulary used, cf. Foucault 1986, 46.

*secum morari* (2.1), but Seneca also emphasizes the dangers of solitude for the untrained, those not yet ready to be entrusted to self-scrutiny, the importance of seeking guidance from appropriate sources.<sup>19</sup>

Companions of the right kind are not, however, always available. The would-be philosopher must then create them for himself. In Letter 25.5–6 Seneca advises, imagine all your actions are being scrutinized by some great man such as Scipio, Cato, or Laelius. ‘When you have made so much progress that you have also respect for yourself also, you may send away your tutor’ (cf. 104.21–2). Another possibility offered is that Lucilius should imagine Seneca himself as present and scrutinizing his behaviour (cf. e.g. 32.1). Thus even where circumstances prevent association with good men, the would-be philosopher can still obtain some of the benefits of this social practice by staging interaction between himself and a wise man within his own imagination.

Those who have made a certain degree of philosophical progress, as we have seen, can play this part for themselves. Seneca advises in a later letter: ‘A good conscience welcomes the crowd but a bad conscience even when alone is anxious and troubled. If what you do is honourable let everybody know about it; if shameful what does it matter if no one else knows, as long as you yourself do? You are wretched if you have no respect for that witness’ (43.5).<sup>20</sup> Here, as in the judicial simile discussed earlier, the self divides in order to play a variety of roles simultaneously—one part of the self scrutinizes the other—though with no sense of the rigid hierarchy of parts of the soul that one finds particularly in Plato.

Dialogue between a more advanced philosopher and a student eager to learn was a traditional feature of Greco-Roman philosophy. Christopher Gill has suggested that interior dialogues which form such a prominent feature of Seneca’s writing (as well as that of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius) could be seen as a simple interiorization of interpersonal dialogue. Yet the very idea of *interiorizing* the

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Galen’s advice to those seeking to cure the passions—they should seek the aid of a man of good reputation, which is discussed by Foucault, 1986, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 68.6: ‘When you withdraw from the world it is not so that people will talk about you but that you may talk with yourself . . . Criticize yourself when by yourself . . . Above all, though, consider what you come to feel is your greatest weakness.’

kind of dialogue traditionally associated with communication between two or more people surely implies a highly complex notion of the self and one which is significantly different from the kind of 'self' envisaged in the writings of Plato or Aristotle. I shall return later to the significance of these shifting role-plays within the Senecan self.

As we have seen, it is not only Lucilius who is presented as engaging in the process of self-scrutiny and self-transformation. Already in Letter 6, Seneca writes of himself:

Intellego, Lucili, non emendari me tantum sed transfigurari . . . et hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translati animi, quod vitia sua, quae adhuc ignorabat, videt . . . cuperem itaque tecum communicare tam subitam mutationem mei . . . concipere animo non potes, quantum momenti adferre mihi singulos dies videam.

(6.1–3)

My dear Lucilius, I sense that I am being not just improved but transformed . . . One of the signs that my soul is in a better state is that it can see faults in itself of which it was previously ignorant . . . So I wish to tell you about this sudden change in myself . . . You cannot imagine how much progress I notice in myself each day.

Seneca himself here is presented as the object of developing self-scrutiny.

Seneca often focuses on the inadequacy of his own moral progress. He describes, for instance, travelling in a modest cart, one of many attempts to make himself content with a humble way of living, in order to free himself from the rule of Fortune. Yet still, he admits, he feels embarrassment that he may be seen by his peers travelling in this manner: 'So my progress is still inadequate' (87.4–5).

He is, he claims, himself in need of philosophical guidance: 'There is no reason you should want to come to me in order to make progress. You are making a mistake if you think that you can get any help from this source; the man who lives here is not a doctor but an invalid' (68.9). And at 71.30, Seneca observes: 'I'm still urging myself to act in accordance with my own recommendations but my exhortations are not yet followed.'

In the Letters, Seneca and Lucilius make progress together. Letter 71 concludes by picking up on the opening words of the first letter in the collection (though with an important shift from second person

singular to third person plural): 'Let us hurry then ... Let us ensure that all time becomes ours. But this cannot happen unless first of all our own selves start to become ours.' Thus, particularly as we move on from the earliest letters in the collection, Seneca does not generally present himself as speaking to Lucilius from a position of great superiority.

On a number of occasions indeed Seneca presents himself as the addressee of his own advice. At 26.7, he writes 'I say this to myself but you should imagine me saying it to you too'. The next letter develops this point further: "'What," you say, "are you giving me advice? I suppose you've already advised yourself, already corrected your own faults? Is that what leaves you free to reform others?" No ... listen to me as you would if I were talking to myself. I am admitting to you my inmost thoughts and, with you as my guest, I'm taking myself to task' (27.1). This strategy serves, in part, to present an appealing picture of Seneca as a man aware of his own faults, rather than a faultless superior offering advice to humbler persons. It also serves to complicate the notion of advisor and advised, of the letters as communication between one individual and another. The dialogue between the more advanced philosopher and the learner is interiorized—yet in such a way that an audience may listen in on the dialogue and indeed may hope to rehearse such dialogues for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Seneca's Letters are presented as the extension of an existing friendship. Foucault observes of them: 'His correspondence with Lucilius deepens a preexisting relationship between the two men ... and tends little by little to transform this spiritual guidance into a shared experience from which each derives a benefit for himself' (1986, 53). This remark perhaps implies a certain continuity of characterisation in the Letters. Other commentators have felt less at ease with the constructions of 'Seneca' and 'Lucilius' which emerge over the course of the 124 extant letters. Griffin, for instance, comments: 'We must admit that Seneca's picture of his personality in the Letters lacks plausibility and consistency' (1976, 5; cf. 417). The Letters may at first appear to offer us the script of a philosophical relationship between two members of the

<sup>21</sup> Lucilius is imagined in a similar role: at 89.23, he is told to give certain pieces of advice to the avaricious, the luxurious, the greedy. Seneca observes: 'Say these sorts of things to other people—so long as you listen when you're talking; write these sorts of things so long as you read when you're writing.'

Roman elite, yet when we look more closely at the roles each character plays we may find the situation altogether less straightforward. The final part of this paper will look at the fissures and slippages in the picture of the authorial self which emerge from Seneca's Letters.

In Letter 63, Seneca delivers a stern homily against indulging in grief. The advice he offers is of the kind which has made commentators in later centuries shrink from the coldness of ancient Stoicism: it is better, when a friend has died, not to mourn at all; one should not give in to mourning; it is better to search for a new friend, rather than to weep for the one who is lost. Yet the tone of the letter changes dramatically at 63.14: 'I who write these words to you am he who lamented so excessively my dear friend Annaeus Serenus that much against my will I must be counted among the examples of those who have been conquered by grief . . . I did not follow my own advice and was not ready when Fortune struck.' Such dramatic changes of tone introduce variety, of course. They also serve to render more sympathetic the authorial persona—again we find Seneca admitting to his own human weakness. But we might also wonder about the implications for the authorial self, when Seneca shifts voice so dramatically.

This multiplicity of voices comes across most clearly in an earlier letter. Letter 57 purports to describe Seneca's experiences returning one day from Baiae to Naples, a journey which involved passing through the dark and dusty Naples tunnel.

aliquid tamen mihi illa obscuritas, quod cogitarem, dedit; sensi quendam ictum animi et sine metu mutationem, quam insolitae rei novitas simul ac foeditas fecerat. non de me nunc tecum loquor, qui multum ab homine tolerabili, nedum a perfecto absum, sed de illo, in quem fortuna ius perdidit.

(57.3)

Yet the darkness gave me something to think about; I felt a certain leap of the mind, and a change (though with no fear), resulting from the novelty and unpleasantness of an unusual experience. Of course I am not speaking to you of myself here, for I am far from being perfect person or even someone of modest abilities; I am speaking of one who is not governed by fortune.

Seneca has briefly ventriloquized the role of the Stoic sage in order to make the point that 'there are some emotions . . . which no virtue can avoid' (cf. 71.29). Here too then Seneca writes in the first person, then distances himself from the sentiment he has just expressed—an



especially startling shift when the letter began from the allegedly personal experience of Seneca's journey through the tunnel. This passage makes explicit a strategy which is widely deployed in Seneca's letters. In drawing attention to his assumption of a role here, Seneca, I would like to argue, renders problematic all his apparently confessional statements about his own experiences and feelings.

At times in the letters Seneca plays the role of Stoic sage, at times that of a lowly aspirant to philosophical improvement. Sometimes he mimicks the voice of the traditional Roman moralist castigating the material luxuries of his fellows, sometimes that of the retired senator concerned with his estates, sometimes that of the elderly invalid. This strategy of many voices may, of course, be seen as a means for avoiding monotony, sustaining the reader's attention—a means to make philosophical instruction palatable. Yet it may also have a more serious philosophical purpose. Which is the real voice of Seneca? Is there a real voice?

One of the final letters in the collection can perhaps be made to throw light on the multiplicity of authorial voices in Seneca's Letters.

sic maxime coarguitur animus imprudens; alius prodit atque alius et, quo turpius nihil iudico, impar sibi est. magnam rem puta unum hominem agere. praeter sapientem autem nemo unum agit, ceteri multiformes sumus.

(120.22)

This is above all the sign of a foolish mind: it appears first in one form and then in another, and, which I judge worst of all, it is never like itself. Believe me, it is a great thing to play the role of one man. But nobody can act the part of a single person except the wise man: the rest of us slip from one character to another.

The ideal Seneca sets out here is that of making oneself in harmony with oneself—the Stoic notion of *constantia* or *aequabilitas*.<sup>22</sup> Yet few can aspire to this except as a very distant goal. Instead, even the would-be philosopher is made up of a mass of contradictory roles. He struggles, for instance, to bring into harmony his desire for philosophical understanding, for the calm that comes from being at one with the universe, but also his continuing involvement in

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Epictetus' question 'how may a man maintain what his *prosopon* requires on every occasion?' (1.2). This is discussed by Gill 1988, esp. 187ff.

more worldly projects—his urge to exert political influence, his desire to impress his fellows through his wealth and his power. The theatrical metaphor is suggestive.

Seneca's Letters direct attention to the self but they also serve to problematize the self in profound ways. The Senecan self is multiple, fragmented, and riven with conflict. Dramas are enacted within the self, new roles assumed at every moment. The self of Seneca's Letters, then, is only apparently revealed to the reader; ultimately it proves quite elusive.

I have already said that I am not going to attempt to answer the question of why it is only at this point in history that the potential of the philosophical tradition in general and the Stoic tradition in particular for extended exploration of the 'self' finally comes to be exploited by a range of authors, not all of them philosophers. However, Seneca's fascination with the slipperiness of the self, his urge to dramatize tensions within the self, may perhaps be related to the particularities of Neronian Rome and to the nature of Seneca's own place in the Neronian court.

There is, I think, a suggestive parallel here with the writings of Thomas More, whose self-fashioning has been brilliantly analysed by Stephen Greenblatt. More (who as a learned humanist was well read in Seneca) lived at the theatrically-obsessed court of Henry VIII. Deft politician and long-trusted advisor to the king, he was eventually executed for refusing to accept the position Henry claimed as head of the church of England. More's extensive and varied writings, like those of Seneca, may be read as testifying to a profound conflict between the ambitions of a brilliant, urbane politician, deeply enmeshed in the role-playing strategies which were inseparable from court life, and the philosopher's desire for retreat into a higher world of religious and philosophical contemplation.<sup>23</sup> More describes how he is tempted precisely by the potential for self-cancellation offered by the latter option.

In Neronian Rome, theatre was a still more dominant metaphor than in the court of Henry VIII. I have written elsewhere of the epistemological anxieties aroused among elite Romans by their ruler's desire to appear on stage—the horrible oxymoron of the

<sup>23</sup> Greenblatt 1980. I am grateful to Daniel Anderson for drawing to my attention the relevance of Greenblatt's arguments for Seneca's self-presentation.

actor-emperor (the *imperator scaenicus*, as Pliny was later to term him, *Paneg.* 46.6).<sup>24</sup> Nero's passion for the theatre was foremost among those imperial characteristics criticized by members of the Roman elite. It also gave new life to a number of theatrical images and metaphors which had traditionally been invoked in attempts to articulate the problematic relationship between emperors and those around them. It was a commonplace of ancient historical writing that the courtiers of a tyrant must always dissimulate their feelings—to reveal one's true self might prove dangerous.<sup>25</sup> Seneca himself was one of the leading figures in the drama of the Neronian court, acting as tutor to the young Nero and later as his advisor. Tacitus remarks on Seneca's ability to dissemble his true feelings in dealings with Nero (*Ann.* 14.56); for a considerable period, while others rapidly fell by the wayside, Seneca was able to maintain his influential position at Nero's court.<sup>26</sup> Surely only a master of self-concealment could have lasted so long.

The part of the loyal advisor was not the only one at which Seneca showed himself adept (or at least adept for a while). At times, he also took on the voice of the emperor himself; since Nero showed no inclination to compose appropriate speeches, Seneca wrote his speeches for him, according to Tacitus (*Tac. Ann.* 13.3). Seneca was also, of course, the author of a number of plays. We should not then be surprised if Seneca's Letters betray a skill in conjuring up a multiplicity of convincing selves nor that any notion of the 'real' Senecan self should prove elusive.

Seneca's writings, then, are part of a larger turn in the first and second centuries AD towards interiorization, a turn which develops a tendency within Stoic thought to focus on the interior disposition of the individual. Techniques of self-scrutiny are explored as a means towards self-transformation, that is to say, bringing oneself closer to the ideal of the Stoic sage. This might seem like a withdrawal from the particularities of the actual world. Yet individual articulations of this aspiration towards the transcendent state of the Stoic sage are inevitably rooted in the particular historical context in which the

<sup>24</sup> Edwards 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. *Tac. Ann.* 13.16.

<sup>26</sup> Oswyn Murray suggests the Letters should be seen as an extended attempt on Seneca's part to distance himself from Nero and his activities.

writer operates. Seneca, as I have emphasized, regularly makes use of the activities of Roman public life—law-courts, games, elections—as metaphors and images for articulating relationships *within* the self.<sup>27</sup>

But there is perhaps a more significant link with the context in which Seneca was writing and his own public role. Seneca's great talent for role-playing, which had allowed him to exercise influence in the court of Nero for so long, should, I think, be connected with his ultimate refusal to identify himself—a refusal which is in deep tension with the urge to self-scrutiny and self-transformation articulated in Seneca's Letters.

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, there is no reference to the emperor in Seneca's Letters.

---

## Imagination and Meditation in Seneca: The Example of *Praemeditatio*

*Mireille Armisen-Marchetti*

Among the various techniques of moral meditation that Stoic direction of conscience prescribes for the apprentice philosopher, *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* must be in first place or very near it. It may be summarized as ‘familiarizing oneself in imagination with misfortunes to come,’ and in particular with death. It is thus a spiritual exercise in Pierre Hadot’s sense;<sup>1</sup> and as such it was one of the meditations to which the Stoic submitted himself every day, mentally, orally, or in writing. It thus takes us to everyday Stoicism, that Stoicism which we now know to have been no mere theoretical dogma, but a constantly meditated and realized truth. However, the techniques of ancient meditation have already been well described (Rabbow 1954; I. Hadot 1969; P. Hadot 1981), and we shall not dwell on them here.

In Seneca, *praemeditatio* poses another problem, leading us to ponder once again the philosopher’s relations with Epicureanism. At bottom, *praemeditatio* is a Stoic technique; for this very reason it is the object of an attack by Epicurus. Now Seneca sometimes adopts the Stoics’ mental hygiene and preaches *praemeditatio*, but sometimes, as if he followed Epicurus, he appears to condemn and proscribe it. What is one to think of these variations? Mere muddle? Or is Seneca, as has been said in respect of other problems, mixing

<sup>1</sup> P. Hadot 1981, 14: the word ‘spiritual’ makes it clear that these exercises are the work not only of the intellect, but of the individual’s entire psychological structure.

different philosophical ‘ingredients’ to make up his moral medicines according to the needs of his current addressee? That would not be impossible, and in other instances that is how he behaves. Here, however, we shall endeavour to show that this is not the case, and that Seneca does not depart from the Stoic path. To do so, we shall place ourselves at a standpoint familiar to us, that of the imagination. If it is borne in mind that *praemeditatio* is a mental technique pertaining to the imagination, it will be easier to resolve the contradiction that appears to characterize his statements.

But for a proper understanding of the problems related to *praemeditatio* in Seneca, we must first situate it in the tradition from which it derived and the Epicurean polemic it aroused. To begin, then, let us go back in time and follow the history of Stoic *praemeditatio* and the Epicureans’ attack.

First of all, the terminology is instructive. *Praemeditari*, as the etymology indicates, is to perform the exercise of imagining possible misfortunes before they happen, so as to avoid being caught at a loss, and to fortify the mind against them in advance by meditating on the lessons of ethical philosophy on the nature of goods. But we should note that besides this word *praemeditari*, which translates *προμελετᾶν* and is already in Cicero, Seneca creates *praecogitare*, which better brings out the imaginative component of this spiritual technique.<sup>2</sup>

The principle of *praemeditatio* was supposed to have been adumbrated by Anaxagoras, who on being told that of his son’s death had replied: ‘I knew I had begotten a mortal.’ Understand: I was prepared for this misfortune, I knew it was written amongst the possibilities of nature.<sup>3</sup> Anaxagoras’ *chreia* would have success with the tragic poets: its noble dignity sounds well in the mouths of Euripides’ and Ennius’

<sup>2</sup> *Praemeditari*, *praemeditatio* are Ciceronian: cf. *Tusc.* 3.31, 32, etc. *Meditari* is used of every kind of psychological or intellectual exercise, and in particular of oratorical ones; it has been influenced by its Greek synonym *μελετᾶν*, a process made easier by the two words’ similarity. *Praemeditari* is calqued on *προμελετᾶν*: A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, 4th edn. (Paris, 1959), 393. *Praecogitare*: Sen. *Ep.* 76. 34 (and later, but in the rhetorical sense, Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 12. 9. 20). By contrast, at the substantival level, Seneca has only *praemeditatio*.

<sup>3</sup> The *chreia* is known to us from Cicero, *Tusc.* 3. 30, 58; Galen, *Hipp. et Plat.* 4. 7. 9, p. 392 M. In the same period, *praemeditatio* is attested in the Pythagorean school (*Vors.* 58 D 6).

heroes. It becomes a truth of sound sense for comedy, in Terence, and for mime, with Publilius Syrus.<sup>4</sup> But what interests us here is Anaxagoras' philosophical posterity. The first to adopt his principle, according to Cicero (*Tusc.* 3. 28, 31, 52), were the Cyrenaics, followed, under the leadership of Chrysippus, by the Stoics: Chrysippus taught that 'the blow that has not been foreseen strikes harder', *quod prouisum ante non sit, id ferire uehementius*.<sup>5</sup> From then on, preventive meditation on coming woes becomes a systematic exercise, which is seen as a characteristic of the Stoic school.

It is therefore not surprising that Stoicism's opponents attack *praemeditatio*, beginning with the Academic Carneades (at least according to Cicero),<sup>6</sup> for whom the practice of *praemeditatio* is ineffective against misfortune, and even somewhat perverse, since in order properly to imagine possible misfortunes, one must begin with other people's, and that entails what we should now call a dash of sadism! But the true opponent of *praemeditatio*, as one might expect, is Epicurus. The philosopher of pleasure goes further than Carneades: not only is *praemeditatio* ineffective, it is positively harmful, since it condemns one to live in perpetual anxiety: 'This philosopher [Epicurus] holds that . . . any evil is painful enough when it occurs, and to think always that misfortune may befall is itself a constant evil.'<sup>7</sup>

But Epicurus, no less than the Stoics, claims to be a healer of the soul. And if he refuses the prophylaxis of suffering that is *praemeditatio*, that does not mean that he abandons the individual to his grief when misfortune comes along. This Epicurean therapy must be borne in mind when in a moment we read the texts from Seneca. Epicurus (like Chrysippus and the Stoics, in fact) thinks that

<sup>4</sup> Euripides: in a lost *Theseus* of which Cicero preserves a fragment in Latin translation (*Tusc.* 3. 29–30). Ennius: in his *Telamo*: cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3. 28 and Seneca, *Pol.* 11. 2. Terence: *Phormio* 241–51. Publilius: cited by Seneca, *Tranq.* 11. 8 (*cuius potest accidere quod cuiquam potest*, 'what can befall one person can befall anyone').

<sup>5</sup> Ap. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3. 52; cf. too *SVF* iii. 482. Chrysippus, so Cicero also tells us at *Tusc.* 3. 59, was said to have commented favourably on Euripides' lines (cf. n. 4).

<sup>6</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* 3. 60. But according to Plutarch, *De Tranq. Anim.* 474 F, Carneades did allow *praemeditatio*.

<sup>7</sup> *Tusc.* 3. 32: (*Epicurus*) *censet . . . satis esse odiosum malum omne cum uenisset; qui autem semper cogitauisset accidere posse aliquid aduersi, ei fieri illud sempiternum malum.*

imagination and figuration can obey the rational will. He therefore advocates making the soul execute a double movement (Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 33): *auocatio a cogitanda molestia*, turning the thought away from present woes, followed by *reuocatio ad contemplandas uoluptates*, bringing our attention back to contemplating pleasures (obviously not so much present pleasures, which are just what we lack, as past ones: in the face of a painful present, we shall take refuge in the infinite resources of our memory).

We now have all we need to raise the delicate problem of *praemeditatio* in Seneca. The full ambiguity of the question appears as soon as we set beside each other the texts in which he alludes to this ethical technique.

*Praemeditatio*, besides functioning as a spiritual exercise *a priori*—that is to say prophylactic, before the misfortune befalls—lent itself easily to becoming a consolation theme, in the following way: the misfortune that overwhelms you and causes your suffering (so one could tell the person to be consoled) seems so great to you only because you lacked the capacity to foresee it, to fortify yourself against it by imagining it in advance. And it is thus, as a consoling argument, that *praemeditatio* makes its first appearance in Seneca's writings. To Marcia, who is mourning her son, Seneca writes: 'Whence comes then ... the obstinacy that we show in feeling grief? From our never imagining a misfortune before the moment when it comes ... He draws the sting of woes who has seen them still far off.'<sup>8</sup> The same idea is found, and in a comparable context, though many years later, in *Ep.* 63.15, where Seneca laments the death of his friend Serenus. What distresses me, he says, is that I had never imagined that Serenus, who was younger than I was, could die before me: 'I did not do so and fortune's blow caught me unawares' (*Quia non feci, inparatum subito fortuna percussit.*) The same idea again in *Ep.* 91, which is still a letter of consolation even though it concerns not a bereavement but the notorious fire at Lugdunum in the summer of 64. The news has grievously affected Liberalis, a friend of

<sup>8</sup> *Marc.* 9. 1–5: *Vnde ergo tanta nobis pertinacia in deploratione nostri ... ? Quod nihil nobis mali antequam eueniat proponimus ... Aufert uim praesentibus malis qui futura prospexit.*



Seneca's, born at Lugdunum, and the philosopher reproduces here some of the consolations he addressed to him: 'The unexpected inflicts more grief, and unfamiliarity increases the weight of misfortunes ... That is why there is nothing one ought not to foresee', *in omnia praemittendus animus*.<sup>9</sup> The continuation of the letter (91. 4–12) is too long to be reproduced here, but in it Seneca illustrates what the actual exercise of *praemeditatio* might consist of. Meditation—this is the most striking feature—here adopts a manner that is more rhetorical than philosophical. To treat the question philosophically would be to reason as follows: our birthplace does not count among real goods, which are the goods of the mind; it is one of the *adiaphora*, subject to the reign of Fortune, and its loss ought not to affect us, etc. Instead of which, without giving the slightest theoretical instruction, Seneca describes, and describes in isolation, the woes that may befall us; and this imaginative representation he illustrates with rhetorical *color*. He first lists the possible woes: exile, illnesses, wars, shipwrecks ... (91. 8); one cannot help thinking of the *topoi* developed by the rhetors in Seneca the Elder. Then he concludes with a meditation on the theme of fire, stuffed full of *exempla* and *sententiae*, not to mention various devices of *amplificatio* and *deminutio*.<sup>10</sup> But the exhortation to practise *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* also appears in Seneca outside the context of consolation, with varying treatments and on different subjects. Amidst all woes, that which must above all others be premeditated is death, because it is the source of the worst anxieties, and also because it is unavoidable, whereas the others, although possible, are not certain: *nullius rei [sc. quam mortis] meditatio tam necessaria est*, 'There is nothing on which meditation is so necessary' [as on death], *Ep.* 70. 18. The theme is found in *Consolation to Marcia* already cited (9. 1–5), but also in the

<sup>9</sup> *Ep.* 91. 3–4: *Inexpectata plus adgrauant: nouitas adicit calamitatibus pondus ... Ideo nihil nobis inprouisum esse debet: in omnia praemittendus animus.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ep.* 91. 9–12: *praemeditatio per exempla* on the impermanence of human cities: examples of towns in Asia, Achaia, Syria, Macedon, Cyprus, and Paphos destroyed by various catastrophes (Cicero, *Tusc.* 3. 56 counts the *per exempla* method among devices suited to a *praemeditatio*); listing in descending order (from the famous cities of Greece and the East to the town of Lugdunum), then ascending (from Lugdunum to famous cities and even whole regions, ending with the evocation of the end of the world under the blows of the four elements, wind, water, fire, and earth). The conclusion takes the form of a *sententia*: *omnia mortalium opera mortalitate damnata sunt.*

conclusion of book 6 of the *Quaestiones naturales* (32. 12), and on several occasions in the *Epistulae morales* ( 30. 18; 70. 18; 114. 27).

Elsewhere, we are also told that we should meditate on woes in general, without further specification.<sup>11</sup> So far, then, everything is very Stoic. And yet, besides these exhortations derived straight from the Porch,<sup>12</sup> we are astonished to discover within the texts some formulae that seem to disrupt their doctrinal coherence. Take for example *Ep.* 13: do not be troubled about what will be, writes Seneca to Lucilius. 'My recommendation to you is not to make yourself unhappy in advance, since these woes ... may never happen'. Or again, in *Ep.* 74: 'Is there a worse extravagance than to worry about the future, and, instead of awaiting the time of tribulation, invite one's troubles to come ... ?' And further texts could be adduced.<sup>13</sup>

What Seneca is saying here is that imagining the future creates useless anxiety and suffering, in sum that it may be dangerous. Now that, as we have seen, is precisely Epicurus' argument against Stoic *praemeditatio*. Seneca's phrases could pass for echoes of Epicurean polemic. Might Seneca be a weak or negligent Stoic, or even an eclectic? The question has been raised in connection with the quotations from Epicurus that end the first thirty letters to Lucilius, and has been answered in the negative by André 1969 and Grimal 1970.

However, there is another element that might strengthen the idea of a Senecan 'Epicureanism' in misfortune therapy. As a defence against suffering in the face of a present misfortune, Epicurus prescribed relieving the mind by bringing it back to the contemplation of pleasures: this was *reuocatio ad contemplantas uoluptates*. Now what does Seneca, for his part, say in other texts? Here is the advice he gives Claudius' freedman Polybius, who is in mourning for his

<sup>11</sup> *Tranq.* 11, 8; *Ep.* 76, 33–5; 78, 29 (*quicquid exspectatum est diu, leuius accidit*, 'What has long been expected falls more lightly'); 107. 3–4. One will also meditate on poverty (*Ep.* 20. 12), and human wickedness (*Ep.* 103. 1).

<sup>12</sup> We even find in Seneca Chrysippus' image of buffeting misfortune. Chrysippus, as translated by Cicero, says *quod prouisum ante non sit, id ferire uehementius*, 'What has not been anticipated strikes one more fiercely' (*Tusc.* 3. 52), and Seneca loosely paraphrases: *praecogitati mali mollis ictus uenit*, 'If a trouble has been considered in advance, the blow is mild when it comes' (*Ep.* 76. 34).

<sup>13</sup> 13. 4: *Illud tibi praecipio, ne sis miser ante tempus, cum illa ... fortasse numquam uentura sint* (cf. too 13. 7). 74. 33: *Quid autem dementius quam angere futuris nec se tormento reseruare, sed arcessere sibi miserias ... ?* Cf. also *Epp.* 78. 14 and 98. 6–7.

brother: 'Let us return in our imagination to the past; let us call up all the pleasures we have ever enjoyed and frequently relive them in our thoughts'.<sup>14</sup> And in another consolatory context, what does he write to Marullus, who has just lost his young son? Instead of giving in to present suffering, one must take pleasure in the recollection of past joys.<sup>15</sup> Is not that remarkably similar to Epicurean *reuocatio*? Our question now is thus whether the texts in which Seneca appears to condemn Stoic *praemeditatio*, like those in which he appears to prescribe *reuocatio ad contemplantas uoluptates*, are of Epicurean inspiration, and call into question the philosopher's doctrinal constancy.

We shall try to show that that is not the case, and that these texts and these formulae, however equivocal they may seem when considered in isolation, always belong to the same therapeutic project, of Stoic inspiration.

Let us begin with the first series of texts, those in which Seneca attacks imagining the future. It will be enough to engage with two of them, the most significant: *Epp.* 13 and 74.33–4. *Ep.* 13 comes at the beginning of the correspondence with Lucilius, when the pupil has not yet had the time to make much progress along the path of wisdom. But Lucilius is afraid: he fears the future, the misfortunes that may strike, and Seneca perceives the need to arm him against his worries without waiting any longer. But he warns him that his precepts will not be Stoic; they will be less ambitious, but of immediate use (13. 4). What would be truly Stoic language? Seneca does not expand, but we can understand. It would consist of saying: these future misfortunes, whose possibility causes you anxiety, Lucilius, are not real evils but *adiaphora*, and you should not let yourself be

<sup>14</sup> *Pol.* 10. 3: *itaque in praeteritum tempus animus mittendus est, et quicquid nos umquam delectauit reducendum ac frequenti cogitatione pertractandum est.* Cf. too 18. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ep.* 99. 4–5. This letter's themes are exactly parallel to those of the *Consolation to Polybius* 10. 1–3, proving that Seneca, at some twenty years' distance, expatiates on the same theme: to lament the death of the loved one is to forget that one had the opportunity to enjoy his presence while he lived (*Pol.* 10. 1; *Ep.* 99. 3). That is ingratitude (*Pol.* 10. 2; *Ep.* 99. 10). One must take pleasure in the remembrance of happinesses past (*ibid.*), for pleasures are fleeting, but their memory is for ever (*Pol.* 10. 3; *Ep.* 99. 5). There follows the allusion to Anaxagoras' *chreia* 'I knew he had to die, because he was mortal' (*Pol.* 11. 2; *Ep.* 99. 8). There are also other resemblances between these two texts on the one hand, and *Ep.* 63 on the other.

affected by them. Ambitious words! Therefore Seneca prefers to adopt a provisional pedagogy, and say to Lucilius: since you are not yet capable of knowing where the true values lie, at least stop worrying about what does not yet exist and may never do.

That might look like a condemnation of *praemeditatio*, but we can easily see that it is not really such, but only a condemnation of the uncontrolled imagination, of the *stultus*' anxiety in the face of the future, and not of a *praemeditatio* properly conducted. *Ep.* 13 does not absolutely rule out the spiritual technique of meditation on the future; it merely shows that Seneca, probably with a certain realism, does not consider it within the range of an insufficiently advanced *proficiens*.

*Ep.* 74. 33–4 enables us to take the problem further,<sup>16</sup> and to understand how Seneca conceives the psychological difference between a soul given over to anxious imagination of the future and one that exerts itself in *praemeditatio*. In what does that state consist which nowadays we call anxiety? Seneca describes it in *Ep.* 74 with the help of a medical analogy: anxiety is for the mind what the weariness preceding a not yet manifest illness or revealing a hidden one is for the body.<sup>17</sup> It is thus a sickness of the mind: we should understand that it is a passion; and indeed Seneca includes it amongst the categories of *metus*, fear, and *dolor*, grief (74. 32, 34). Fear and grief pertain to an error of judgement: they consist in taking for an evil what is only an *adiaphoron*. But in the case of anxiety about the future, the mind's fault is double, and a second error of judgement is superimposed on the first. That emerges clearly from Seneca's text: to torment oneself about a misfortune to come is to treat as a reality what is only a product of the imagination. Anxiety adds to an initial error about the ethical value of things a second error about their existence. It amounts to taking seriously not only something that does not deserve it, but something that does not even exist: to treat as felt what is only imagined. Hence the closing formula

<sup>16</sup> Same problems in *Epp.* 78. 14 and 98. 6–8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ep.* 74. 33: *quemadmodum in corporibus languorem signa praecurrunt—quaedam enim segnitia eneruis est et sine labore ullo lassitudo et oscitatio et horror membra percurrrens—sic infirmus animus multo ante quam obprimatur malis quatitur; praesumit illa et ante tempus cadit.* 'As in our bodies there are signs that precede illness—a weak inertia, fatigue not caused by work, yawning, and shivering that pervades the limbs—so the unhealthy spirit is shaken by ills long before it is overwhelmed by them; it anticipates them and collapses ahead of time.'

of *Ep.* 74: *non est autem nisi ex eo quod sentias dolor*. There is no grief, no genuine grief, except on the basis of something felt. The fault—for there really is a fault—of the anxious person must be blamed on his very will, and anxiety affects minds bound by a kind of complicity to their disease: *animos libenter aegros et captantes causas doloris*, ‘minds that enjoy being ill and seek out reasons to suffer’ (74. 34).

Nevertheless, let us not take the anxious person for a raving lunatic. The lunatic makes no distinction between the experience created by a real object and the mental image resulting from his madness: Orestes thinks he really sees the Erinyes. The anxious person, for his part, distinguishes the real object from the mere figment of his imagination; but he acts as if he did not—that is to say, he suffers. *Praemeditatio* is quite the opposite. To be sure it pertains to the imagination, but controlled imagination subservient to the rational will (whereas in anxiety it is consciousness that allows itself to be invaded by the mental image). In *praemeditatio*, the objects (misfortunes) conceived by imagination are subjected to ethical judgement, which identifies them as hazards inherent in the human condition, that is as *adiaphora*: the Stoic will imagine bereavements, wars, fires, exile, but he will summon up these representations in a deliberate fashion, and with the sole purpose of testing on them the teachings of ethics, that is to learn to see these events as possibilities, but also as *adiaphora*.

How does the question appear now? It has become clear that Seneca never had the intention of adopting Epicurus’ polemic. Epicurus condemned *praemeditatio* understood as a moral exercise, a spiritual technique; what Seneca rules out is simply the uncontrolled imagination of the *stultus* and his unjustified anxiety in the face of the future, which he never for a moment dreams of confusing with the serene meditation of the philosopher.

It remains to examine one last problem, that raised by recollection of past pleasures, prescribed by Seneca as well as by Epicurus. Must we see in this an intrusion by the Epicurean consolatory technique of *recordatio ad contemplandas uoluptates*? We may begin by noting that some texts mentioning recollection of pleasures include consolations addressed to non-Stoics: *Consolation to Polybius* 10 and *Ep.* 99. 4, the *Consolation to Marullus*. Neither Polybius nor Marullus is a sage or even a Stoic, but both have lost a loved one and are suffering. Confronted by this moral and psychological emergency, Seneca

prescribes for them a remedy borrowed from Epicurean therapy, and advises them to take refuge in contemplating their past happiness, their past *uoluptas*. If the precept is surprising in a Stoic's mouth, it is above all because *uoluptas* is a *uitium*, and the advice may seem to compromise with passion,<sup>18</sup> as if Seneca, faced with the distress of two people in mourning, forgot for a moment that he was a Stoic.

But this explanation is inadequate, for the principle of recollecting past pleasures is also found in solidly Stoic contexts such as *Ep.* 98. 11, addressed to Lucilius who has made considerable progress in his knowledge of Stoicism: 'Possession can be snatched from us, but past possession, never ... Chance robs us of the thing, but leaves us the usufruct ...'<sup>19</sup> It is no longer a question here of provisional therapy for the use of non-Stoics, but an exhortation within Seneca's paraenetic project. The interpretation, so it seems to us, may be modelled on that already presented by examining *praemeditatio* on the one hand and anxiety on the other: we have seen that for Seneca imagination of the future guided by reason cannot be dangerous, for suffering cannot result from something that is mere imagination and not a real experience. We may think that likewise representation of past happinesses, since it rests only on a mental image, is incapable of inducing a real *uoluptas*, that is to say a real passion.<sup>20</sup> What then does the happiness of remembrance consist in? We shall suppose that it pertains to *gaudium*, to blameless joy, in the category of *eupatheiai*.

<sup>18</sup> In the *Consolation to Polybius* at least (the least Stoic of the texts concerning the recall of the past), the reference is indeed to *uoluptas*: the word recurs on several occasions (*Pol.* 10. 2–3), and competes with *gaudium* and *bona*. The equivalence is enough to show that Seneca is not holding to scrupulous Stoicism. *Ep.* 99, more technical, eschews *uoluptas*.

<sup>19</sup> *Habere eripitur, habuisse numquam ... Rem nobis eripit casus, usum fructumque apud nos relinquit quem nos iniquitate desiderii perdidimus.*

<sup>20</sup> Added to this is the fact that the passion of *uoluptas* has the fearsome disadvantage of attaching itself to objects that may be snatched away from us at any moment according to the whims of Fortune. The happy memory, by contrast, is inalienable: that which is stored in our memory belongs to us for ever. *Pol.* 10. 3: *longior fideliorque est memoria uoluptatum quam praesentia* ('The memory of pleasures is more lasting and dependable than their presence'); *Ben.* 3. 4. 1: ... *cum certior nulla sit uoluptas, quam quae iam eripi non potest* ('though no pleasure is more certain, than one that cannot now be snatched away'); *Ep.* 99. 4: *nostrum est quod praeterit tempus nec quicquam est loco tutiore quam quod fuit* ('time that has passed is ours, and nothing is in a safer place than what has been').

But it must be recognized that this is no more than a hypothesis, for Seneca does not make his thinking more explicit.

However, from this examination of *praemeditatio* an overall certainty emerges, that Seneca is doctrinally coherent. When on the one hand he advocates the Stoic technique of *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*, and on the other he attacks anxious imagination of the future, he does not contradict himself, nor does he renounce Stoicism in favour of Epicureanism. In *praemeditatio*, imagination places itself in the service of reason; in anxiety, it is exactly the other way round: imagination overwhelms and sweeps away reason, with the complicity of the judgement. To put his pupil on his guard against the latter, then, does not imply mistrust of the former. In fact, we have here an example of a constant feature in Seneca and in ancient direction of conscience in general. Hadot, in his *Exercices spirituels* (1981, etc.), rightly insists that the ancient philosophies, with Stoicism in the lead, are psychagogies, that set out not only to convince but to convert, with all the spiritual and psychological consequences that implies. Hence come differences in presentation to the particular addressee, the pupil, differences that may sometimes overshadow doctrinal orthodoxy even if they do not compromise it. In showing through the example of *praemeditatio* that Seneca, despite certain ambiguous formulae, never deviated from doctrinal constancy, we merely verify that rule.

At the same time, we also gain assurance that for a Stoic there can be a philosophical use of the imagination. The Porch's psychological texts are severe on that subject, tending too easily to reduce it to a pathology of hallucination (Armisen 1979); in theory, at least, the Stoics mistrust a faculty whose independence they fear, and are afraid it will come to upset the rational functioning of the mind. Seneca himself develops an unfavourable ontology and psychology of imagination (cf. Armisen-Marchetti 1985, i. 88 ff.). But in his moral practice, when he has to confront psychological realities through direction of conscience or personal meditation, we see the philosopher, like his Stoic masters, having a more realistic recourse to all the resources of the mind and contriving a place for a 'good' imagination, an imagination controlled by the rational will, the will associated with ethical knowledge.

## SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALONSO DEL REAL, C. (ed.) (2001), *Consolatio. Nueve estudios*, Pamplona.
- ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, M. (in press), 'Tota ante oculos sortis humanae condicio ponatur: exercice moral et maîtrise des représentations mentales chez Sénèque', in *Phantasia. Il pensiero per immagini degli antichi e dei moderni* (Convegno Internazionale, Trieste, 28–30 April 2005).
- CALAME, C. (1991), 'Quand dire, c'est faire voir: l'évidence dans la rhétorique antique', *Études de lettres* 4, 3–22.
- DUMONT, J.-P. (1994), 'Sensation et perception dans la philosophie d'époque hellénistique impériale', *ANRW II.36.7*, 4718–4764 (particularly 4743–4747).
- FATTORI, M. & BIANCHI, E. (edd.) (1988), *Phantasia. Imaginatio. Atti del V Colloquio del Lessico Intelletuale Europeo*, Rome.
- HADOT, P. (1992), *La citadelle intérieure. Introduction aux Pensées de Marc Aurèle*, Paris (particularly 220–5).
- (1995), *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, Paris (particularly pp. 191–5 and 210–16). Translated by Michael Chase as *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Mass. 2002).
- (2002), *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*<sup>3</sup> (revised and augmented edition), Paris.
- LILLO REDONET, F. (2001), *Palabras contra el dolor. La consolación filosófica latina de Cicerón a Frontón*, Madrid.
- MANIERI, A. (1998), *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, Pisa/Rome.
- NEWMAN, R.J. (1989), 'Cotidie meditare: Theory and Practice of the *meditatio* in Imperial Stoicism', *ANRW II.36.3*, 1473–513.
- VOELKE, A.-J. (1993), *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme*, Fribourg/Paris (particularly Chapters 3, 4, and 5).
- WATSON, G. (1988), *Phantasia in Classical Thought*, Galway.
- 1994, 'The Concept of Phantasia from the Late Hellenistic Period to Early Neoplatonism', *ANRW II.36.7*, 4765–4810.



---

## The Will in Seneca the Younger

*Brad Inwood*

There are few words in the philosophical lexicon so slippery as ‘will’. In an attempt to track a history of the idea of will, the most we have going for us is a widely agreed upon lexical correspondence. In modern European languages, so far as I know, we can at least pick out counterparts: will, *volonté*, *volontà*, *Wille*. Push it back a bit further and you arguably add the Latin *voluntas*. But as almost everyone agrees, you cannot push this lexical correspondence back to ancient Greek, where neither *boulêsis* nor *prohairesis*, neither *dianoia* nor any other term quite does the job.<sup>1</sup>

What lies behind these lexical correspondences, though, is considerably less clear. Just what is meant by will and whether it exists—or can helpfully be talked about, if one’s sympathies run towards instrumentalism in such matters—are all controversial questions. What Anthony Kenny (Kenny 1979, vii) rightly calls ‘a view familiar in modern philosophical tradition’ holds that

I wish to thank the National Humanities Centre in North Carolina for support which made work on this topic possible. I have also received a good deal of constructive criticism on early drafts of this paper, most notably from Margaret Graver and Richard Sorabji. I am also grateful to audiences at Ohio State University, Cornell University, McMaster University, and the University of Texas at Austin, and to an anonymous referee for *Classical Philology*.

<sup>1</sup> This view is shared by all the authorities on Seneca cited in this paper. Some might argue that *prohairesis* in Epictetus does capture the idea of will. I cannot deal with Epictetus in the course of this paper, though of course his work post-dates Seneca anyway. Recent work dealing in part with Epictetus and the will includes two excellent discussions: Alberti 1999 and Bobzien 1998.

the will is a phenomenon of introspective consciousness. Volition is a mental event which precedes and causes certain human actions: its presence or absence makes the difference between voluntary actions [*sic*]. The freedom of the will is to be located in the indeterminacy of these internal volitions. The occurrence of volitions, and their freedom from causal control, is a matter of intimate experience.

Kenny rejects this conception of the will, following (as he says) Wittgenstein and Ryle. But he has captured it well. One might bring many different theories of the will to some sort of order by suggesting that they are best understood as various accounts of will in this sense. For the sake of simplicity, I would like to adopt Kenny's description of a traditional sense of the term 'will' as a reference point, adding only one further observation. Although Kenny does not emphasize it (since he dismisses the idea *a fortiori*), it is almost universally assumed by proponents of traditional will that its occurrent volitions are rooted in a faculty of the will, a distinct part of the soul or mind, a set of dispositions devoted particularly to the generation of 'volitions' in the sense just given.

The critique of the traditional sense of will in Anglophone philosophy since World War II is so familiar as to need little description. In its place there has grown up a body of theory not designed as a competing account of traditional will, but as a displacement of it, an explicit attempt to account for the 'springs of human action' (to adopt the familiar phrase used by Kenny (1979, viii) and advertised in the title of Alfred Mele's 1992 book) without it. Kenny identifies Anscombe's *Intention*, his own imperatival theory of will, and the work of Donald Davidson (at least up to the time of *Essays on Actions and Events*) as central to this project. He then sets out to track the same style of theory in Aristotle. This project aims to account for the phenomena purportedly accounted for by traditional will and rests on the principle that 'a satisfactory account of the will must relate human action to ability, desire, and belief'. A related and almost equally influential approach to the problem of the will in this tradition is that of H. Frankfurt.<sup>2</sup> For Frankfurt, will in its simplest form is our 'effective desire' and is a psychological event which many sub-human animals can share.

<sup>2</sup> Frankfurt 1971. Frankfurt's approach developed and became more subtle in his later work, and he has decisively influenced several more recent philosophers to work in the same vein (I think in particular of Bratman 1987 and Bratman 1999).

In this project, the lexical item 'will' is not supposed to stand for any single mental item. It points instead to a set of *explananda* and it indexes a theory defined in part by the denial that there is any such single mental item as traditional will which coherently accounts for them. The word 'will' as used in this project is an instrumental summary reference to a more complex set of *explanantia*. I will label it 'summary will'. Traditional will and summary will involve very different ontological claims. The corresponding philosophical psychologies cannot be reconciled by terminological stipulations. Since my aim is to consider Seneca the Younger's contribution to the topic of will, it will be important to distinguish clearly between traditional will and summary will. This has yet to be done in considerations of the philosophy of Seneca.

The significance of Seneca for the history of the will has long been appreciated, at least in broad outline. Indeed, since traditional will is generally agreed to be absent in Aristotle (Kenny 1979, vii), yet is apparently present in Augustine and in medieval philosophy,<sup>3</sup> and since our lexical correspondence only extends to Latin and not to ancient Greek, interest naturally enough turns to ancient philosophers working in Latin, of whom Seneca is one of the best, best preserved, and most influential.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of *voluntas* in Seneca's work, especially in the letters and later treatises such as *On Favours*, has long been noted. Pohlenz attempted to explain the sharp emergence of *voluntas* as a result of Seneca's Roman experience and language, regarding Augustine's use of the term as the natural culmination of this development.<sup>5</sup> *Voluntas*

<sup>3</sup> The role of Augustine is reasserted in Kahn 1988, 237–8.

<sup>4</sup> Irwin 1992 advances a significantly different view of the will in Aristotle. He argues that Aquinas was right to detect a conception of the will in Aristotle's ethics, one that does much of the same work as his own notion of *voluntas* does. But Irwin does not show that Aristotle goes beyond what I have called a summary conception of the will; rather, he argues that the largely intellectualist theory of Aristotle represents a theory of the will, but not a voluntarist theory. Perhaps so, though his analysis of *boulésis* seems open to doubt, and is certainly not one which would naturally occur to anyone not beginning from a reading of Aquinas' discussion of Aristotle. It may be that Aquinas' own explicit theory of the will is intellectualist in character; that goes beyond my competence and present interests. In this paper my concern is only with the development of the distinctively non-intellectualist theory more conventionally associated with the terms *voluntas* and 'will'.

<sup>5</sup> Pohlenz 1965, esp. 446. I take no view on the facts of the matter concerning Augustinian notions of the will, on which there is a large and contentious literature. See Rist 1994, esp. Ch. 5.

was Seneca's attempt to render the Greek *dianoia*, Pohlenz thought, and the term shifted markedly in its meaning as a result of the connotations and social practices associated with the term in Seneca's time and place (Pohlenz 1965, 445); a voluntarist theory resulted. Rist (1969, 224–8, esp. 227) attempted to mitigate this reading, claiming that 'when Seneca talks about willing and the will, what he is really concerned with is our moral character', and denies a radical discontinuity with earlier Stoic psychology. He urges a view of Senecan *voluntas* which is as innocent of traditional will as was Aristotle's theory or even Chrysippus'.<sup>6</sup>

Yet even Rist (1969, 227) concedes that Seneca's use of the term is not fully accounted for in such terms, and his reaction against Pohlenz has not been influential. The 'voluntaristic' interpretation of Seneca (which sees in him the roots of traditional will) survives in Ilsetraut Hadot's book on Seneca, though her discussion is brief (Hadot 1969, 162–3). And this view permeates A.-J. Voelke's *L'Idée de volonté dans le Stoïcisme* (Voelke 1973), being especially prominent in his chapter on Seneca. Grimal's treatment of Seneca (for example, in Grimal 1979) typically leaves it difficult to tell just what kind of will he attributes to Seneca, though an attentive reading certainly points to the traditional rather than to the summary sense.

In the early 1980s P. Donini's much closer description of Seneca highlights the role of *voluntas* in the letters and the *On Favours* (see Donini 1982, 202–3); Donini's frank reference to Seneca's substitution of *voluntas* for Zenonian rationality underpins his bold claim that 'Seneca's notion of *voluntas* is a genuine discovery, one which cannot be contained in any version of Stoic philosophy, and not even, truth to tell, in any version of Platonism'. Shortly thereafter, A. Dihle, searching for the roots of Augustinian (that is, traditional) will focuses briefly on Seneca, noting the same tendencies (Dihle 1982, 134–5, 142). He summarizes Seneca's position as a 'vague voluntarism'. Pohlenz's hypothesis of Roman cultural influence is developed with special emphasis on the impact of Roman law. Like Pohlenz, Dihle sees Roman culture as pushing Seneca in the direction of voluntarism, against the resistance of the 'intellectualism' of the

<sup>6</sup> The fullest attempt to show that earlier Stoic psychology amounts to a merely summary treatment of the will is in Inwood 1985, Ch. 2–3.

predominantly Greek philosophical tradition. Kahn's short discussion of Seneca (Kahn 1988, 254–5) aligns itself closely with the voluntaristic and culturally determinist view of Pohlenz, Voelke, and Dihle. Despite the protest against Pohlenz registered by Rist,<sup>7</sup> there has been a remarkably homogeneous view of this issue.

It is time to reassess Seneca's contribution to the problem of the will.<sup>8</sup> The urgency of doing so is reinforced by the growing realization that earlier Stoics, especially Chrysippus, should be aligned with Plato and (even more clearly) with Aristotle in holding a merely summary theory of the will. The contrast between traditional will and summary will is much more helpful and revealing than the polarity 'Greek intellectualism vs. Roman voluntarism'. We are looking, then, for clear evidence of traditional will, in contrast to summary will. A review of recent discussions reveals broad agreement about the relevant evidence. The later works of Seneca are the principal focus and the key illustrative texts, the 'smoking guns' invoked to establish Seneca's 'new' emphasis on the will, come from the *Letters*. There are variations, of course, but as one reads Pohlenz, Hadot, Voelke, Dihle, Kahn, and even Donini a cluster of five proof texts emerges, each of which is invoked by at least two authorities: Seneca, *Letters* 34.3,<sup>9</sup> 37.5,<sup>10</sup> 71.36,<sup>11</sup> 80.4,<sup>12</sup> and 81.13.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Part of the reason why Rist's view has been ignored is that it is too extreme—for it is not the case, as Rist claims, 'that neither Seneca nor Epictetus has made any significant variation on the doctrine of the Old Stoa relating to willing and knowing' (Rist 1969, 231–2).

<sup>8</sup> Since my concern is to deal with Seneca's contribution, I pay no attention here to Epictetus, whose work came far too late to influence Seneca. There has, of course, been a tradition of bringing Epictetus' notion of *prohairesis* into discussions of Senecan *voluntas* (see, e.g., Kahn 1988; Rist 1994, esp. 187). But since there is no evidence whatsoever that earlier Stoics, or indeed any philosopher who might have influenced Seneca, anticipated his use of the term, such speculation cannot contribute to an understanding of Seneca's usage.

<sup>9</sup> Pohlenz 1965, 445; Hadot 1969, 163; Voelke 1973, 170.

<sup>10</sup> Pohlenz 1965, 445; Voelke 1973, 176; Dihle 1982, 134. See Rist 1969, 225.

<sup>11</sup> Pohlenz 1965, 445; Hadot 1969, 163; Voelke 1973, 170; Dihle 1982, 135. See Rist 1969, 226.

<sup>12</sup> Pohlenz 1965, 445; Voelke 1973, 179; Dihle 1982, 135; Donini 1982, 202; Kahn 1988, 254. See Rist 1969, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Pohlenz 1965, 446; Hadot 1969, 163; Voelke 1973, 175; Donini 1982, 134, 203. See Rist 1969, 225–6.

Let us begin with 34.3 and 71.36. In the former Seneca says: ‘the *pars magna* of goodness is wanting (*velle*) to become good’, and in the latter: ‘the *pars magna* of moral progress is wanting (*velle*) to make progress’. Here, according to Pohlenz, *voluntas* is made into the decisive factor in moral improvement, and his very wording is echoed closely by Hadot; Voelke takes the same view of the significance of these texts: will is a distinct psychological force, so distinct that it can be recognized as a necessary condition for moral progress (*bonitas* in 34.3, *profectus* in 71.36).<sup>14</sup> These critics see will as a distinct mental event here. But why? Consider 34.3 more closely. Seneca is describing with some pride his efforts to improve his friend Lucilius:

Meum opus es. Ego cum vidissem indolem tuam, inieci manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed subinde incitavi; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem. ‘Quid aliud?’ inquis, ‘adhuc volo.’ In hoc plurimum est, non sic quomodo principia totius operis dimidium occupare dicuntur. Ista res animo constat; itaque pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum.

You are my handiwork. When I noticed your potential, I got to work on you, exhorted you, spurred you on, and did not allow you to progress slowly; I drove you constantly. And even now I do the same, but now I am exhorting someone who is already in the race and encouraging me in return. You say, ‘what else [would you expect]? I still want it.’ Here that is the most important thing, and not just in the proverbial sense that the beginnings are half of the whole. This business turns upon the mind. And so the greater part of goodness is wanting to become good.

Is there a traditional will at work here? Hardly. Seneca merely claims that desire for a given result is crucial, especially when the matter in hand is intrinsically mental. In the much more complex letter (*Ep.* 71), Seneca makes the same point while encouraging Lucilius to persevere with moral progress despite the backsliding which is inevitable whenever one relaxes one’s efforts (*Ep.* 71.36):

Instemus itaque et perseveremus; plus quam profligavimus restat, sed magna pars est profectus velle proficere. Huius rei conscius mihi sum: volo et mente tota volo.

<sup>14</sup> Dihle 1982, 240, n. 84 correctly sees that 34.3 presumes a traditional psychology and that *voluntas* can sometimes mean nothing more than ‘wish’ or ‘desire’, though he wrongly limits that meaning to the tragedies.

Let us press on and stick to it. There is more ahead of us than we have yet wasted. But a crucial part of making progress is wanting to—and this I am aware of, that I want it and want it with all my mind.

This is one of Dihle's proof texts for 'vague voluntarism'.<sup>15</sup> Here too one might note that the wanting in question is for something mental or psychological. It is second-order wanting, which will be important, but it is not at all clear that we have here a distinct mental act rooted in a special faculty.

Dihle goes further when considering another popular proof text (*Ep.* 37.4–5). He sees Seneca as progressing from 'traditional Stoic intellectualism' to the introduction of 'an independent act of the will rather than reason itself', and he explicitly refuses an explanation of this phenomenon. Seneca did realize that will should be grasped 'independently of both cognition and irrational impulse' (Dihle 1982, 134–5). This closely follows Pohlenz' assessment, and Voelke (1973, 175–6) seems to take this one step further, regarding the passage as proof that human will can be an irreducible mystery: 'ailleurs il affirme que la conscience ne pénètre jamais jusqu'aux racines du vouloir'. He claims that this passage shows the 'irréductibilité du vouloir au savoir'. What does Seneca say to provoke such an assessment? That if you want to master all, you must submit yourself to reason. Reason will teach you what to undertake and how to go at it and will keep you from just blundering into things: 'You won't be able to show me anybody who knows how he came to want what he wants; he isn't brought there by planning but driven there by impulses.' ('Neminem mihi dabis qui sciat quomodo quod vult coeperit velle: non consilio adductus illo sed impetu inpactus est.')

The cure for unreflective desires is reason, i.e., thinking and planning.<sup>16</sup> If you look around, you won't find people who know how they have come to have the desires they do. But that situation is a mark of failure. Fools are in a muddle, after all, and Seneca is urging that we take control and develop the self-knowledge we need in order to improve ourselves. There doesn't seem to be any evidence of traditional will here.

What about 80.4? 'And what *do* you need to become good? The desire.' ('Quid tibi opus est ut sis bonus? Velle.') Seneca is celebrating

<sup>15</sup> Dihle 1982, 135; see 240 n. 86. Dihle also invokes 80.4 in this sense, for which see below.

<sup>16</sup> Rist 1969, 225 is right to reject Pohlenz's reading of this text, but is wrong, I think, in taking it to be strictly in accordance with the orthodox Stoic analysis of action. In particular, it is unlikely that *impulsus* here represents *hormê*.

the benefits of social isolation—everyone who could bother him is off watching the ball game and he is left in peace. The distant noise of the crowd impinges but does not really upset him; for it merely makes him reflect on how much effort is put into physical improvement and how little into psychological betterment. A particular contrast lies in the dependence of the body on other people and external resources: physical training is far from autonomous. But mental training is. Sportsmen need a lot of food, drink, oil, and training. Moral improvement comes without *apparatus* and without *impensa* (*Ep.* 80.4):

Quidquid facere te potest bonum tecum est. Quid tibi opus est ut sis bonus? Velle. Quid autem melius potes velle quam eripere te huic servituti quae omnes premit . . . ?

Whatever you need for becoming good is with you. And what *do* you need to become good? The desire. And what can you more readily desire than to remove yourself from the servitude which oppresses everyone else . . . ?

It is in contrast to the enormous and tyrannical demands of physical training that Seneca says ‘all you need is the desire’. It is not plausible to take this as a claim that desire—or will—is totally self-sufficient for moral progress; the point in context is rhetorical. Seneca wants to stress the importance of inner self-sufficiency, and the resolution to improve is the best indication of that. Elsewhere he will emphasize the need for advice, for friends, for philosophical guidance. Here he wants to argue, rhetorically to be sure (but this is, after all, the finale to Book 9 of the Letters and Seneca can claim a fitting rhetorical licence), that turning inward is freedom, that one’s larger social context and one’s body are marks of slavery. Notice the trope: ‘And what can you more readily desire than to remove yourself from the servitude which oppresses everyone else?’ Freedom is the most desirable thing, so this rhetorical question packs great power. But what ties it to its context is the one word, *velle*, which some have wanted to take as evidence of an entirely new theory of the will. It is only by ignoring the context and the nature of Seneca’s argument that one can find in this passage clear evidence of a traditional will.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Again, Rist 1969, 224 rightly rejects Pohlenz’ reading but is insufficiently subtle in his own. That Donini 1982, 202, Voelke 1973, 179, and Dihle 1982, 135 and n. 86 can see voluntarism, even ‘vague voluntarism’ here is powerful testimony to a belief



Finally we turn to *Letter 81*, the ‘appendix’ to Seneca’s treatise *On Favours*. Elsewhere (Inwood 1995, esp. 249–54) I have discussed the argument of this letter, but the essential point of 81.13 needs to be reasserted. The slogan *velle non discitur*, which is so often taken out of context,<sup>18</sup> underlines the importance of know-how in the life of the sage. Only the wise man knows how to be grateful and to repay a favour. A non-sage can only do his best. The difference between the two is the whole point of this passage (which is in the midst of Seneca’s explication of the paradox that only the wise man is grateful), so it only makes sense to focus on the point of contrast between the wise man and the fool. One knows how and the other does not, and Seneca goes on to tell Lucilius how the sage does what he does. The shared feature of wise man and fool is their willingness—their *voluntas*—to repay the favour. So Seneca does not want to talk about how to acquire that. When he says *velle non discitur*, he is not claiming that our traditional will is immune to cognitive causation. He is saying no more than that in his contrast between sage and fool (where the fool is *ex hypothesi* a well-intentioned moral agent lacking only that wisdom which sages alone can have) the willingness or desire to repay a favour is not what is at issue. But that is only because Seneca’s self-defined interests here are limited, not because he is moving towards a theory of traditional will. In saying that the basic desire to act decently is not learned in the way that moral know-how is learned, Seneca has not moved beyond Aristotle’s position. There is nothing here which suggests a distinct faculty or specially reserved set of dispositions whose function it is to generate acts of volition.

So much for the allegedly best evidence for traditional will.<sup>19</sup> As far as these key texts are concerned we have no reason to see anything

in Seneca’s commitment to traditional will which is prior to the most cursory reading of the evidence. On the other hand, this usage may fit better into another pattern: sometimes the terms *voluntas* and *velle* can be translated as ‘resolve’ or ‘intend’ (though ‘desire’ may be a more apt sense in these cases). See, e.g., *Ben.* 3.21.2, 3.30.1, 5.4.1, 5.12.7, 5.14.2; *Qu. Nat.* 2.38.3; *Ad Marciam de consolatione* 23.2 (cf. *Ep.* 70.21, 77.6); *Ep.* 95.8, 70.21, 77.6. A string of passages from *On Anger* (1.8.1, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.35) could also in principle be brought under the meaning ‘resolve’, though it seems that here the real work is being done by the terms ‘judgement’ and ‘decision’.

<sup>18</sup> Even Rist 1969, 225–6 exploits the passage to make a larger point not warranted by the run of the argument.

<sup>19</sup> The *De beneficiis* has also been seen as a *locus* of the traditional will, but only Donini 1982 has attended to the question in any detail. Although the book has a

but summary will in Seneca, and his position is to that extent like Aristotle's or Chrysippus'. But that cannot be the whole story, and it is wrong to claim that there is nothing new or interesting in Seneca's theory of the will. Those who have seen in Seneca's work the beginnings of a traditional will have, I suspect, been encouraged by some genuine features of his work. But in order to see which features of his work might be exploited as evidence of traditional will, we will need to detach ourselves from the lexical framework within which this whole debate has been conducted so far (for *voluntas* seldom means much more than considered desire or willingness). We will have to stop looking for it under the traditional label and cast our net more widely. What we find, I think, is much more interesting. Even though Seneca does not really help to invent the traditional will (for we find nothing inconsistent with summary will), his work contains features which might well have helped to inspire those who did. But we will not find those key ideas isolated under easily recognizable labels.<sup>20</sup>

Instead, I suggest that we should look for Seneca's indirect and unintended contribution to thinking about traditional will in his reflections on mental causation, self-control, self-awareness, and self-shaping. When Seneca emphasizes our relationship to our own selves, when he focusses on how we treat our own character and temperament as things on which we can reflect and act, on which we can have causal impact, then despite the fact that he is still working within the confines of summary will, he may nevertheless be contributing to the development of a traditional sense of will; certainly he is making it easier for modern critics to interpret him as doing so. It is the second-order quality of our mental lives (that is, when the mind takes itself as its own object) which plays the most important

number of distinctive features dealing with Seneca's view of human motivation, the use of *voluntas* in it is clearly compatible with summary will.

<sup>20</sup> Not even under the label 'assent', which Voelke 1973, Ch. 3 and Kahn 1988, 245–6 treat as a possible forerunner of the traditional will. But that interest is misplaced, since the earlier Stoic theory is clearly a summary theory of the will. In Seneca, the mental event most clearly associable with will is not assent, and the more carefully one looks at the use Seneca makes of the early Stoic notion of assent, the harder it is to see in it any significant development towards the idea of traditional will. (Assent is, of course, a mental event of considerable importance to Seneca in various contexts, e.g., in *Ep.* 113 and in the early chapters of *De Ira* 2.)

role in constructing the will,<sup>21</sup> and Seneca, though hardly unique in his awareness of this aspect of mental life, stands out for the frequency and explicitness of his interest.<sup>22</sup>

Seneca is not, of course, a professional philosopher and teacher, with commitments to the full articulation of theory and to the improvement of other people's souls; this may contribute to his greater concentration on self-improvement and self-shaping,<sup>23</sup> and on the impact one can have on oneself.<sup>24</sup> And the tendency to do so is pervasive; it is found throughout his career, unlike the use of the term *voluntas*. As early as the *Consolation to Marcia*, written in the reign of Caligula,<sup>25</sup> Seneca can say (8.3): 'Now you are your own guardian; but there there is a big difference between permitting yourself to grieve and ordering yourself to do so.' ('Nunc te ipsa custodis; multum autem interest utrum tibi permittas maerere an imperes.'). In *On the Shortness of Life* (written between 48 and 55) Seneca shows how wide-ranging this interest is, when he harnesses to the theme of self-reflection and self-assessment the Stoic metaphysical analysis of time (sec. 10). In *On Tranquillity* we have an illustration of the relationship between self-knowledge and self-management: in section 6, Seneca emphasizes that we need to start from

<sup>21</sup> I am aware of the broad similarity between Senecan summary 'will', as I propose to understand it in what follows, and the views about the importance of second-order desires in the work of Frankfurt (see n. 2 above and Inwood 2005, Ch. 9). It would be reckless to overestimate the similarities, but they are nevertheless undeniable. How to account for them? It is tempting to diagnose a simple case of reinvention of the wheel. Frankfurt and Seneca may simply be making comparably acute observations of fundamentally similar moral phenomena. Historical influence can, I think, safely be ruled out. Similarly, the fact that his analysis of the relevant phenomena of mental life is so suggestive of some features of traditional will ought to remind us that, after all, the *explananda* are the same for both summary and traditional will. The philosophical superiority of summary will lies, in my view, in its greater simplicity and economy. The historical superiority of the claim that Seneca does not go beyond summary will lies in the fact that his predecessors in the school and outside it did not, and that there is no evidence at all that Seneca innovated, or even thought of himself as doing so.

<sup>22</sup> Important texts on self-shaping: *Ep.* 11, 16, 76.34 (*praemeditatio*), 80, 83, 90.27 (*artifex vitae*), 91.15–6, 98.4.

<sup>23</sup> The craft of self-shaping is still practiced among psychologists. For a range of contemporary perspectives and clinical practices, see, e.g., Wegner and Pennebaker 1993.

<sup>24</sup> When he does think primarily of someone else, as often happens in the letters to Lucilius, he will emphasize his causal relationship to him: 'you are my handiwork,' as he once said to his friend (*Ep.* 34.2).

<sup>25</sup> For all works I follow Griffin's dating, Appendix A in Griffin 1992.

self-inspection (*inspicere . . . nosmet ipsos*) and self-assessment (*se ipsum aestimare*) before analyzing the other relevant aspects of our situation: the tasks we set ourselves and the other people we have to deal with. Self-shaping and the self-conscious management of the relationship between self and others is crucial to achieving tranquillity (see esp. sec. 17).

But the treatise *On Anger* is the most extensive reflection on self-shaping in Seneca's corpus, concentrating, as any treatment of anger would tend to do, on self-control.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the work Seneca shows an acute awareness of the importance of our initial responses to provocation, and of the need to manage them rather than to deny them.<sup>27</sup> This practical goal—the development of an internalized ability to eliminate passions—leads Seneca to take a particular interest in the Stoic theory of *propatheiai* (2.1–4, 1.16.7). And when he turns his attention to remedies, he divides his efforts between character formation (the prevention of irascibility as a character trait) and instruction on how to react under provocation. When discussing character formation Seneca divides his attentions between the shaping of children's characters as they grow up (2.19–21)—actions carried out on others—and advice to adults for shaping themselves.

Seneca's interest in self-shaping continues throughout his career, and there are important reflections on it in his latest works, in the *Natural Questions* (e.g., 2.59.3, 6.2.1), in the *Letters*, and in the socially oriented *On Favours*. For our purposes, we need to concentrate on themes and language which establish the relevance of this to a mental event such as the will. There is a lot to choose from, but in the limited space available I will focus on the following: the language of self-directed commands; explicitly second-order psychological processes; and the role of judgement (*iudicium* and *arbitrium*).

<sup>26</sup> See especially D. Zillman, 'Mental Control of Angry Aggression', and D. M. Tice and R. F. Baumeister 'Controlling Anger: Self-Induced Emotional Change', Chs. 17 and 18 in Wegner and Pekkebakker 1993. For reflection on the utility in anger-control of the self-conscious manipulation of the description under which one sees things, see Kennett and Smith 1996. In the *De Ira* Seneca too shows an interest in this particular technique.

<sup>27</sup> This theme also appears clearly in *Helv.* 17.1–2, where Seneca concedes (un-Stoically) to his mother that grief is not *in nostra potestate* and argues against mere distraction from grief, on the grounds that admitting its power and defeating it by reason is a more stable resolution.

I begin with self-directed commands. Early on Seneca marked the difference between allowing oneself to feel something and ordering oneself to do so; I am thinking of the passage of the *Consolation to Marcia* mentioned above. The same ideas are developed many years later in *Letter 99.15–21*: we can either allow tears to fall or (under the influence of socially inculcated conceptions) order them to fall. The naturally occurring tears, the ones we can permit but do not order, are said to come *nolentibus nobis* (99.19). This echoes Seneca's view of uncontrollable reactions in the *On Anger* (see <non> *in sciiis nobis*, 2.1.1; *non voluntate nostra, in nostra potestate*, 2.2.1; *voluntarium vitium*, 2.2.2; *motus ... animorum moveri nolentium*, 2.2.5, etc.) where in-principle controllability (rather than mere causation by one's own desires and beliefs) is taken as a mark of voluntariness (see Inwood 1993, esp. 176). A similar correlation of self-command with self-control and rational reflection is apparent in *Letter 116.1*:

Utrum satius sit modicos habere adfectus an nullos saepe quaesitum est. Nostri illos expellunt, Peripatetici temperant. Ego non video quomodo salubris esse aut utilis possit ulla mediocritas morbi. Noli timere: nihil eorum quae tibi non vis negari eripio. Facilem me indulgentemque praebebo rebus ad quas tendis et quas aut necessarias vitae aut utiles aut iucundas putas: detraham vitium. Nam cum tibi cupere interdixero, velle permittam, ut eadem illa intrepidus facias, ut certiore consilio, ut voluptates ipsas magis sentias: quidni ad te magis perventurae sint si illis imperabis quam si servies?

The question has often been put whether it is better to have moderate passions or none. Our school drives them out, the Peripatetics moderate them. I do not see how any moderately diseased state can be healthy or useful. But never fear: I am not depriving you of anything that you aren't willing to have denied to you. I will show myself to be easy-going and indulgent with regard to the things you pursue and which you think to be necessary to life or useful or pleasant. It is the vice which I will remove. For though I forbid you to desire I will permit you to want, so that you can do the same things, but without fear and with a surer counsel, and so that you can better perceive the pleasures themselves. And why shouldn't they make a bigger impact on you if you give them orders rather than taking orders from them?

The language of self-command is used in two different modes. Sometimes Seneca uses explicitly reflexive language (e.g. *De Ira*

2.12.4)<sup>28</sup> where the command is both given and accepted by either the agent or some significant psychological part of the agent; and at other times one part of the soul gives an order either to another part or to the agent as a whole (e.g. *De Ira* 2.32).<sup>29</sup> In either mode the effect is the same. Seneca is in most such cases<sup>30</sup> isolating a mental event which has an important, if not decisive, bearing on action and ascriptions of responsibility. This is clear at *On Favours* 5.7.5 where Seneca asks, ‘Whom will you admire more than the man who commands himself, who has himself in his own power?’ (‘Quem magis admiraberis, quam qui imperat sibi, quam qui se habet in potestate?’) It is even clearer in *Letter* 78.2 where Seneca describes his own resolution to live despite suicidal despair at his prolonged ill health:

Saepe impetum cepi adrumpendae vitae: patris me indulgentissimi senectus retinuit. Cogitavi enim non quam fortiter ego mori possem, sed quam ille fortiter desiderare non posset. Itaque imperavi mihi ut viverem; aliquando enim et vivere fortiter facere est.

Often I formed an impulse to kill myself, but the age of my most loving father stopped me. I thought not of how bravely I could die, but of how bravely he would not be able to bear the loss. And so I ordered myself to live, for sometimes it is an act of courage to live, too.

In view of his own despair, this is what most of us would call an act of will. We can see the same connection of self-command with will in a passage of the *On Anger* (2.12.3–4):

‘Non potest’ inquit ‘omnis ex animo ira tolli, nec hoc hominis natura patitur.’ Atqui nihil est tam difficile et arduum quod non humana mens vincat et in familiaritatem perducatur adsidua meditatio, nullique sunt tam feri et sui iuris adfectus ut non disciplina perdomentur. Quodcumque sibi imperavit animus optinuit: quidam ne umquam riderent consecuti sunt; vino quidam, alii venere, quidam omni umore interdixere corporibus; alius

<sup>28</sup> *De Ira* 2.12.4, 3.13.7, *Ben.* 5.7.5, *Ep.* 26.3, 52.14, 70.25, 78.2, 95.18, 104.3, 117.23.

<sup>29</sup> *De Ira* 1.9.2, 2.35.2, 3.23.4, *Tranq.* 2.8, *Helv.* 18.9, *Ben.* 5.20.7, *Ep.* 18.3, 26.3, 65.1, 66.32, 85.32, 88.29, 90.19, 92.9 and 26, 106.10, 107.6.

<sup>30</sup> In some of the texts it is hard to be certain whether a distinct event is envisaged; in some cases we may be dealing with metaphorical descriptions of internal dispositions of the soul. But many if not most of these texts should, I think, be taken literally, and the others form part of a more general discourse about self-shaping and self-control.

contentus brevi somno vigiliam indefatigabilem extendit; didicerunt tenuissimis et adversis funibus currere et ingentia vixque humanis toleranda viribus onera portare et in immensam altitudinem mergi ac sine ulla respirandi vice perpeti maria. Mille sunt alia in quibus pertinacia impedimentum omne transcendit ostenditque nihil esse difficile cuius sibi ipsa mens patientiam indiceret.

[The Peripatetic] says, 'one cannot remove anger completely from the soul; human nature just doesn't admit of that.' But there is nothing so difficult and demanding that the human mind cannot master it and by constant practice make it habitual; no passions are so fierce and autonomous that they cannot be tamed by training. The soul accomplishes whatever it commands itself to do. Some people have succeeded in never laughing. Some people have completely deprived their bodies of wine, others of sex, others of all forms of liquid. Some other man is content with very little sleep and can stay awake indefinitely without fatigue. Others have learned to run on slender, slanting ropes and to carry huge loads scarcely bearable by human strength, or to dive to incredible depths and endure the sea without pause for breath. There are a thousand other cases where persistence overcomes every obstacle and demonstrates that nothing is difficult if the mind tells itself to endure it.

What we would without hesitation describe as an act of will, and indeed think of as paradigm instances of will-power, are here portrayed as self-directed commands issued in the pursuit of moral self-control and character improvement. Here we have mental events, acts of 'will', despite the absence of the obvious label which connects readily to modern lexical correspondences. For Seneca, then, it is self-directed acts of command which are acts of 'will'.

In contemporary discussions it is not unusual to look to second-order psychological phenomena in order to isolate what is distinctive about human mental processes as against those shared with animals; the best known such contemporary treatment is that of Frankfurt and his followers (see nn. 2 and 21 above), and in his seminal discussion, Frankfurt 1971, he astutely picks out a form of second-orderness as being central to the difference between persons and mere animals. Indeed, one can concede that all relatively complex vertebrates desire and even believe; but only humans, perhaps, can want effectively to want things and work at believing things. Second-orderness in this sense is common in Seneca. At the opening of *Letter* 61 he urges:

Desinamus quod voluimus velle. Ego certe id ago <ne> senex eadem velim quae puer volui. In hoc unum eunt dies, in hoc noctes, hoc opus meum est, haec cogitatio, inponere veteribus malis finem.<sup>31</sup>

Let us cease to want what we have been wanting. I certainly work at not wanting the same things as an old man that I wanted as a boy. This is what my days and nights are focused on, this is my labour and my meditation: to put an end to my long-standing mistakes.

Such self-awareness and self-shaping can be used for positive ends (as here) or to deceive others, as in letter 95.2: ‘there are many things we want to seem to want, but in fact don’t want’ (‘Multa videri volumus velle sed nolumus’). Making one’s own wanting a matter of explicit reflection and even manipulation is a common technique in Seneca. In the preface to *Natural Questions* 3 (sec. 12) we read: ‘What is most important? Being able to bear misfortune with a happy heart, to take whatever happens as though you wanted it to happen—for you would have had to want it if only you had known that everything happens by divine decree’ (‘Quid est praecipuum? Posse laeto animo adversa tolerare; quidquid acciderit, sic ferre, quasi tibi volueris accidere—debuisses enim velle, si scisses omnia ex decreto dei fieri’).

This concern with achieving explicit control over one’s own desires also manifests itself in his typically Stoic concern with consistency. Always having the same desires becomes a mark of moral progress, even of virtue. This is explicit at *Letter* 20.4–6:

Etiamnunc dicam unde sit ista inconstantia et dissimilitudo rerum consiliorumque: nemo proponit sibi quid velit, nec si proposuit perseverat in eo, sed transilit; nec tantum mutat sed redit et in ea quae deseruit ac damnavit revolvitur. Itaque ut relinquam definitiones sapientiae veteres et totum complectar humanae vitae modum, hoc possum contentus esse: quid est sapientia? Semper idem velle atque idem nolle. Licet illam exceptiunculam non adicias, ut rectum sit quod velis; non potest enim cuiquam idem semper placere nisi rectum. Nesciunt ergo homines quid velint nisi illo momento quo volunt; in totum nulli velle aut nolle decretum est; variatur cotidie iudicium et in contrarium vertitur ac plerisque agitur vita per lusum. Preme ergo quod coepisti, et fortasse perduceris aut ad summum aut eo quod summum nondum esse solus intellegas.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 27.2.



And now let me tell you where this inconsistency and the bad fit between actions and plans come from: no one asks himself what he should want, and if he has done so, he does not stick to it but jumps around. He doesn't just change, but also flips back, and returns to what he has repudiated and abandoned. So, to set aside the traditional definitions of wisdom and try to include the entire measure of human life, I can be satisfied with this: what is wisdom? always to want the same thing and to not want the same thing. You don't even have to add the clause 'providing that what you want is right'. For no one can be always satisfied by the same thing unless it is right. Hence men do not know what they want, except at the very moment when they are doing the wanting. No one has resolved to want or not want for good. Their judgement varies daily and reverses itself; most people live life like a game. So stick to what you started on, and perhaps you will reach the top, or a point which you alone can tell is not the top.

At *Letter* 52.1 this is expressed as 'wanting something once and for all' ('quicquam semel velle'),<sup>32</sup> and in *Letter* 95.58 the connection between 'wanting the same things always' and having 'true desires' ('vera velle') is again dependent on having a grasp of philosophical *decreta*.<sup>33</sup> The notion of self-conscious control of one's own wants and desires also turns up in *Letter* 37.5, considered above. But what is actually important here is the notion of wanting something *consilio adductus* (upon reflection) rather than *impetu impactus* (simply driven by psychological causes). What points to the will here is the explicit second-orderness, not the mere word *velle*.<sup>34</sup>

This idea is also apparent in the treatise *On Anger*. At 2.26.4–5 Seneca is arguing against being angry at animals, on the grounds that they cannot will (*velle*) to harm us and so do not actually do us any injury (a view about the moral centrality of self-conscious intent which recurs in the *On Favours*): they do us no injury 'because they cannot want to; for it is no injury unless it proceeds from a plan. Hence they can damage us, as can a piece of iron or a stone, but they certainly cannot do injury to us' ('quia velle non possunt; non est

<sup>32</sup> Here, note also the problematization of trying to control our wants.

<sup>33</sup> Consistency with others is as important as consistency with oneself over time: *idem velle atque idem nolle* is a mark of wisdom and true friendship (*Ep.* 109.16); cf. *De Ira* 3.34.2: *quod vinculum amoris esse debebat seditionis atque odi causa est, idem velle*.

<sup>34</sup> The same could be said of *Ep.* 71.36: it is the second-orderness and not the wanting which makes the passage of interest.

enim iniuria nisi a consilio profecta. Nocere itaque nobis possunt ut ferrum aut lapis, iniuriam quidem facere non possunt'). The key idea is that the kind of desire relevant to a responsible will is one which flows not just from a desiderative state (animals do have those—*consuetudo* and training are mentioned a few lines below), but from a conscious plan: the contrast to habit and training is *iudicium*, a judgement.

From the beginning of conscious reflection on free will and responsibility the idea of a bivalent possibility has been central: the ability to do or not to do something has been taken as a mark of freedom.<sup>35</sup> If that is the mark of morally responsible, free action, then it would not be surprising to see Seneca, in his reflections on what it means to will something, to put a similar condition on wanting. There is a kind of wanting which might turn up in any belief–desire explanation, of course, and that is the commonest use in Seneca. But in many contexts the bivalent possibility is about wanting itself, not overt actions; he emphasizes that the ability to *want or not want* the same thing is what counts. Genuine *velle* entails *posse nolle*. This theme occurs prominently in *On Favours*. Consider 2.18.7–8:

Cum eligendum dico, cui debeas, vim maiorem et metum excipio, quibus adhibitis electio perit. Si liberum est tibi, si arbitrii tui est, utrum velis an non, id apud te ipse perpendes; si necessitas tollit arbitrium, scies te non accipere, sed parere. Nemo in id accipiendo obligatur, quod illi repudiare non licuit; si vis scire, an velim, effice, ut possim nolle. 'Vitam tamen tibi dedit.' Non refert, quid sit, quod datur, nisi a volente, nisi volenti datur; si servasti me, non ideo servator es.

When I say that you should choose the person to be indebted to, I exempt, of course, *force majeure* and fear: when they are brought to bear there is no choice. If it is open to you, if it is within your ability to decide whether you want to or not, then you will weigh the matter up for yourself. But if compulsion removes the ability to decide, you should realize that you are not receiving a favour but obeying. No one is obligated by receiving something which it was not permitted to reject. If you want to know whether I am willing, make it possible for me to be unwilling! 'But he gave you life!' What is given doesn't matter, unless it

<sup>35</sup> For Aristotle's use of this as a mark of voluntariness, see *NE* 3, 1110a17–18; *EE* 1225b8, 1226b30–2; and Sorabji 1980, 235. Frankfurt's own refinement of the so-called 'alternate possibilities' criterion for moral responsibility is expounded in Frankfurt 1969.

was given by a willing donor to a willing recipient. Just because you saved me, it does not follow that you are my saviour.

Of course, this sets Seneca up for a problem when dealing with perfect agents, such as gods or sages. So in a later book (see 6.21–2) Seneca must extricate himself dialectically from potential paradoxes. For present purposes, Seneca's slick argument is less interesting than the terms of debate: he and his interlocutor share the belief that there is a clear moral significance attached to being able to want or not to want—parallel to the issue of being able to do or not to do. Wanting has become a reflective, internalized action.<sup>36</sup>

I have been considering cases where Seneca shows a sharp interest in acts of self-command, and where he is reflecting carefully on our second-order desire, our wanting to want. The final ingredient in Seneca's recipe for traditional will has, like self-command, the character of a mental event. I refer to Seneca's striking use of the language of passing judgement—*arbitrium* and *iudicium* are the key terms.

This use is found prominently in the treatise *On Anger*.<sup>37</sup> Judgment and decision (as I shall translate the *iudicium* and *arbitrium*) are part of the language of legal authority. The treatise is addressed, after all, to Seneca's brother the provincial governor, and the ostensible reason for this dedication is that a man in such a position has more reason than most to reflect upon anger and to learn self-control: a great deal of the therapeutic part of the treatise makes better sense when one remembers that it is being addressed to an administrator with virtually unlimited power over non-citizens in his jurisdiction: 2.22–4 is a clear illustration of this. Two contrasting cases are cited to demonstrate the need to pause, in a judicial spirit, for assessment, hearing both sides before coming to a decision on any important matter: the tyrant Hippias who caused his own downfall by hasty reaction to suspicions, and the decision of Julius Caesar to prevent himself from over-reaction by destroying potentially damaging evidence before even reading it.

<sup>36</sup> Compare *Ep.* 49.2, 67.2, 95.49, 116.8 for other sharply observed reflections on wanting and ability.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Clem.* 2.2.2, where it occurs for the same reasons as in *De Ira*; compare the passage to *De Ira* 2.1.1 where the same contrast of *iudicium* and *impetus* occurs. In the *De Vita Beata* 5.3 (cf. 6.2, 9.3) *iudicium* is linked to notions of control, not just reason. The *De Beneficiis* presents us with *iudicium* and *arbitrium* in connection with reflective choice; similarly *Ep.* 71.2–3, 87.1.

The general point in this passage<sup>38</sup> is that once one causes oneself to stop to debate the merits of one's reactions to provocation, then any subsequent action taken will be the result of a quasi-judicial decision.<sup>39</sup> Once Seneca reconceptualizes the agent as a judge (*iudex*) the fact that one's mental reactions are self-caused events (like traditional will) becomes clear. As a judge, one must critically assess the fairness of one's own response to events—one's mental life takes on the explicit rationality of the court-room and one's reactions are subject to debate and the expectation of detachment. When in 2.30 Seneca considers situations where the facts are not in question, he urges that we consider a variety of mitigating considerations, especially the intention (*voluntas*) of the agents, before reacting. Like judges, we should strive to consider the broadest possible range of relevant considerations before passing judgement. Note that *voluntas* is not the word for will, but the model of reaction and decision which Seneca invokes here captures a good deal of what traditional will is supposed to involve.

Political and judicial contexts provide the ideal forum for practicing the control of anger and for some of the language in terms of which it can be understood. The interest in this sense of judgement starts in book 1 of *On Anger*, at 1.15.3 where Seneca uses the example of Socrates to urge delay and reflection before punishment. The choice is between hasty, that is, angry, punishment and duly considered quasi-judicial reaction: 'cum eo magis ad emendationem poena proficiat, si iudicio †lata† est'.<sup>40</sup> In 1.17.1 Seneca argues against the Peripatetic notion that anger can be used in the war against wickedness because it is unlike other weapons: *bellica instrumenta* can be taken up and put down at the decision of the bearer. The passion anger is not like that. Again, it is the presence of a prior act of considered decision which makes all the difference. The identical idea had been raised earlier at 1.7.4 in connection with the Chrysippean example of the runner.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For the use of the metaphor of judicial processes to capture the phenomena of moral-decision making in this, and many other, texts merits a separate study, see Inwood 2005, Ch. 7.

<sup>39</sup> See also 2.26.6 and 2.28–31.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *On Anger* 3.12.4–7.

<sup>41</sup> See *SVF* 3.462. The idea that what distinguishes a passionate from a non-passionate response lies in its amenability to decision also turns up at *De Ira* 2.35.2.

But it is in the technical early chapters of Book 2 that judgement and decision play their clearest role in adumbrating the scope and role of traditional will. For Seneca sees the task of managing the passions as a matter of imposing on oneself a delay in the reaction which would otherwise occur, a delay which provides the time needed for a considered judgement or decision to be formed. And that involves all of the elements of traditional will: second-orderness; mental events; treating one's own psychological processes as 'other', as something upon which one may act; and the effort required by the task of self-shaping.

At *On Anger* 2.1.1 the question is whether anger is a matter of *iudicium* or *impetus*; the fact that a judgement is required is what brings in *voluntas* and controllability at 2.2.1. Judgement and *voluntas* are yoked again at 2.3.5, and 2.4.2 underlines the role of judgement in distinguishing passions from pre-passionate behaviour. The motion of the mind which is caused by a judgement can also be eliminated by it. This emphasis on controllability by an explicit mental act is striking throughout the book, even in passages where *voluntas* is not invoked.<sup>42</sup> In fact, one of the charming conceits of Seneca's strategy in the book is the emphasis he puts on the fact that we can fake anger: in response to Peripatetic suggestions that anger is necessary Seneca several times responds that if ever we do need anger to influence other people then we can pretend.<sup>43</sup>

It is time to conclude this discussion of the various aspects of 'will' in Seneca's works. It is too simple and deeply misleading to invoke various passages of Seneca in which he uses *voluntas* or *velle* to support suggestions that he helped to invent or discover the will as a distinct faculty or set of specialized dispositions. Yet it is equally wrong to retrench around the claim that there is nothing new in Senecan psychology. Conceptual history is a messy business, and all the more so when writers like Seneca (and Plato) who do not use technical terms in a consistent and systematic way play an important role in the process. As I see it, there isn't any new word for will in Seneca, at least not one with a distinctive usage, though *voluntas* may

<sup>42</sup> The various arguments about the utility of anger (e.g. 2.33–6 and 3.14–15) all presuppose that it is controllable.

<sup>43</sup> Note 2.17.1; 2.14 reveals the same connection between conscious controllability and feigning.

from time to time happen to pick out a phenomenon claimed for itself by traditional will. What matters far more than such lexical considerations is the cluster of key interests which Seneca has, interests which together (but not separately) produce something which covers the phenomena which traditional will is supposed to be uniquely able to accommodate. The interest in second-orderness in the form of talk about self-shaping and self-knowledge; the language of self-command; the focus on self-control, especially in the face of natural human proclivities to precipitate and passionate response; and the singling out of a moment of causally efficacious judgement or decision in the process of reacting to provocative stimuli; these are Seneca's contributions to the development of the will. These contributions are fully compatible with the philosophical project centred on notions of 'summary will', and yet evoke phenomena often thought to be explicable only in terms of traditional will. This seems to me to be evidence for a philosophical depth in Seneca's work which continues to demand exploration.

## 6

---

# Boundary Violation and the Landscape of the Self in Senecan Tragedy

*Charles Segal*

In Memoriam David S. Wiesen (1936–82)

### I

T. S. Eliot's remarks on self-dramatization in Seneca's tragedies anticipated and encouraged more recent attempts to reevaluate the rhetorical texture of the plays.<sup>1</sup> Again and again, through a variety of rhetorical figures, the actor calls attention to the importance of his or her emotions. This technique, as Eliot pointed out (1927*b*, 113), has contributed to Seneca's popularity at periods of cultural crisis and transition, like our own. *Medea superest* and 'I am Antony still' are related by more than just literary influence.

At periods when the traditional values are called into question and the social rewards and accepted marks of esteem are no longer felt as satisfying human needs and desires, men and women are likely to look inward and to define the meaning of life in terms of the self, in terms of internal and private rather than external and public things. The size and scale of the imperial bureaucracy (dwarfed, to be sure,

<sup>1</sup> Eliot 1927*b*, especially 112*f.* and 119. See also Owen 1968, especially 292*ff.* and 312*f.*

by our own), the precariousness of public life under a Caligula, a Nero, or a Domitian, the riskiness or illusoriness of freedom, all contributed to this inward focus. Tacitus' *Dialogus* sharply juxtaposes the traditional rewards of the Roman public man—power, influence, prestige, wealth, the gratifying crowd of clients at the door, the admiring finger pointing out the successful advocate in the forum—with the quasi-pastoral seclusion and quietude of the man of letters (*Dial.* 7–10 and 11–13). Seneca himself, in the *Thyestes*, dramatizes the disaster resulting from the protagonist's failure to follow his own good instincts and mistrust the 'false names' of greatness in the world (*Thy.* 446f.). When these 'great things' are perceived as delusory, men turn to the inner standards of value, ultimately to the value of the self alone. The wisdom, courage, and proudly won autonomy of the Stoic sage can then constitute the true index of personal worth. The external trappings of power and wealth are *adiaphora*, 'indifferent things.' 'Stoicism,' as Eliot remarks (1927*b* 112), 'is the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him'; its theatrical equivalent (or 'version of cheering oneself up,' as Eliot calls it) is a self-dramatizing, rhetorically ostentatious individualism.

Senecan 'self-dramatization,' for all its literary artifice, rests upon such a view of the importance of the self. It is, among other things, an expression of individual alienation from the central values of the culture. Seneca often dramatizes that alienation as the inflicting or suffering of physical violence, the most obvious form of violating the self. These are the terms that the last half-century has made all too familiar to our own age. The enormities and distortions of Senecan rhetoric no longer seem beyond the reach of our experience.

Stoicism is not the only response of Seneca's contemporaries to this condition of alienation; it is but one of several forms of individualism which develop out of the moral, social, and political crises in Roman society from the late Republic on. Seneca's stoicism seems to have provided him with a more or less consistent point of view, a stable intellectual basis suited to his rhetorical technique of projecting personal emotion into a cosmic frame. The Senecan dramatic assertion of the self takes two different but complementary forms. There is the I-statement of self-dramatizing emotion, like Phaedra's *me, me profundi saeve dominator freti / invade et in me monstra*



*caerulei maris / emitte* ('Me, me, make the object of your attack, cruel ruler of the deep sea, and against me send forth the monsters of the blue sea', *Pha.* 1159–61). And there is the involvement of the entire world in the hero's suffering, a responsive sympathy between individual and cosmos. The hero dramatizes his suffering through a bold network of imagistic correspondences between man and nature. These express, according to C. J. Herington, 'a moral and physical unity from the depths of the universe to the individual human soul' (1966, 433; see also Owen 1968, 300ff.). Thyestes calls to the sea and earth, to the gods of the lower and upper worlds, to listen to the atrocities inflicted on him (*Thy.* 1068ff.).<sup>2</sup> Jason sees Medea, murderer of their children, flying off into the aether and shouts that there, where she is going, there are no gods (*Med.* 1026f.). The Senecan hero places himself at the centre of the world's stage and cries out, Look, my suffering is that of the entire universe. 'Enwrap the whole world in fearful clouds', says Thyestes (*nubibus totum horridis / convolve mundum*, *Thy.* 1078f.). In himself alone, says Oedipus, Nature has overturned all her laws and so should devise equally unnatural modes of punishment for his guilt (*Oed.* 942–45).

This grandiose version of the pathetic fallacy is actually but an indirect or displaced form of the I-statement of self-dramatization described above. The hero's perception of the magnitude of his pain virtually causes the trees to turn pale, the waters to cease to flow, the air to thicken with mist, and so on (cf. *Ag.* 34ff., *Thy.* 197ff., 260ff.).

To this double strategy in the hero's assertion of his individual magnitude in suffering—I-statement and cosmic projection—correspond the two sides of the philosopher's wisdom. The Stoic sage abandons external power for the realm of the soul. To rule over the 'evils of the heart' makes the true king (*Phoen.* 104ff., *Thy.* 348f, 380ff.; cf. *Nat. Quaest.* 6.32.4ff.). The sage also identifies himself with the world soul: he is the proper beneficiary of the gods' care and the appropriate spectator of the majesty and order of the universe (cf. *Ad Helv. de Consol.* 8.3ff.; *De Otio* 5; *De Vita Beata* 8.4ff.).<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also the chorus of *Thy.* 789ff on the turning of day to night; in general Regenbogen 204.

<sup>3</sup> On the world soul and the wise man in Stoicism see Rist 1969, 209ff.; Pohlenz 1959, 1.112ff., especially 117f. In pointing to some links between Seneca's tragedies and Stoic philosophy, I do not mean to imply that a strictly Stoic interpretation

latter attitude, as one would expect, is less suitable for tragedy, although the author of the *Octavia* has Seneca himself, as a dramatic character, discourse at length on this topic (385ff.).

Seneca's combination of the Silver Age rhetorical magnification of experience and the subjectivizing forms of expression in Roman poetic diction<sup>4</sup> creates a new vision of tragedy. The unbearable suffering possible in a world of uninhibited violence resonates with an intensity of personal agony which is comparatively rare in Greek tragedy. In the latter, formal structure and a fuller intellectual vocabulary help to contain the expression of suffering in more clearly demarcated limits. Euripides, for example, makes us hear the screams of the blinded Polymestor in the *Hecuba*; but how un-Senecan and how characteristically Euripidean is the subsiding into long rationalistic-historical debate (Eur., *Hec.* 1056–254).

Senecan tragedy clearly does not create the towering heroic figures of Aeschylus or Sophocles. Such figures—Prometheus, Ajax, Antigone, Philoctetes—are so defined that their nature involves a hopeless struggle against the very conditions that are necessary to their existence; and in this struggle they are doomed by the greatness that they themselves possess, by their commitment to justice, nobility of nature, absolute values in a corrupt and imperfect world. In Seneca the tragic element operates in a struggle that is almost entirely inward, in a battle against the passions rather than in a head-on conflict with divine powers, universal moral principles, or an unyielding world order. Admittedly, this inward turning of the dramatic focus creates something that is often closer to the pathetic than to the genuinely tragic. Seneca's protagonists struggle much more with themselves than with essential laws of the universe or the basic conditions of life and society. But to the extent that such characters as Phaedra, Medea, Clytaemnestra, Thyestes, or Hercules engage with the evil and violence in themselves—and therefore potentially (if less exaggeratedly) in us all—they do exemplify a quality

exhausts the meanings of the plays or that their purpose was simply to illustrate Stoic doctrine. For a recent discussion and bibliography of this much discussed issue see Motto and Clark 1982. Dingel 1974, 97ff. and 116f., has suggested for Seneca a 'negative Stoicism', like Lucan's (*Phars.* 7.445ff.), stressing the remoteness, incomprehensibility, and inhuman harshness of the divine powers and fate.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963) Ch. 3.

of genuine tragedy. They suffer guilt, take responsibility for their defeat by their own uncontrolled emotions, and suffer the physical and moral consequences of their actions.<sup>5</sup>

In Seneca the ultimate truth of human character is revealed in moments of tremendous violence, where even reason is pressed into the service of intensifying every possible means of suffering, as in Oedipus' self-torturing that he should use his 'native cleverness' in punishing himself (*utere ingenio, miser, Oed.* 947). Overwhelmed by emotions beyond his control, the Senecan tragic hero becomes alienated from an aspect of his own humanity, from the rational moderation of desire, hatred, love, fear, hope, despair, and guilt.<sup>6</sup> No wonder our own age of decentred emotionality has rediscovered these works.

Seneca's limitation of vocabulary, rhetorical figures, and concentration on the flow of emotional movement rather than on structures of action or events create a kind of artificial echo chamber where human suffering, and all the emotional responses it involves, are magnified to a new level and therefore appear with a new pictorial expressiveness, what has been called a 'psychoplastic portrait of emotional affect.'<sup>7</sup> Here

<sup>5</sup> For a good survey of discussions about the tragic element in Senecan drama and a defense of the plays as tragedy, see Motto and Clark 1982, and Ilona Opelt, 'Senecas Konzeption des Tragischen', in Lefèvre 1972, 92–128, especially 93f. In contrast to the Greek tragedy of fate (*Schicksalstragödie*), Opelt argues, Seneca exemplifies a 'tragedy of evil' (*Tragödie des Bösen*), where the protagonist consciously, not blindly, takes guilt upon himself (92). This form of tragedy, she believes, is foreshadowed in the Xerxes of Aeschylus' *Persians* and in late Euripidean plays such as *Hecuba* and *Troades*. Her analysis of *nefas*, however, does not really clarify 'the tragic' in the plays. I suggest that the tragic dimension lies in the conflict between good and evil in the individual soul. In this conflict evil sometimes wins, and the hero is engulfed in his or her own inner monstrosity (e.g. Medea, Clytaemnestra, Atreus, and momentarily Hercules in both *HF* and *HO*), or after yielding to evil in the form of passion and emotional violence turns against himself in remorse, retribution, and mental or physical self-punishment (Phaedra and the Hercules of *HF*), or suffers both physically and emotionally as a result of an inadequate or mistaken moral decision (Agamemnon, Thyestes, Oedipus). In all cases, however, as many have pointed out, Seneca's emphasis falls on the inner, emotional, and psychological dimension of the action and the suffering.

<sup>6</sup> On Oedipus' self-punishment see Regenbogen 193. Compare Atreus' helplessness before the obsession of limitless, inexhaustible vengeance in *Thy.* 255f.: *nil quod doloris capiat assueti modus; / nullum relinquam facinus et nullum est satis* ('I am plotting nothing which any moderation of ordinary resentment can contain; I shall shun no crime, and none is enough').

<sup>7</sup> Regenbogen 207. He goes on to remark that this emotional–rhetorical coloring is closer to Tacitus than to Greek tragedy.

the real action occurs in the spaceless and timeless realm of the emotional life (see Owen 1968, 312f.; Shelton 1978, 30). The vast geographical hyperboles serve to set off that inner world as a distinctive reality of its own. Seneca's originality, as Otto Regenbogen has pointed out in a justly celebrated essay (1927–28, especially 204–14), lay not in the invention of new thematic material but in the vivid, imagistic depiction of this enclosed inner space of pathos, suffering, vehemence of feeling.

The focus on character and emotional reactions rather than on events per se also creates an impression of staticity, of purely verbal happenings. The world of nature depicted in the tragedies is, in one sense, as artificial as the dramatic situations themselves. It exists less for its own sake than as a foil or objective correlative for the emotional reality of the protagonists. The forests of Hippolytus' hunting in the *Phaedra* or the remote seas of the *Argo's* travels in the *Medea* are another form of this self-dramatization. They have their full existence in tension with an inner landscape of the soul. These expansive landscapes serve to set off the narrow, self-imposed limitation of hatred or vengeance in which an Atreus, a Hippolytus, or a Medea becomes enclosed.<sup>8</sup>

The two recurrent motifs of enclosure, entrapment, constriction on the one hand and all nature on the other are opposite but complementary poles of the sympathy that links microcosm and macrocosm. The *Oedipus* correlates the 'inverted nature' (*natura versa est*, 371) of the entrails examined by Manto with the inverted nature made manifest in the hero's life (*leges ratas / Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda*, 'Nature overturns her established laws in Oedipus alone', 942f.). Those laws are revealed to men in the microcosmic scrutiny of the viscera laid bare beneath the flesh as the priestess peers into the dark secrets of the sacrificed heifer's vitals and sees the monstrosity of an unborn fetus 'not in its rightful place, filling its parent' (*alieno in loco / implet parentem*, *Oed.* 374f.). But they are also revealed in the macrocosm through the 'sympathetic' response of polluted air and parched earth (632ff.), which follow upon the horror of a 'mother heavy once more in her accursed womb' (*utero rursus infausto gravis*, 637). The repetition of *gravis*, 'heavy', from the

<sup>8</sup> Cf., for example, the chorus of *Medea* 301–79, and contrast the death of Pelias through Medea's magic arts, *angustus vagus inter undas*, 668.

account of the plague-bearing wind's 'heavy breath' (*gravi flatu*) a few lines earlier (631) stresses the link between the interior pollutions of the incestuous womb and the deadly plague of the polluted natural world outside. The relation between the two is metaphorical or analogical as well as causal. From the corrupted liver to the irregular course of the stars, the message is the same.

Tiresias' unlocking of the enclosures of the 'deep Styx' and the 'Lethan lake' (*profundae claustra laxamus Stygis*, *Oed.* 401; *claustra Lethaei lacus*, 560) is the cognitive equivalent of Oedipus' revealing the hidden uterine secrets of the dark places from which he came and to which he has returned. Seneca deliberately exploits this interplay between the visceral horror of the entrails and the womb on the one hand and the havoc in nature wrought by the plague on the other. Tiresias' determination to 'unloose the gates of deep Styx' (401, quoted above), stands in sharp contrast with the bacchic hymn that begins with the 'sky's shining beauty' (*lucidum caeli decus*, 405). The tension is resolved when Oedipus accepts the dark horror of his begetting and expiates it by the self-imposed darkness of self-blinding (cf. 998–1003). He thereby restores vitality to the upper reaches of nature and brings back a 'gentler condition of the sky' and 'life-filled draughts of air' (*mitior caeli status*, 1054; *vividus haustos*, 1056), just as Laius' ghost had foretold.<sup>9</sup>

Here, as in the *Thyestes*, Seneca intensifies the sensation of physical suffering by playing off images of the open air against images of enclosing or penetrating the hidden cavities of the body. Thus the macrocosmic effect in the natural world of Oedipus' atonement is achieved through the visceral imagery of his self-blinding. He digs out (*scrutatur*) his eyes with 'hooked fingers' (*Oed.* 965), tears them 'from their furthest roots deep within' (966). His hand is 'fixed deep inside' (*fixa penitus alte*, 968f.) and 'tears the hollows and empty recesses' (*recessus ... inanes sinus*, 969). The uterine and visceral associations of most of these words become unmistakable fewer than a hundred lines later when Jocasta atones for her unwitting crime by the grim poetic justice of penetrating with her incestuous

<sup>9</sup> For other aspects of the finale of the *Oedipus* see C. Segal, 'Sacral Kingship and Tragic Heroism in Five Oedipus Plays and *Hamlet*', *Helios* 5, no. 1 (1977) 5–7; Owen 1968, 312.

husband's sword 'the spacious womb which bore both sons and husband' (*uterum capacem qui virum et natos tulit*, 1039). Aside from the grim, even grotesque physical horror, Oedipus' language depicts the feelings of guilt, remorse, emotional suffering, the physical as well as the psychological wrench of anguish, through images of somatic violation, images of being trapped within himself and being pushed back within himself (952–79, 1024–41). The 'rain that pours forth' and 'waters' Oedipus' cheeks (*subitus en vultus gravat / profusus imber ac rigat fletu genas*, 'Look, the sudden storm pours forth and makes heavy his face and with weeping waters his cheeks', 925f.; cf. 978) is the 'eye's moisture' of his body (955); but it also foreshadows the healing macrocosmic effects at the end (1054ff.), restoring the parched and dying crops (50–2; cf. 649ff.).

In the *Phoenissae*, Oedipus' self-dramatizing exaggeration of guilt goes further than the nails reaching into the eyes' hollow sockets: he would even reach through the eye into the brain itself (*nunc manum cerebro indue; / hac parte mortem perage qua coepi mori*; 'now dip your hand into brain; complete your death in that part where I began to die', *Phoen.* 180f.). The physical gesture has a direct psychological correlate in Oedipus' sense of guilt as he reaches back into his prenatal existence in Jocasta's womb (*intra viscera materna*, *Phoen.* 249f.). He feels his place there as an already sinful penetration of his mother's body, into which 'a god has driven him [*egit*], pushed back in concealment [*abstrusum, abditum*], doubtful of existence', the perpetrator of 'an unspeakable crime' (*Phoen.* 251–3). When a few lines later he describes how 'his father cast him away' (*abiecit pater*, 258) to die in Cithaeron's forests with its 'wild beasts and savage birds' (255f.), he establishes a symbolic link between the cruelty of his fate both in the hiddenness of the womb and in the expulsion to the wild. The symmetry of accursed concealment within the womb of the mother and harsh expulsion by the father to a hostile mountain expresses the psychological meaning of Oedipus' crimes. He reenacts, as it were, the experience of losing the intimacy of womb / mother, which he regains by returning there as husband; he relives metaphorically the hatred of the father who 'threw him forth' (*abiecit*), a deed he avenges by killing Laius.

The son's illicit penetration of the mother's womb even in being born (*Phoen.* 245–7) is answered by the father's penetration of the

son's feet (*Phoen.* 254), an act of symbolic castration. The pattern of Oedipus' life is already present, quite literally, from the first beginnings: wrongful placement inside the mother followed by the physical violation and penetration of his own body.

The explicitness about the psychological dimension of Oedipus' suffering is Seneca's characteristic reinterpretation of the material of Sophocles' Oedipus plays. It is most marked, perhaps, in the apparition of Laius' ghost in the *Oedipus* (619–58). The ghastly apparition, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of subterranean horrors that are Seneca's hallmark (*Oed.* 559–98), is like the bad dream of a guilt-tormented mind. The murdered father has not a word of charity, compassion, or understanding for a son who acted in ignorance. He is virtually a foreshadowing of the Freudian superego, a harsh, demanding, guilt-raising father figure, a projection of the son's own conviction of his inherently evil nature. Through the eyes of this *tristis imago* (Virgil's phrase for another demanding father, *Aen.* 6.695), Oedipus sees himself as indelibly stained with the worst possible crimes of civilized humanity. He is a 'bloody king' who holds both his scepter and the wife of his bedchamber as the rewards of the infamous double outrage of parricide and incest (*Oed.* 634–7):

... rex cruentus, pretia qui saevae necis  
sceptra et nefandos occupat thalamos patris,  
invisa proles, sed tamen peior parens  
quam natus, utero rursus infausto gravis ...

The *Medea* uses a different aspect of this relation between the macrocosm of nature and the microcosm of the individual's emotional and physical being. Medea's revenge dwarfs the vast reaches of sea and earth explored by the *Argo* (cf. 301–79) and cancels them out through the interior bonds of the womb, her weapon against the leader of the expedition. At the climax of her revenge she, like Oedipus, would reach into her vitals to extirpate in her womb the traces of motherhood that tie her to Jason (*in matre si quod pignus etiamnunc latet, / scrutabor ense viscera et ferro extraham*, 'In the mother if any pledge still lies hidden, I will search my vitals with the sword and with iron draw it out,' 1012f.). As *pignus* is a common term for the 'child' who constitutes a 'pledge' of love and fidelity between husband and wife, Medea's lines combine the literal and the metaphorical rooting out of

her tie to Jason: she would excise the foetus that may be growing in her womb from their union and from the bond of love which should have insured its growth, safety, and birth. Medea soon uses that sword not on herself but on her remaining child; and the visceral imagery of 1012f. conveys the interior darkness of her insatiable vengeance. Lady Macbeth's 'Unsex me here', with all the thickening of blood and change of milk to gall, spares us this uterine rooting out of motherhood.<sup>10</sup> In a reverse but complementary movement Medea would make her fertility itself a symbol of her vengefulness. She envies Niobe, with fourteen children to sacrifice to vengeance (954–6), and complains that she has been 'sterile in respect to [exacting] punishment' (*sterilis in poenas fui*, 956). 'If this hand of mine', she goes on later, 'could have been sated with single slaughter, it would have sought none; though I kill two, still is the number too narrow for my grief' (1009–11).

After this paradoxical interplay of fertility and sterility, Seneca opens out another contrast in moving from the enclosed space of womb and vitals to the 'open path to the heavens' where her serpent-drawn chariot will carry her 'among the winds' (1022, 1025). The violated interiority of her body and the violation of nature's limits in the *Argo's* distant explorations and in the magic of Medea's aerial car are complementary aspects of the same theme, the pushing beyond limits, beyond civilized behavior, into the barbarian and the monstrous. At the frontiers of the civilized world where Medea's passion has its origins, we veer between the violated innocence of the Golden Age (see Lawall 1979; Segal 1983*b*) and the pitiless ferocity of inhuman savagery. Calling up the primordial monsters of the earth's remotest places (674–704), Medea also releases her own interior monstrosity, suppressing the life-giving side of her motherhood and envisaging a Niobe-like fertility of death.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1. v. 38–52; pallid too by contrast is the visceral imagery of Racine's Thésée who describes his paternal misgivings at condemning Hippolytus in these terms: 'Malgré ton offense, / mes entrailles pour toi se troublent' (*Phèdre* IV.iii).

<sup>11</sup> Note, for example, the alliterative play on *Medea / malum* and *Medea / monstrum* (e.g. 362, 674f.) on the one hand and *Medea / mater* on the other (171, 289f., 933f., 950f.). See Traina 1979, 273–5 and Segal 1982, 241–6.



## II

This interaction between the enclosed depths of the soul and the expansive frame of nature obviously has its philosophical roots in the Stoic correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm and the ideal of living in harmony with the universe. But its literary effectiveness lies in another area, one where even Seneca's most grudging critics have acknowledged his power, namely his depiction of morbid states of the soul, anxiety, fear, obsession, vindictiveness, the lust for power. 'La psychologie est peut-être ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans le théâtre de Sénèque,' wrote Léon Herrmann sixty years ago, and few would disagree.<sup>12</sup> The powerful symbol of the underworld, corresponding to the darker hell of the soul, finds a place in nearly every Senecan tragedy.<sup>13</sup>

When Oedipus hears from the old shepherd the truth about himself in the simple four words, *coniuge est genitus tua* ('that child was born of your wife,' *Oed.* 867), he replies with a heavily alliterated invocation to Earth and the powers of the nether world (868–70):

dehisce tellus, tuque tenebrarum potens,  
in Tartara ima, rector umbrarum rape  
retro reversas generis ac stirpis vices.

Yawn open, Earth, and you, powerful ruler of shades, carry back into the lowest depths of Tartarus these inverted exchanges of the race and its stock.

The 'yawning of the earth' at the appearance of Laius' ghost earlier (*subito dehisce terra*, 582; cf. *dehisce tellus* 868) now changes from supernatural magic to emotional reality. It becomes an expressive

<sup>12</sup> Léon Herrmann, *Le Théâtre de Sénèque* (Paris 1924) 492. Good discussions of Seneca's psychological focus may also be found in Berthe Marti, 'Seneca's Tragedies: A New Interpretation,' *TAPA* 76 (1945) 222f. and 229–33; Norman T. Pratt, Jr., 'The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama,' *TAPA* 79 (1948) 10f.; Ettore Paratore, 'Originalità del teatro di Seneca,' *Dioniso* 20 (1957) 56ff.; Herington 1966, 447f.; Jo-Ann Shelton, 'The Dramatization of Inner Experience: The Opening Scene of Seneca's *Agamemnon*,' *Ramus* 6 (1977) 33–43. On the other hand the attempt of Rozelaar 1976, Chs. 2–4, to correlate the psychological concerns of the tragedies with Seneca's personal life, childhood experience, and private neuroses is, though interesting, most speculative.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Owen 1968, 296f., 307, 311f.; Shelton 1978, Ch. 4; Henry and Walker 1965, 14f. and 21f.

indication of the horror in Oedipus' soul as he makes his terrifying discovery. Now the destructive darkness over the city which Oedipus described in the play's opening lines (1–5; cf. 44–9) is traced to its origin in himself.<sup>14</sup> With that revelation of the truth the earth really does seem to open beneath him, as it did in 582, and show the infernal realms of shades and darkness beneath the plants and trees (the mild agricultural metaphor of *stirps* in 870 is active here). The chiasmic repetition *tenebrarum potens / rector umbrarum* ('ruler powerful of dark shadows') and the idea of 'gaping' in *dehisce* provide a stylized but adequate verbal equivalent to Oedipus' split-second realization. At once he knows that his world is turned upside down, that the ground is no longer the same beneath his feet. The very non-realism of the representation conveys the horror: the remote, fabled realm of Tartarus is the anguish that he is now living. Sophocles' Oedipus cries out *iou iou* and addresses the light that he sees for the last time (*OT* 1182–5); Seneca's Oedipus utters an initial word, *dehisce*, which suggests his open-mouthed speechlessness, and then addresses the darkness. The darkness of the lower world that opens before him (cf. 582f.) and the abyss of darkness within himself become visible, as it were, at the same time. This is an Oedipus who, in the course of minutes, is ready to call himself 'the crime of the age' (*saeculi crimen*, 875). The sudden glimpse of the dark hell within in the cry *dehisce, tellus* confirms in metaphorical terms the inner violence that the action has revealed in Oedipus' soul: his readiness to torture by fire and use 'bloody ways' of interrogating (861f.), his acknowledged 'savagery', and his loss of self-control (*si ferus videor tibi / et impotens . . .*, 'if I seem to you savage and out of control', 865f.).

### III

With his feeling for the emotive quality of visual scenes, Seneca often creates an objective correlative for these psychological events through images of place or landscape. The *locus horridus* of gloomy forest or

<sup>14</sup> With this passage in *Oed.* compare *Phaedra* 1238–42: the figurative reopening of the lower world for Theseus corresponds to his recognition of the subterranean violence in himself, unleashed in his curse on his son. Cf. also *Tro.* 519f.

strangling trees expresses the nightmare world of fear, anxiety despair.<sup>15</sup> Bruno Snell observes that Seneca 'likes to surround his characters with what one could call a cloud of their milieu' (1964, 27). The power of that milieu, however, often derives from images that give a physical sense of helplessness in the face of emotions. 'Anxiety' means, literally, the constriction of heart, diaphragm, and stomach when we encounter dread. Lucretius' *anxius angor* calls attention to the root meaning of the word and its physiological effects (cf. *DRN* 3.993).

Seneca, like many ancient writers, conveys the physiological concreteness of emotions in metaphors like that of the mind 'swelling' with anger or the 'seething' of grief and pain (*tumet animus ira, fervet immensus dolor*, of Oedipus, *Phoen.* 352). But he often pushes this physiological correlate of emotion much further. In particular he develops two complementary types of physiological sensations for emotional disturbance: entrapment, enclosure, engorgement, or implosion on the one hand and dismemberment, invasion, penetration, or mutilation on the other. In quite a literal sense his language grips us in our vital places. The 'wide realm of Diana', as Snell describes the 'cloud' of Hippolytus' milieu at the opening of *Phaedra*, contrasts with Phaedra's image of herself as she enters immediately after. She is 'weighed on' by a 'greater grief' (*maior incubat . . . dolor*, 99), has an illness growing inside her, and feels her passion as the steam of a volcano burning and seething within (101–3). As she describes her condition of desperate, neurotically obsessive fixation on Hippolytus, she uses other images of enclosure, the 'dark house' of the Labyrinth where Daedalus 'shut in' the monstrous bull (*qui nostra caeca monstra conclusit domo*, 122). The reference to the Minotaur locked in the Cnossian Labyrinth suggests her own metaphorical entrapment in the dark heredity of her mother, Pasiphae, of which

<sup>15</sup> For the motif of enclosure in the *locus horridus* see Rosanna Mugellesi, 'Il senso della natura in Seneca tragico', in *Argentea Aetas: In Memoriam E. V. Marmorale*, Pubbl. dell' Ist. di Filologia Classica di Genova 37 (Genoa 1973) 43ff., 63–6, who comments on 'la nuova sensibilità pittorico-visiva di Seneca' (63). For this kind of 'atmospheric' effect of landscape in Roman poetry, see also C. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Hermes Einzelschrift 23 (Wiesbaden 1969) 5ff. The essay of Pierre Thévenaz, 'L'interiorità in Seneca' (1944) in Alfonso Traina, ed., *Seneca, letture critiche* (Milan 1976) 91–6, is concerned not with spatial 'interiority' but with the internalization of values, the importance of 'the things under our control' in Seneca's philosophy.

Phaedra is painfully aware (e.g. 127f., 242). Later the Nurse describes her love madness (*furor*) as something burning inside, 'shut up within' (*inclusus*, 362), which, though concealed, is betrayed by her face and bursts forth as fire from her eyes (360–4). Entrapment in an inner fire of uncontrollable passion as in a burning building is combined with another image of radical alienation from the self: Phaedra's physiological sensation of the strangeness of her body as in a hopeless, feverish disease (*spes nulla tantum posse leniri malum, / finisque flammis nullus insanis erit*, 'there is no hope that so great a suffering can be soothed; the wild flames will have no check', 360f.).<sup>16</sup> Both images become more powerful by the contrast with her fantasy wishes of the outdoors, woods, hunting, the feeling of the wind in her hair (394–403).

Through such descriptions Seneca manipulates those anxieties, present in all of us, which have to do with what psychologists call primary boundary anxiety, the concern with the autonomy of our physical being, our corporeal integrity in its most fundamental sense. Such anxieties have their roots in the infant's first experiences, his inchoate sense of his separateness from the mother, his fear of being engulfed and swallowed. Such concerns surface in the language and imagery of other Latin authors: Ovid and Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, have been fruitfully studied from this point of view.<sup>17</sup>

The spatial imagery of the *Phaedra* exploits both forms of boundary anxiety: Phaedra is entrapped in the cavernous hell of her hopeless desire, Hippolytus is dismembered. In both cases the self suffers a direct physical violation, an irreparable breach in ontological security. Phaedra, nurturing the evil within, becomes unrecognizable to herself. When the monster, called forth by Theseus' prayer to Neptune, emerges from the sea (1025ff.), Hippolytus initially holds out against panic (1066f.), but the nightmarish apparition cannot be

<sup>16</sup> The modern reader may perhaps forget how real and present was the danger of being trapped in a burning building in Imperial Rome: e.g. Juvenal 3. 197–202 and in general A. G. McKay, *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World* (Ithaca 1975) 85ff.

<sup>17</sup> Leo Curran, 'Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *Arethusa* 5 (1972) 71–91, especially 78–82; R. F. Newbold, 'Boundaries and Bodies in Late Antiquity', *Arethusa* 12 (1979) 93–114, with a bibliography of psychological literature; see also Bradford Lewis, 'The Rape of Troy: Infantile Perspective in Book II of the *Aeneid*', *Arethusa* 7 (1974) 103–13.

checked by rational control (cf. the simile of the pilot, 1072–5) and soon overwhelms his hold on reality in the most elemental way, leaving him scattered in pieces over the woods that were once his secure and peaceful refuge from women and sexuality. By exaggerating the details of the monster in Euripides' play (*Hipp.* 1173–248), Seneca shifts the event from the plane of mythical reality to the plane of nightmare fantasy, an externalization of a dream world of unconscious terrors. The Euripidean text, to be sure, already contains that element, but it is intensified by the secondary elaboration of Senecan rhetoric and artificiality. Seneca's play, in this respect, is a psychological reading of Euripides': the mythic and theological issues are reinterpreted as psychological states and symbols.

For Seneca's Hippolytus, as for his Oedipus, reality dissolves into nightmare. Oedipus' world opened to reveal the hellish depths in himself as *saeculi crimen*, 'the criminal of the age' (the hero of the *Hercules Furens* undergoes a similar experience). Hippolytus' death turns him into exactly the opposite of what he has wanted to be, so that he is in a sense disintegrated from within as well as from without. Convicted of incestuous rape, he is mutilated and castrated (cf. 1099) by a creature that evokes both the castrating father imago (cf. 1046ff.) and his own neurotic distortions of the sexuality that he has repressed in himself.

In the *Phoenissae*, as I have remarked above, Oedipus images his guilt as a kind of uterine penetration of his mother's 'entrails' (*intra viscera materna*, 249f.) and also as entrapment in the guilty concealment of the womb: in its recesses he is 'pushed back and hidden away' (*abstrusum, abditum*, 251). That sense of being helplessly entrapped, enfolded, or compacted has its psychological dimension in his feeling that it is not only the sky, gods, or crimes that he cannot escape, but himself. His very body is a prison, a corporeal equivalent of the confinement within his own guilt. 'It is myself I flee,' he says (*me fugio*), 'my breast [*pectus*], guilty of every crime, and this hand of mine, and this sky and the gods and the dread crimes that I, though innocent, performed' (*Phoen.* 216–18). The sensation of entrapment, whether in the womb or in the corporeal / psychological prison of his own body, depicts a self experienced as something that he wants to escape but cannot. Correspondingly, he experiences his unremitting burden of guilt as a boundary violation, the penetration or mutilation

of his body.<sup>18</sup> It is not enough, as in the *Oedipus*, that he digs his fingers into his eyes; now he would reach through more ‘boldly’ into the brain (*nunc manum cerebro indue*, ‘now dip your hand into the brain,’ *Phoen.* 180). In his next speech, as he traces his guilt to the womb and to his birth, he uses an image of cruel penetration to convey the malignancy of his fate: ‘With hot iron my father pierced my tender feet’ (*calidoque teneros transiit ferro pedes*, 254).<sup>19</sup>

Seneca’s most effective manipulation of primary boundary anxiety occurs, as one might expect, in the *Thyestes*. It is not so much the imagery of eating and digestion which, in the last analysis, brings home to us the horror of Atreus’ revenge as the vivid sense of being stuffed, crammed full, impacted. As Atreus unveils his triumph, he seems to soar in the vast celestial spaces of boundless euphoria (885f.): ‘I walk the equal to the stars and beyond all men, with my proud head touching the lofty vault of heaven’ (*aequalis astris gradior, et cunctos super / altum superbo vertice attingens polum*). But images of his own satiety follow almost at once, as he contemplates ‘filling the father full of the death of his sons’ (890f.). When the vengeance comes, it pushes this fullness to the point of horror, in striking contrast with the free movement of Atreus’ opening lines. The horror is quite literally visceral as Thyestes cries out (999–1001):

quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea?  
quid tremuit intus? sentio impatiens onus  
meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit.

What is the disturbance that tosses around my entrails? What trembles within? I feel a burden that will not endure me, and my breast groans with a groaning not my own.

The polyptoton *meum ... non meo* (‘mine ... not mine’) conveys the speaker’s confusion of personal boundaries, his alienation from

<sup>18</sup> The heavy emphasis on Oedipus’ feelings of guilt that he can never escape in *Phoenissae* (e.g. 216ff.) is one of the most interesting aspects of Senecan characterization and certainly underlies Oedipus’ cries to the dead Laius, a figure who has virtually the status of an apparition (cf 39ff. and 166ff.) and is treated almost explicitly as a hallucination produced by neurotic anxiety.

<sup>19</sup> Seneca has elaborated this detail from the description of the pierced feet in Euripides’ *Phoenissae* 26, *σφυρών σιδηρὰ κέντρα διαπείρας μέσον* (‘passing the iron spurs through the midst of the ankles’). Sophocles’ version leaves these details vague (*OT* 717–19, 1032–4, 1349–55). See in general Maxwell-Stuart 1975, esp. 38f.

the physical substance of his own body. The situation is analogous to the sensation, in excruciating pain, of uttering a scream that one does not recognize as one's own.

It is fruitful to compare the scene in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* where Oedipus, emerging blinded from the palace, cries, 'Miserable that I am, where on earth am I carried, unhappy, where does my cry fly about me, borne aloft?' (1308–11). Comparison between the language of Seneca and Sophocles is instructive: Sophocles' language has none of Seneca's corporality. It is the lightness, the fluttering, that predominates (*diapōtatai phoradēn*, 'the cry flutters carried around'). Aside from the Sophoclean hero's unobtrusive ethical dative, *moi*, in 1309, there are no personal pronouns. Far from being alienated from himself in the extremity of pain, Sophocles' Oedipus recovers a deepened sense of self as he plunges into a suffering of which he is the self-chosen agent, not the victim (*OT* 1331ff.).

Seneca's imagery of corporeal heaviness, the burden stuffed within, gains an added dimension of psychological suffering when Atreus reveals the truth. Thyestes says (1040–4):

hoc est quod avidus capere non potuit pater.  
 volvuntur intus viscera et clusum nefas  
 sine exitu luctatur et quaerit fugam.  
 da, frater, ensem (sanguinis multum mei  
 habet ille); ferro liberis detur via.

This then is what the greedy father could not hold. My entrails roll around within; the closed in evil struggles, with no way out, and searches for escape. Give me a sword, brother (that sword of yours has much of my blood); with steel let a way out be given to my children.

This is the acme of the horror: Thyestes is trapped in the evil of his own body. The nightmare of the boundary violation is all the greater as the foreign matter, the source of evil (*clusum nefas*), is stuffed within himself as both alien and fearfully his own. The victim is bloated and distorted in his own flesh by being crammed full of a poisonous feast that he cannot disgorge and must assimilate. The scene's outrage works through its evocation of the primary processes over which we have no conscious control, the digestive absorption of alien substance converted into our very being.

Seeking to grasp and dramatize the horror, Thyestes reaches out to the remote geography of 'the Caucasus' harsh rock' (1048) but cannot throw off the sensation of being 'pressed down' (*premor*, 1050f.): *genitor en natos premo premorque natis* ('a father, I press down my sons, and by my sons I am pressed down'). The shift from the active to the passive form in *premo* ... *premor* expresses the movement from outside to within, from an external to an internal heaviness.<sup>20</sup> This movement, in turn, is another aspect of that fundamental alienation from self conveyed by 'mine ... not mine' (1001f., quoted above).

As Thyestes calls to the seas to bear witness to the crime, he describes the waters too as 'closed in' (*clausa litoribus vagis / audite maria*, 'Hear me, you seas enclosed in your wandering shorelines', 1068f.), so that the inwardness of the 'closed in evil' (*clusum nefas*, 1041) of the sons trapped in his belly colors his perception of the natural world as well. Atreus repeats the notion of constriction when he uses the verb *angit*, 'chokes', metaphorically, of Thyestes' alleged bitterness that he did not prepare such a feast for Atreus first: 'I know why you are lamenting,' Atreus tells his brother; 'you grieve because I anticipated your crime; it chokes you not that you took in the unholy banquet [*nec quod nefandas hauseris angit dapes*], but that you did not prepare it' (1104–6). The alliteration and repetition in the play's last line, Atreus' *te puniendum liberis trado tuis* ('I give you over to be punished by your sons') continue the sense of entrapment in one's own flesh (*te* ... *tuis*). The fresh pastoral woods that Thyestes reluctantly gave up to enter Atreus' palace (412ff.) are never more hopelessly distant.

This reduction of suffering to primary physical boundaries and to elemental digestive processes is more than just rhetorical sensation-ism or the love of the grotesque. It corresponds to a large moral

<sup>20</sup> Compare also Theseus' reabsorption into the dark hell of his own violence in *Phaedra* 1203: addressing Avernus and Tartarus he cries out, (*me*) *impium abdite atque mersum premite perpetuis malis* ('hide me, the evil one, away and press me down, submerged, in eternal suffering'). Here too, as in *Thy.* 1050f. and *Phoen.* 251f., the imagery of weight and oppression express feelings of overwhelming guilt and remorse. Theseus' language, however, does not develop the visceral equivalents of this heaviness, as in the passages discussed in the text.



design. It is no accident that the ghost of Tantalus opens the play with his torment by the emptiness of hunger (1–6). His ever ‘greedy mouth’ and ‘gaping hunger’ are both a contrastive and a complementary image of the corruption of the house: such corruption will reduce men to their lowest and most basic functions. In his first appearance onstage Atreus contemplates his vengeance in images of fullness that anticipate the condition of Thyestes at the end. His lust for revenge takes the form of an insatiable hunger that makes him virtually a living Tantalus (252–4):

non satis magno meum  
ardet furore pectus; impleri iuvat  
maiore monstro.

My breast burns with a madness that is not great enough. My joy is to be filled with a greater monstrosity.

When he unfolds his plot, he describes his breast again as ‘shaking’ and ‘revolving deep within’ by a ‘disturbance’ that will be closely echoed in Thyestes’ physical trouble later (260f.):

*Atreus.* tumultus pectora attonitus quatit penitusque volvit.

Trouble astonished shakes my breast and rolls it around deep within.

We may compare Thyestes at 999f.:

quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea?  
quid tremuit intus?

What is this trouble that tosses my entrails? What has trembled within?

or at 1041, *volvuntur intus viscera*, ‘My vitals are rolled around within’. A few lines later Atreus’ growing lust for revenge is something in his mind (*animo*) that ‘swells’ (*tumet*, 267f.) beyond normal limits.

In Thyestes’ case the imagery of inward fullness, swollenness, turgidity shifts at the end from ‘breast’ and ‘mind’ (*pectus, animus*) to ‘entrails’ (*viscera*). Yet the parallels show Atreus as already drawn into his victim’s suffering, already as degraded spiritually as his victim is physically. His own malaise about the insatiability of his vengeance contrasts with the horrible satiety that he has brought to Thyestes (889–91): ‘It is well, it is abundant. Now it is enough even for me. But why enough? I shall go on, even though the father is filled up with the death of his children . . .’ And yet the very terms that he

uses of his all-devouring vengefulness link him with his victim (cf. *satur est*, 'he is sated', 913). His metaphorical ascent to the broad heavens at the culmination of his revenge (884–8) is soon enclosed in the narrow terms of satiety, filling, and constriction (889–900). The torturer is inextricably fused with the tortured and in his own way victimized by the very violation that he inflicts on the other. The monstrosity that swells in Atreus' soul (267f.) is more deeply corruptive than the monstrous food in his brother's stomach. Though physically defeated and degraded, Thyestes retains a dignity of spirit which eludes the successful and exuberant criminal, Atreus.<sup>21</sup>

This language of the body, especially of the viscera, functions in a manner analogous to metamorphosis in Ovid.<sup>22</sup> It is disturbing because it reminds us of our physicality, of our inevitable reduction to being mere body. We are reduced to those primary bodily processes like digestion over which we have no conscious control but on which we nonetheless rely for our lives. By reminding us of our visceral physicality too, such descriptions indirectly evoke the inevitability of death. We are forced to see ourselves in the context of the corruptible entrails of animals. This ultimate reduction of our being to physical matter, to the fate that we share with all living (and dying) things, is profoundly disquieting.

Like the *Phaedra*, the *Thyestes* combines the internal boundary violations of the victim's imploded body with the external violation of the agent's delight in mutilation. When he has Thyestes before him stuffed with the impious banquet, Atreus gloats over the details of how he cut the sons limb from limb, chopping and breaking the individual members (1057–68).

Psychology aside, the sadistic violation of human flesh by mutilation, decapitation, and crucifixion was an all too familiar reality in the amphitheaters of Seneca's contemporaries. The anxiety reflected by the tragedies in this area of experience had a basis in fact. One does not witness such acts without some damage to the spirit; and

<sup>21</sup> On Thyestes' moral conflicts and superiority see Viktor Pöschl, 'Bemerkungen zum Thyest des Seneca' (1977) in *Kunst und Wirklichkeitserfahrung in der Dichtung, Kleine Schriften* 1 (Heidelberg 1979) 311–19; Poe 1969, 369–76, and the references in 360 n.11.

<sup>22</sup> See Irving Massey, *The Gaping Pig: Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1976) 22ff., esp. 28.

Seneca's plays bear witness, if only indirectly, to the corruptive effect that torture has on those who permit or condone it.<sup>23</sup>

There is even archaeological evidence for the vivid impressions that the executions, gladiatorial games, and crucifixions left on more sensitive spectators. The Italian archaeologist Umberto Fasola describes a graffito on a shop wall near the amphitheater at Puteoli. The crude but gripping drawing is clearly the work of one who 'was certainly a witness of such torture and was deeply impressed' by the suffering of the transfixed, dying man.<sup>24</sup> It is as if Seneca represses the knowledge of the actual tortures in the public spectacles of his day but allows the reality of their psychological effects and their emotional impact to surface in the remote, mythical, and bizarre violations of the human body depicted in his plays: the butchering of Thyestes' sons, the tearing out of Oedipus' eyes, the dismemberment of Hippolytus' body. In Seneca, as in Lucan, Petronius, Tacitus, Juvenal, and other Silver Age writers, the proximity of violent death, torture, and helpless subjection to physical violation produces a corresponding extremism of violence in the style.<sup>25</sup> The stylistic equivalents of the psychological impact of violence were, perhaps, one way to come to terms with experiences that, two millennia later, are no more easily assimilable to reality. However remote, stilted, and incredible Seneca's rhetoric of violence and violation may look, it has a modern descendant in the atmosphere of unreality and nightmare which pervades the novels of Kafka, Canetti, and Wiesel and a still living cousin in the element of the surreal and the incredible that attaches to the (alas) non-fictional accounts of the tortured from Argentina to Algeria, from Auschwitz to the Gulag.

<sup>23</sup> For some contemporary discussion see M. N. Nagler, *America without Violence* (Covelo, Calif. 1982) 17–30; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture, Cancer of Democracy* (Harmondsworth 1963) and *Les Crimes de l'armée française* (Paris 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Umberto M. Fasola, *Traces on Stone: Peter and Paul in Rome*, English trans. of *Ricordi archeologici di Pietro e Paolo a Roma* (Rome and Florence 1980) 107–14; the quotation comes from 111.

<sup>25</sup> See Regenbogen 211ff., especially 215f., citing Seneca, *Ad Helv. Matr. de Consol.* 20. 1–3.

## Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama

*John G. Fitch and Siobhan McElduff*

### 1. CONSTRUCTING THE SELF

‘Nobody wants to be a nobody,’ writes the novelist John Fowles. ‘All our acts are partly devised to fill or to mask the emptiness we feel at the core.’<sup>1</sup> We are not born with a defined identity, like Athena emerging fully armoured from the head of Zeus. Rather we must construct a *persona*, a mask which we present to the world—and even, as Fowles suggests, to ourselves. To fashion a *persona* that will be convincing to the world, to exert control over our own identity, requires force and determination. The alternative is to allow the world to make a mask for us.

Self-construction has a special affinity with the genre of drama, not least with the masked drama of antiquity. The mask worn by the actor is unmistakably a front, a constructed version of identity. Senecan tragedy is centrally concerned with the processes by which its *dramatis personae* construct, adopt, and reinforce identities for themselves. Some of the decisive moments in Seneca are those in which the leading figures assert identity. *Medea nunc sum; crevit ingenium malis*: ‘Now I am Medea; my natural powers have been strengthened by evils’ (*Med.* 910). *Vultus hic Oedipodam decet*: ‘This [blinded] countenance is fitting for an Oedipus’ (*Oed.* 1003).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Aristos* (rev. edn. London 1968) 51.

<sup>2</sup> An important impetus towards the modern rediscovery of Senecan drama was provided by T. S. Eliot’s essay (1927*b*) on ‘self-dramatization’ among Shakespeare’s *dramatis personae* as an inheritance from Seneca. From the vast modern literature on

Competitive societies such as those of Greece and Rome, which place great value on honour and reputation, are particularly likely to exacerbate a sense that one is a 'somebody' only if one performs certain actions. 'Let no-one think me paltry and weak,' says Euripides' Medea, 'nor inactive, but rather one of the opposite character, harsh to my enemies and kind to my friends; for the life of such people is most renowned' (807–10). The Senecan figures are often obsessed by the *scale* of their achievements, and the point of the competition is in part to prove that they are 'somebody' in the world. 'Now I hold the glory of kingship, now I hold my father's throne,' Atreus assures himself after his revenge (*Thy.* 887), though of course he held those things before. Medea's recognition of her own strength (*Medea nunc sum*) co-exists with a need to have it 'recognized' by others (*coniugem agnoscis tuam?* 1021, 'Do you recognize your wife?')

The urgency of self-representation is fuelled by desire: desire for the approval and love of others, desire to wield power, desire to play an adult role. These desires distort any authentic sense of the self. A strongly patriarchal society generates a desire to equal or usurp the role of the Father.<sup>3</sup> In Seneca's *Troades*, both Greeks and Trojans regard Astyanax solely as a potential replacement for his father, a *futurus Hector* (551, cf. e.g. 464–68, 536, 665, 1117 *sic quoque est similis patri*). There is a connection between the fact that Hercules when 'sane' puts himself on a par with his father Jove (*Hercules* 926–7 *ipse concipiam preces/Iove meque dignas*), and that when 'insane' a few moments later he plans to overthrow him (965ff.)<sup>4</sup>

self-construction we cite two prominent studies: Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York 1959), and Greenblatt 1980.

In drama, since it impersonates reality, the audience can observe the *dramatis personae* themselves playing roles hypocritically. In Seneca, for example, Atreus pretends to be a forgiving brother, Helen a *pronuba* for Polyxena, Phaedra a victim of rape (*Thy.* 508ff., *Tro.* 861ff., *Pha.* 824ff.). Language of role-playing is used at *Tro.* 715 *gere captivam* and 884 *dedisce captam*.

<sup>3</sup> René Girard in a well-known study saw imitative desire as central to the Romantic novel of the nineteenth century: *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, transl. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore 1965). The novels of Flaubert, for example, including *Madame Bovary*, repeatedly portray figures who attempt to mould themselves according to some externally suggested standard, to see themselves as they are not. For Girard, the issue culminates in Dostoyevsky, where imitative desire shows itself in its most powerful form, i.e. within the family: in *A Raw Youth*, son and father love the same woman.

<sup>4</sup> It has often been suggested that the structure of the soul in Plato and Stoicism, with reason controlling the emotions, represents an internalisation of patriarchal

The opposite of a constructed self would be a spontaneous or authentic self: a tiger does not need to proclaim its tigrity, as Léopold Senghor said. A completely spontaneous self could not exist in the presence of language, but the urgency of creating an imposing *persona* varies from one culture to another. One would expect it to increase with the loss of a reciprocal recognition between individuals, characteristic of a relatively unitary community such as that of the fifth-century polis.<sup>5</sup> It is no coincidence that the increased focus on the individual in post-fifth-century tragedy is paralleled by an increasing focus in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy on the individual, and on ways of making him invulnerable and self-sufficient. Finally, the loss of a sense of cosmic order, such as would limit the individual's place in the universe, opens up space for self-aggrandisement of the most imperialistic kind (so Garton 1972, 197). The ambivalence of the last line of the *Medea* brilliantly suggests the interconnection between the gods' loss of power and Medea's powerfulness. *Testare nullos esse qua veheris deos*: 'Bear witness, where you ride, that there are no gods'—or, 'Bear witness that there are none *where you ride*.'<sup>6</sup>

An increasingly intense concern with the self can be observed in the evolution of tragic drama since the fifth century BC. During this evolution, the focus of tragedy moves away from interaction between the *dramatis personae*, towards the self in isolation and the psychology of the passions. There is an increasing use of those dramatic techniques which show the *personae* as thinking aloud, rather than interacting with others: the aside, the entrance-monologue and the soliloquy.<sup>7</sup> By the time of Seneca, dialogue carries little sense of the

family and social structure: e.g. Faber 1978, 19. Since the *hegemonikon* in Stoicism is a portion of God, it is literally an internalisation of the Father. Braden argues that the defining characteristic of the *hegemonikon* is its controlling ability, even more than its rationality (1985, 20–2). Foucault perhaps overgeneralized in seeing a relationship to the self defined by 'domination–submission', 'command–obedience', mastery–docility' as characteristic of the ethics of ancient Greece, in contrast to the Judeo-Christian tradition: *The Use of Pleasure* (New York 1985) 70.

<sup>5</sup> Braden 1985, 33–6 makes an instructive contrast between Greek and Senecan tragedy in this regard.

<sup>6</sup> Loss of a sense of cosmic order: Garton 1972, 197. At *Med.* 1027 the possibility that 'where you ride' could be taken as modifying 'there are no gods' is suggested by the word order of the line, and not ruled out by the indicative mood of *veheris* (so Hine 2000 ad loc., citing K–S 2.542–4 and H–Sz 547–8).

<sup>7</sup> Tarrant 1978. Herington in his famous essay (1966, 449–51, 455) suggested that in this drama both descriptions of external landscape and the interventions of Nurses

participants listening and responding to each other; especially in stichomythia, more frequently used in Seneca than in fifth-century tragedy, they are concerned mainly to score points off each other.<sup>8</sup>

Two examples will illustrate this new isolation of the self. Gill 1987, 31 notes that the decisive monologue in Seneca's *Medea* (893–977) operates in a different mode from that of Euripides' heroine (1021–86), and indicates a shift in dramatic discourse and concerns. It is:

much more of a soliloquy; and the pattern of motivation for infanticide articulated in the speech is one in which Medea responds to herself (especially to her character, and her past) rather than the others immediately concerned, her children and Jason.

Similarly in Act 5 of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, most of Hercules' utterance is concerned with calibrating his own response to the tragedy, largely in terms of his self-image; only one-quarter of the lines spoken by him are clearly addressed to Amphitryon or Theseus, in contrast to the pattern in Greek tragedy in which a speaker generally engages in dialogue when there are other *dramatis personae* on stage (Leo 1908, 91–2).

## 2. OEDIPUS: A PERSONA OF GUILT

Since Oedipus is a paradigm for the issue of identity, we begin with him. In the opening scene of Seneca's *Phoenissae*, the exiled Oedipus is preoccupied with himself, as is shown by his insistent use of *me*, *meus* and first-person verbs. He identifies himself with the guilt of his deeds (158 *totus nocens sum*) and is filled with self-hatred (e.g. 44–5, cf. 537). His goal is Mt. Cithaeron, which he regards as a place of special importance to his identity (13 *meus Cithaeron*, 27 *noster locus*: 'my Cithaeron', 'my place'). In fact it will *complete* his identity, since he will die (presumably by suicide) as an old man in that place where

and other minor characters can be interpreted to some degree allegorically, i.e. as representing aspects of the *inner life* of the leading figures.

<sup>8</sup> Dialogue frequently proceeds by means of *Stichwörter* or link-words which, together with the frequent use of *sententiae*, give it a brittle, intellectual quality: Seidensticker 1969, 38–44. Consequently the speakers 'bounce off each other like billiard-balls,' in the phrase of Braden 1970, 19.

he should have died as an infant (32–3). Psychologically Cithaeron represents a ‘home’ (NB 30 *sedes meas*, ‘my abode’), a place of ‘stasis and rest in the establishment of selfhood’ (Docherty 1983, 230). But this kind of completion of the self paradoxically involves self-destruction:<sup>9</sup> Oedipus longs to withdraw from his one remaining human contact, with Antigone, and to die.

Oedipus’ insistence on an identity of guilt in *Phoenissae* is paralleled by the eagerness with which he embraces that identity when the truth is revealed in the *Oedipus. Saeculi crimen vagor, odium deorum, iuris exitium sacri*: ‘I wander as the crime of the age, the object of the gods’ hatred, the destruction of holy law’ (875 f.). Braden notices ‘the speaker’s triumphant awareness that he is now the center of cosmic attention’ (1985, 51). He has achieved an identity; he has answered the question which haunts him, ‘Who am I?’ But the very haste with which he grasps this answer shows it to be false, or at least partial. The answer misrepresents Oedipus’ self because it was not-Oedipus, that is not Oedipus’ conscious intent, that did these deeds.

Again constructing a version of himself from his past, Oedipus images himself as a second Sphinx (*Phoen.* 118ff.). He propounds a second riddle, this one about himself (134–7): ‘He was his grandfather’s son-in-law and rival of his father, brother of his own children and father of his own brothers ...’ (134–7, cf. *Oed.* 638–41). The riddle is about identity; overtly about Oedipus himself, it also suggests the ambiguity and doubling of roles within the incestuous triangles of the family, replicated from one generation to the next: wife-mother, son-lover and so on. The vehemence with which Seneca’s Oedipus embraces an identity of guilt, even at the cost of self-loathing, suggests that behind it lies an irrational burden of guilt, greater than could be caused by the unwitting commission of deeds however horrible. This is confirmed by the fact that, in notable contrast to Sophocles’ *OT*, Seneca’s Oedipus is consumed by anxiety and guilt from the beginning of the play: he *assumes* that all Thebes is infected by his ‘great crimes’ and his ‘death-bringing hand’ (35, 77), long before he discovers that he has in fact committed such crimes. Overtly his dread is based on the oracle which foretold that he would

<sup>9</sup> In a parallel way, Braden argues that suicide in Seneca’s Stoicism is the natural fulfilment of the wise man’s self-regulation, the ultimate act of self-control (1985, 24f.).



do such deeds (15–27). But its obsessive nature puts it closer to Freudian neurosis.<sup>10</sup> We accept Segal's view that drama can function as a dream-world in which repressed fears and fantasies are acted out, and specifically his suggestion that the elaborately described apparition of the vengeful Laius in *Oedipus* is 'virtually a foreshadowing of the Freudian superego, a harsh, demanding, guilt-raising father figure' (above, p. 144). This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that in *Phoenissae* Oedipus *hallucinates* the image of his father as physically attacking him in rage (39–44). Oedipus' intended suicide on Cithaeron will finally obey the *mandatum patris*, the command of the Father (38) given at his birth, that he must die. The oracle, then, can be understood as a metaphor for a doom of guilt, bound up with the very processes of procreation: Oedipus was guilty even in the womb, condemned by both the divine and the human Father while still unborn (*Phoen.* 243–54). We recall the famous words of Freud:

His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours—because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so.<sup>11</sup>

In discussing the background to character-portrayal in Seneca, Charles Garton rightly stressed the influence of rhetoric, and particularly the practice in declamation-oratory of *inferring* from known facts concerning the person in question. In the next section we shall show how Seneca characters in search of identity repeatedly look to *precedent*, and exploit it by the processes of 'inference, extension, exaggeration' which Garton notes (1972, 200–1). Oedipus' self-identification with Cithaeron and the Sphinx is based in just this way on precedents from his earlier life. But it would be wrong to conclude (as Garton certainly did not) that Seneca used such processes uncritically. On the contrary, Seneca has Antigone propose to her father an alternative identity, one based on 'resisting' evils rather than identifying with them (*Phoen.* 79, 191). He has an option: he could regard those acts which he did in innocence as external to his real self, rather than as defining it. It would also be wrong to conclude that

<sup>10</sup> So J.A. Segurado e Campos in *Euphrosyne* 12 (1983–84) 223–32.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900], transl. James Strachey (London 1976) 364.

rhetoric is empty of meaning. In fact the rhetorical processes which Garton names are clearly akin to the psychological procedures through which we invent versions of ourselves, by imitating and internalizing and developing what has a particular emotional impact on us. In the next section we shall watch these procedures at work in the Senecan *dramatis personae*.

### 3. MATERIALS OF SELF-CONSTRUCTION

How do the Senecan figures construct and proclaim their identities? They do so prominently by self-naming, either in self-address or in third-person reference to themselves.<sup>12</sup> 'Oedipus' sums up a whole life-history and its uniqueness in 'This countenance is fitting for an Oedipus' (*Oed.* 1003, cf. for example 943, *Phoen.* 89). Self-naming is unusually frequent in Seneca: Hercules uses his own name 12 times in Seneca's *Hercules* but only once in Euripides' *Herakles*; Medea names herself eight times in Seneca but only once in Euripides.<sup>13</sup> To name oneself can convey awareness of one's image and pride in one's accomplishments: when Ulysses tells Andromache that it is not easy for her to deceive *Ulysses*, he reminds her of his skills in trickery—and reminds himself too of the standards he must maintain (*Tro.* 568–9, cf. 607–8).

<sup>12</sup> Docherty 1983 has enlightening comments on the problematic relationship between names and identity in fiction, in Ch. 2, 'Names'. The hero of *Lord Jim*, for instance, 'strives to realize the imaginary identity of one worthy of the title 'Tuan Jim' and fixes himself in that nominal entity.' Docherty's elegant formulation reminds us at once of the figures of Senecan drama, whose goal is repeatedly to be 'worthy' of a name or pre-defined standard: *dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo: uterque faciat* (*Thy.* 271–2: 'It is a deed worthy of Thyestes and worthy of Atreus: let each of them perform it').

On 'loaded' uses of proper names in Senecan drama, see Traina 1979; Segal 1982; G. Petrone in *MD* 20–1 (1988), 61–6.

<sup>13</sup> Forms of *Hercules*, *Alcides*, *Herculeus* in Sen. *Herc.* at 631, 635, 957, 960, 991, 1152, 1155, 1163, 1168, 1218, 1295, 1316; in Eur. only at 581, and that in *rejection* of his *persona* as 'Herakles the victorious'. Medea: Sen. 8, 166, 171, 517, 524, 567, 910, 934; Eur. 402.

Indeed self-naming is often a way of defining who one *should* be, an index of the gap between one's present performance and one's ideal role. 'Do you, an angry Atreus, act with nothing more than futile complaints?' (*Thy.* 179–80).<sup>14</sup> Here Seneca plays with two meanings of 'act' (*agis*), both 'take action' (Tarrant *ad loc.*) and 'play your role', a theatrical metaphor (*OLD* s.v. *agere* 25–6). The most famous example is that moment when Medea's nurse appeals to her by name, and Medea turns the name into a promise—*fiam*, 'I shall *become* Medea' (171). Similarly Hercules' self-naming becomes particularly insistent at the beginning of Act 5 as he realizes that he, the world-conqueror, has himself been conquered. Such naming as a means of desperately re-affirming the power of one's *persona* echoes as a Senecan inheritance through Renaissance drama: 'I am Antony yet'.

The gap between the actual situations of these speakers and the reified selves which they name reminds us that self-naming is always a misrepresentation. The notional or nominal self is a simplification of the complexities of existence to something that can be encapsulated in a word or a description. To put it more generally, self-construction is always a reduction because it ignores the fluid self which exists in relationships, in favour of the self-as-entity. The process of 'becoming Medea' is in fact a radical simplification: it involves destroying the self-in-relationship, viz. as mother of Jason's children and therefore still connected to him. Though she speaks of her revenge as the achievement of her mature *ingenium* (910), she is defining and so simplifying her *ingenium* as that of powerful witch. This is not maturity, but in fact reversion to an earlier and cruder identity, that of Colchian (43–5, 677, 752): at the moment of fullest self-assertion she reverts literally to the identity of virgin girl (982–4).

The name is particularly powerful in constructing a (mis)identity when it appears to mean something in itself. The name Aias seems to

<sup>14</sup> Braden 1985, 42: 'the speech is essentially self-address, a rousing of oneself to action. The past figures insofar as it supplies motive for response, but the real business is Atreus' confrontation with a self image to live up to. Indeed, part of what he sets before himself . . . is his own name; the phrase *iratus Atreus* is offered as a reproach, but it resonates in its isolation as something a bit more impressive: a play title, maybe, like *Hercules furens*.' It is worth adding that, since *iratus* is almost an anagram of *Atreus*, the phrase implies that anger is built into his role.

have inscribed within it *aiai*, alas, casting its owner as a man of sorrows (Soph. *Ajax* 430–3). When Seneca's Medea says that now she is truly Medea because her *ingenium* has been strengthened by evils, she implies that her name means the woman who *μῆδεται*, who has *μῆτις* (cunning intelligence). Similarly when Oedipus says 'It is granted to Oedipus alone to *know/understand* ambiguities,' *ambigua soli noscere Oedipodae datur* (*Oed.* 216), he means that his name, in addition to its apparent meaning 'swollen-foot', contains the root of *οἶδα*, to know:<sup>15</sup> it is his identity to know about identities.

The name also shapes identity in another way within a strong mythical tradition: we know in general terms, even before the play begins, what a Medea does, or a Clytemnestra or Phaedra, and what sort of person she is. So there can be metatheatrical playing-off of the figure against an identity which she has not yet taken on fully. That is what happens when Euripides' Clytemnestra, pleading with Agamemnon not to sacrifice their daughter, cries 'Do not force me to become a woman of evil towards you' (*IA* 1183–4): that is, do not make me become that Clytemnestra famed for murdering her husband. In Seneca, Thyestes' ghost shudders at the sight of the house where the 'custom' of devouring children was already inscribed, long before his own crime, in the very name, 'the house of Pelops' (*Ag.* 7–11). The more famous examples in Seneca are those in which figures drive themselves with manic enthusiasm to achieve a pre-scripted identity, to *become* Medea, to do a deed *worthy* of Atreus. Christopher Gill remarks that the phrase *Medea nunc sum*

resonates with the force of earlier, significant uses of the name in the play, as well as with the force of the literary tradition in which that image has come to be shaped.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For Medea cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.27 and Eur. *Med.* 402, in both of which places Medea implies that her name carries these meanings. For Oidipous/*οἶδα* cf. Soph. *OT* 397 (*ὁ μῆδὲν εἰδὼς Οἰδίππου*) and Maxwell-Stuart 1975, 37–8. So far as we know, neither word-play in Seneca has been noted before. Nor has the pun at *Thy.* 485f. *vos facitis mihi/Atrea timendum*, which plays on 'You make the fearless one fearful to me'. Socrates at Plato *Cratylus* 395A makes various ironic suggestions about Atreus' name, one being that it was coined *κατὰ τὸ ἄτρεστον*, 'in accordance with his fearlessness'.

<sup>16</sup> Gill 1987, 32. Because self-construction takes place largely through language, the process by which the *dramatis personae* 'write themselves,' and write themselves *anew*, is akin to that by which the author rewrites their stories. 'The challenge and anxiety of *imitatio* are shared by author and character' (Tarrant 1985 ad *Thy.* 272–7).

We would relate this allusiveness to a widespread sense in Senecan drama that identity and destiny are always already written, predetermined, by name and family history. Aegisthus invokes his own name to persuade himself that he has no choice but to immerse himself in the destructive story of revenge: 'Be assured that for you the pitiless gods are preparing destruction and a terrible fate ... , Aegisthus: for one of your birth, death is no penalty' (*Ag.* 229–33). This sense of mythical identity as predetermined is a heightened correlate, we suggest, of the situation in real life in which one's identity appears to be pre-set, appropriated, by one's name or family or others' construction of oneself—a situation which some embrace all too readily, because it provides a pre-constructed identity, while others feel compelled to spend too much energy in resisting it.

In addition to names, *precedents* are a prime means by which Senecan figures construct identities. Megara, threatened with forced marriage to the tyrant Lycus, dramatises herself as a fiftieth Danaid, equally determined as her 'sisters' to murder her would-be husband (*Herc.* 498–500). Atreus, seeking revenge against his brother for the seduction of his wife, sees himself as having a 'similar cause/case' to that of Procne and Philomela against Pandion (*Thy.* 276).<sup>17</sup> Clearly such self-construction is oriented less towards genuine self-understanding than towards taking a certain kind of action. The precedent suggests or confirms that certain actions are imaginable, performable. At the same time it provides a kind of excuse, since the action however horrible is not unprecedented. Once again, the rhetorical nature of such use of precedents should not blind us to their psychological meaningfulness: our age is all too familiar with the phenomenon of 'copycat' crimes, suicides, murders.

Precedents within the family and home are naturally the most powerful and the most often used as models. In fact they are sometimes presented as determinative. Seneca's Phaedra invokes the illicit passion of her mother Pasiphae, in order to present herself as the helpless victim

<sup>17</sup> There is a suggestion of the self-reflexive quality of metatheatre about these references by mythical characters to the web of myth which encompasses them. This is particularly the case when a figure *alludes* to other myths, creating a complicity of knowledge with the audience. When Medea wants to ride in her 'father's' sun-chariot, or to see the sun turn back (28–34), she seems to imply, 'This play should be a *Phaethon*, or a *Thyestes*.'

of illicit passion for Hippolytus, doomed by a curse imposed by Venus on her whole house (113–14, 124–8). But here again the precedent could be read as an excuse, rather than a determining factor. Is our destiny in our genes, or do we have control over our choices? The issue is as complex and unresolvable in Seneca's drama as in real life. Phaedra's Nurse is persuasive when she briskly dismisses the notion of divine intervention, and the idea that 'Nature is to abandon her laws, whenever a Cretan woman falls in love' (195–215, 176–8). But clearly this Phaedra has a *propensity* to sensual love and to flouting conventional limits. There is a similar balance, though struck differently, when Medea takes on a Colchian identity again (e.g. 43–4, 752). Certainly this is part of her inheritance, a part which would assert itself when she is most threatened, but equally there is a large element of free choice in her decision to revert to it. Atreus speaks of Tantalus and Pelops as examples which demand imitation by him (*Thy.* 242–3), and the supernatural prologue suggests a propensity to evil in this family, but no one could deny his personal commitment and enthusiasm.

Within the family, the precedent of the father is particularly ambivalent in Freudian terms, since the son's desire to emulate the father necessarily entails a desire to remove the father, and is complicated further by sexual desire. Hippolytus, in fact, represses his awareness of mutual aggression between himself and Theseus, masking it by his painfully dutiful attitude towards Theseus and Phaedra; this repression is allied to his repression of his own sexuality. Consequently his attempts to emulate his father with *pietas* meet with disaster. Confronted by the monstrous bull from the sea, he casts himself in his father's role—'To vanquish bulls is my father's trade' (1067, tr. Boyle)—but he is doomed because (to frame one prosaic formulation of a poetic symbol) the bull represents sexual aggression, both his own and his father's, with which he cannot deal. Similarly his earlier dutiful promise to 'fill his father's place' for Phaedra, and make her forget her sense of widowhood (632–3), is redolent of repressed sexuality: it is understood by Phaedra in an erotic sense, and followed by her amatory comparison of Hippolytus to Theseus.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> On Hippolytus' repression see Segal 1986, 92–3; on his submission to the authority of the father, *ibid.* 182–3; on the meanings of the bull, 112–14 and 177. For a Freudian reading of Seneca's Hercules as exhibiting 'the potential murderous harshness of the Father, *who is also a son*', see Faber 1978, 21.

Precedents can also be constituted by one's own past actions: here *persona* becomes fully self-reflexive. Hercules in his madness thinks that for one who has conquered earth, sea and underworld, the conquest of heaven is a natural next step, a 'Labour' worthy of his own stature (*dignus Alcide labor*, 957). His thinking when sane is not very different: he reconciles himself finally to living on, rather than committing suicide, by seeing it as another 'Labour' to be added to his accomplishments.<sup>19</sup> Medea assesses the actions accompanying her divorce from Jason by the yardstick of those accompanying her union with him—the murder of Apsyrtus and Pelias: they must either *equal* or *outdo* them (e.g. 52–4 and 904–9 respectively). Once again we want to note the alliance between rhetoric and psychology. *Scelera te hortentur tua/et cuncta redeant* she urges herself at an early stage (129–30): 'Let your own crimes urge you on, and let them all return.' 'Return' they do, for as she prepares to murder her children, she has hallucinations of that brother whom she murdered so many years ago (963–71).

Precedents require that one should live up to them. We have seen several times already the desire to be *worthy* of a certain *persona* or certain precedents. Oedipus wants to enact a punishment 'worthy' of his crimes (*Oed.* 879 *sceleribus dignum tuis*), and Hercules regards it as 'fitting' (*decet*) that the arrows of Hercules should be launched against a tyrant's family (as he thinks). But there is also a challenge to *outdo* the past, since imitation leads to emulation. Medea thinks of her former crimes as 'training' for a greater crime which will top them (907–13). Atreus is inspired by the deed of Procne, but that achievement is already 'appropriated' (*occupatum*, *Thy.* 271), so he seeks 'something greater' (274 *maius aliquid*). In fact Atreus' motivation is centred around competition, whether with his brother's crimes (193–7) or with any 'ordinary' human crimes (254–70).

A third way in which Senecan figures (mis)identify themselves is through a specific social *persona* such as that of wife. The attraction of such identification is that it provides a pre-scripted role which can be played easily. Its cost is exactly to misidentify the self, by associating it too completely with a particular role. Sartre exemplified his

<sup>19</sup> Immediately afterward he ignores Amphitryon's words of affection at 1319–21, as he ignored his earlier plea at 1246–57, in order to express once again his obsessive concern with his self-image, 1321ff. See further Fitch in *Hermes* 107 (1979), 246–7.

concept of 'bad faith' with the waiter in a restaurant who plays his part *too* well, *too* whole-heartedly, not marking any distinction between role and self. One manifestation of bad faith is that a role can be used, like a precedent, as an *excuse*, shielding the full self from responsibility. Atreus defines himself as a tyrant and, with the strange logic of self-construction, argues that it is disgraceful behaviour in a tyrant not to avenge himself (*Thy.* 176f.). Since Juno in *Hercules* feels that her role and 'name' as Jove's wife is deleted by his infidelities, she decides that the existence of so many of his bastards has made her a stepmother (*novercam* 21)—with all the negative connotations of that term for antiquity—and that she must do something 'worthy' of that role (112 *dignum noverca*: worthiness again!).

From her appeal to the marriage-gods in the opening words of the play, Seneca's Medea identifies herself as wife. The reasons for her attachment to that role are evident: she cut herself off from family for it (e.g. 483–9), committed crimes for it (e.g. 129–36), and gained through it a position in Greek society without which she is literally displaced (249–51).<sup>20</sup> Her revenge re-asserts her rights to that role, as she makes clear in her moment of 'triumph': *coniugem agnoscis tuam?* (1021: 'Do you recognize your wife?'). Because of the complexity of the theme in the play, her question can be glossed in several ways: 'Do you give me now the recognition which I deserve?' or 'Do you recognize your true wife—not Creusa?' or 'Do you recognize the particular character of *your* wife?'<sup>21</sup> But the self-identification is problematic, as always. Her role of wife is an 'empty mask', so to speak, because the relationship which gives it substance is ended. Furthermore self-conceptualization, particularly when drastically simplified to the single word 'wife', leaves out large areas of the full self. We see this when Medea's maternal feelings rebel against her

<sup>20</sup> Self-definition becomes both urgent and problematic when others refuse to recognize one's identity, since a secure sense of self-hood depends on mutual recognition. Both Creon and Jason refuse to recognize Medea's rights, and treat her in effect as a nonperson. Medea's self-construction is an attempt to prove her existence, both to herself and others: e.g. 561 f. *excidimus tibi?/numquam excidemus*: 'Have I fallen from your mind? I will never fall from it.'

<sup>21</sup> The last possibility is confirmed by her following words, *sic fugere soleo*, 'This is how I always flee,' i.e. with bloodstained hands. (For the interpretation v. D. Armstrong in *CQ* 32 [1982] 239f.). The *anagnorisis* of *Thy.* 1006 *agnosco fratrem* similarly means, 'I recognize the nature of my brother.'



wifely desire to harm Jason through the children—or rather, to use her own reifying and self-dividing language, when the ‘mother’ wars against the ‘wife’ (928, *materque tota coniuge expulsa redit*: ‘the mother returns completely, with the wife banished’). Medea’s language illustrates in the clearest way the paradox that self-conceptualization, though its goal is to give the self a coherent identity, actually fragments the self through misrepresentation.

This fragmentation of the self is manifested in that language, so recurrent in Seneca, which speaks of the passions as separable entities, independent parts of the self. Megara’s hatred towards Lycus is literally reified, a separate *thing*: *una res superest mihi, ... odium tui* (*Hercules* 380–3: ‘One possession is left me, ... my hate for you.’) Medea addresses her *dolor*, asks questions of her *ira*, and appeals to her *furor*, exactly as if they were *dramatis personae* (914, 916, 930);<sup>22</sup> Atreus’ *dolor* ‘scarcely obeys the leash’, *vix dolor frenos capit*, like a bloodthirsty hunting-hound (*Thy.* 496–503). To speak of the passions as independent is a way of shielding the self from responsibility, from the burden of taking decisions: we have seen precedent and social role used in comparable ways. Indeed, Clytemnestra explicitly and deliberately uses this strategy:

... omisi regimen e malibus meis.  
quocumque me ira, quo dolor, quo spes feret,  
hoc ire pergam: fluctibus dedimus ratem.

(*Ag.* 141–3)

(‘I have let the rudder slip out of my hands: wherever anger, resentment, hope will carry me, there I am resolved to go: I have given up my ship to the waves.’) More commonly passion-figures claim to have no choice, since this is, after all, the point of the strategy. Phaedra, an expert in disclaiming responsibility (until the last moments of her life), speaks in this way: ‘my passion compels me to follow the worse path ... What could reason do? Passion has conquered and reigns supreme’ (178f., 184f.); ‘I am not mistress of

<sup>22</sup> Further examples of reification of emotions are collected by Liebermann 1974, 120 fn. 142, 129f. On Medea see Henry and Walker 1967, especially 176–7: ‘When identity yields to a quasi-personification of a force called *dolor*, what kind of identity can Medea retain? ... In her there is an absence of continuous identity combined with repeated and desperate affirmation of identity existing or to come.’

myself' (699). The cost is everything: the self gives up autonomy, wholeness, selfhood itself.

#### 4. PHAEDRA: MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF THE SELF

At a crucial point in the *Phaedra*, Hippolytus addresses his stepmother dutifully as 'mother'. But since Phaedra is about to confess her passion to the young man, 'mother' is not at all the image she wants him to have of her. 'The name of mother is proud, and carries too much power. A humbler name suits my feelings: call me sister, Hippolytus, or slave—yes, slave is better' (609–12). To arouse his masculine protective feelings further, she calls herself also his 'suppliant' and a 'widow'. But the *persona* of slave has a particularly useful ambiguity, since through it she can and does evoke established connotations of the *servitium amoris*. In short, she is manipulating conventional images in the hope of changing Hippolytus' attitude towards her from deferential respect to protectiveness and eventually love. But the desperateness of the attempt, and the disconnection of these images from reality, is shown by the speed with which she shifts from one to another.

Another *persona*, which Phaedra constructs in more detail earlier in the play, is that of the helpless victim of Venus, doomed by a family curse of monstrous love. As we saw, the Nurse 'reads through' this particular script, understanding it as an excuse for Phaedra to indulge her passion.<sup>23</sup> Yet another role with which Phaedra toys is that of huntress or Amazon; she even dresses the part (387–403). Because the role is suggested by desire, it has an ambivalence comparable to that of 'slave': an Amazon or devotee of Diana is conventionally chaste, but for Phaedra the role offers an opportunity to pursue her

<sup>23</sup> Some critics have accepted at face value Phaedra's claim that she is in the grip of ungovernable emotional forces: R. Merzlak, 'Furor in Seneca's *Phaedra*,' *Studies in Latin Literature* 3 (1983) 192–210, and P.J. Davis, 'Vindicat Omnes Natura Sibi: a Reading of Seneca's *Phaedra*,' in Boyle 1983, 114–27, specifically at 120–4. We would make a distinction between ungovernable and ungoverned emotions. The unreality of her self-analysis is paralleled by her unreal visions of the external world, e.g. that Theseus will forgive her love, that Hippolytus will love her in return, that their love can be legitimized by marriage (respectively 225, 240, 597).

passion. (The motif of hunting takes on a corresponding ambivalence, for her repeated language of pursuing Hippolytus figures her as a huntress *of him*—an image which in turn represents him, the man of the wilderness, as a wild creature, 240.)

These varying self-representations are fuelled by desire. Yet Phaedra's desire itself is not a single thing, but multifaceted. Sexually she is drawn to Hippolytus' youthful potency, though even that is a palimpsest behind which she glimpses the earlier attractiveness of the young Theseus (646 ff.). Hippolytus' energy is allied to a male freedom of movement, which she envies because of her sense of entrapment in the palace and in the heavy clothes of a noblewoman. For her, his sexual potential is conflated with his power as hunter over life and death, and his weapons become palpably sexual symbols when she desires to handle stiff javelins with her soft hand (111; Segal 1986, 64), or later welcomes the prospect of penetration by his sword (710–12; Segal 1986, 37, 132–4). And his male vigour denotes his potential to wield patriarchal power over the city, a power which is part of what attracts her: 'You are in the vigour of youth's first bloom: rule over the citizens in the confidence of your father's power, and take me in your embrace and protect me as your suppliant and slave' (620–2).

If Phaedra's desire is multifaceted, it is also not unmediated, any more than the varied self-representations which it inspires are unmediated. On the contrary, her desire imitates, or at the least takes its cue from, the desires of Theseus and Pasiphae: it is not accidental that she mentions Theseus' pursuit of *illicitos toros* (97) immediately before she reveals her own illicit passion. Most important, her passion mimics her own former desire for Hippolytus' father Theseus, as she herself acknowledges: 'Hippolytus, this is how it is: I love Theseus' features—those former looks which he had once as a youth when his first beard was marking his smooth cheeks, and when he saw the sightless home of the monster of Cnossus ...' (646–66).<sup>24</sup> Here we have the familial triangle, but seen from the viewpoint of female rather than male desire. As an Oedipal son's desire mimics that of the father, so the desire of the mother (here stepmother) towards the son mimics her own earlier desire towards the father,

<sup>24</sup> This former desire too was not unmediated, but played understudy to that of her sister Ariadne: 650, 656, 662.

who has become undesirable through age or absence.<sup>25</sup> Desire is imitative, just as the self-representations which it fuels are imitative.

But Phaedra also knows another version of herself, that of the chaste noblewoman of good repute. Under the Nurse's insistence, she reverts briefly to this version of herself at 250ff. The script for the *persona* of 'honour threatened by dishonour' includes suicide, preceded by 'consideration of alternative methods of suicide' (Tarrant 1976 on Ag. 972ff.): Phaedra accordingly enumerates her options for suicide at 258–60. Critics have discussed whether her plan for suicide is sincere, or a ploy to end the Nurse's resistance to her passion.<sup>26</sup> But the model of role-playing suggests another possibility. At her Nurse's insistence that she should play the part of 'the honorable woman,' she throws herself into that role with as much vehemence as she devoted earlier to 'victim of love,' without however having necessarily committed herself to playing the part to the end. In a comparable way, the Nurse later assigns her, and stage-manages for her, the role of 'innocent victim of rape.' Admittedly in the latter case Phaedra is more conscious of role-playing; but here too there is a contrast with the Phaedra of Euripides' play, who scripts her role, commits herself to it, and acts it to the end.

What happens at the beginning of the final Act of Seneca's play is that the role of victim of rape becomes insupportable for Phaedra. The presence of Hippolytus' broken body shows her that her play-acting has had disastrously real consequences. In her response to this situation, we see once again the influence of desire on role-playing: the presence of her love-object makes it impossible for her to contemplate renewing sex-relations with Theseus, in the role of innocent wife (1186–7). But by now she has played so many versions of herself that she no longer knows which is real: 'If you are chaste, die for your husband; if unchaste, for your love' (1184–5). Correspondingly death, though now inevitable as the finale of her drama, has multiple and contradictory meanings for her, as is evident in the words just

<sup>25</sup> Hence Phaedra's repeated insistence that Theseus will never return from the underworld parallels an Oedipal son's desire to remove (kill) the father. Her insistence on this point reflects her wishes rather than a realistic appraisal, for both the Nurse and Hippolytus are sure that he *will* return, as of course he does.

<sup>26</sup> Seidensticker 1969, 100 fn. 58 surveys the question and rejects the idea of a ploy.

quoted.<sup>27</sup> It is both an escape from guilt and an opportunity to pursue Hippolytus frantically through Tartarus (1178–80), both an atonement for her crime and a means of cursing Theseus as if *he* were guilty (1197, 1199–200).<sup>28</sup> What Driscoll wrote of Shakespeare's Richard II would apply well, *mutatis mutandis*, to this Phaedra:

Disaster finds Richard, who has so often lived like a child enacting a fantasy, still playing so many different people that he cannot establish a coherent identity as a king or a man.<sup>29</sup>

## 5. SELF-CONSTRUCTION AND TRAGEDY

Finally we want to explore the tragic significance of self-construction. We have shown how the process misidentifies and fragments the authentic self, leading to alienation from that self and ultimately to self-destruction. Alienation is built into the process of self-construction, especially through language; the more obsessive the effort, the greater the degree of self-destruction. Because identity is reciprocal, destruction of the self also involves destruction of others. Self-construction is closely associated with the tragic outcomes of the Senecan dramas.<sup>30</sup>

An association between self-construction and death is evident in the case of Oedipus. He is eager to complete his *persona* of guilt by dying on Cithaeron: the *persona* he has embraced is so painful that he longs to escape it. Phaedra's various misrepresentations of herself are so out of touch with reality that their consequences leave her and

<sup>27</sup> Similarly at 706ff., when Hippolytus is about to stab her in anger, she welcomes imminent death both as release from her passion and simultaneously as consummation of it: Segal 1986, 132.

<sup>28</sup> Here we part company from Segal, who believes that in Act 5 Phaedra redeems herself morally. He writes, for example, that 'now she herself, not her *furor*, deliberately chooses what is ethically better' (1986, 198). But who is this 'she herself'? Both her suicide and her clearing of Hippolytus' name have more to do with emotional impulse, in our view, than with deliberate choice. Segal recognizes the ambivalence of her suicide more clearly at 103–4.

<sup>29</sup> J. P. Driscoll, *Identity in Shakespearean Drama* (Lewisberg 1983), 33.

<sup>30</sup> On these issues see particularly Laura Kay Abrahamson, *The Tragedy of Identity in Senecan Drama*, Diss. Bryn Mawr 1993.

Hippolytus dead, and Theseus longing for death: it is no coincidence that she flirts with death three times before embracing it (254–61, 710–12, 854–81). Hercules' pursuit of a conquering *persona* leads inevitably to the deaths of his wife and children: it is not safe for ordinary humans to be around such superhuman violence, and indeed one could argue that Hercules has destroyed his familial ties metaphorically, by constantly placing them second to self-aggrandizing achievement, before he destroys them physically. The thematic structure of *Hercules* suggests that Hercules' self-aggrandizing career is a kind of death-in-life, negatively because it ignores the daily pleasures of life, and positively because it takes him into *Gegenwelten*, landscapes and contexts of death. In the case of Atreus and Medea, not only does creation of an invulnerable *persona* require that they consciously destroy family relations/relationships, but these murders are explicitly presented as sacrificial offerings to *Atreus and Medea themselves*,<sup>31</sup> marking these 'selves' as quasi-divine, both more and less than human. Since relationships are reciprocal, Atreus' and Medea's destruction of these relations is simultaneously the killing of parts of themselves; when Medea kills her children, she kills her maternal self.<sup>32</sup>

Are there any instances in Senecan drama where self-identification is less neurotic and destructive? Perhaps there are, in *Troades*. The men and women of Troy share an identity as Trojans which is less strenuously self-constructed and arises more naturally from their membership of a community. The chorus is unmistakably a Trojan group (95, *agnosco Troada turbam*), Hector was Troy's wall (126), Troy covers its dead king protectively like a tomb-mound (30), Hecuba virtually identifies herself with the life of the city. Admittedly there is occasionally an obsessive element about this identity, for example when Andromache values her son only as a replacement for Hector (461–74). But the fact is that, although the play is

<sup>31</sup> *Thy.* 713f. *quem prius mactet sibi/dubitat*, 'He hesitates which [nephew] he should sacrifice first to himself': see Tarrant's note ad loc. *Med.* 1019f. *plura non habui, dolor, / quae tibi litarem*, 'I had nothing more to sacrifice to you, my *dolor*'.

<sup>32</sup> Hence aggression against her children involves, at least potentially, aggression against her own body which created them: 1012 f. *in matre si quod pignus etiamnunc latet, / scrutabor ense viscera et ferro extraham*, 'If any love-pledge still lies hidden within *the mother* [i.e. myself as mother], I will search my womb with the sword, and drag it forth with steel'.

concerned with the tragic destruction of this Trojan identity, destruction here comes from outside, rather than from the very process of self-identification. In this respect, however, as in several other respects, *Troades* is exceptional within the Senecan corpus.

Is any alternative visible to the destructive process of self-construction? Several passages describe at least an idealized alternative, which is that of the simple life.<sup>33</sup> Such a life, passed in rural surroundings, is regularly characterized by peace (*quies*) and security of mind, in the root sense of freedom from anxiety. The contented man does not seek to impose himself on others through intimidation (*Thy.* 455f., 468). His secure selfhood is implied by contrasts: if the public man is all too well known to others but dies a stranger to himself, the opposite is true of the contented man (*Thy.* 401–3); if the ambitious, ‘uncertain of themselves’, pursue wealth and power and so lay waste their lives, then the man who ‘holds onto the days which will never return’ presumably enjoys an unanxious selfhood (*Herc.* 159–85).<sup>34</sup> But this ideal functions as a conceptual contrast to neurotic anxiety, rather than a realistic possibility. Certainly the ideal fails in the two *dramatis personae* who espouse it, for Thyestes’ return to Argos

<sup>33</sup> The chief passages are *Ag.* 102–7, *Oed.* 882–91, *Pha.* 483–539, 1126f., *Herc.* 159–201, *Thy.* 391–403, 449–70.

<sup>34</sup> These passages cannot be called philosophical in any meaningful sense, though they are sometimes redolent of popular Epicureanism; the only passage which presents an alternative in Stoic terms is *Thy.* 339–90, which develops the theme that true kingship lies not in power and wealth, but in the self-regulation of the *sapiens*. Despite the rarity of explicit Stoic elements in the dramas, there is undeniably a resonance between Seneca’s drama and *philosophica*, consisting partly in the fact that the goal of both the passionate *dramatis personae* and of the *sapiens* is radical self-definition and self-sufficiency. When Medea speaks of her own *animus* as superior to external Fortune (159, 176), her *sententiae* could be quoted with approval by a Stoic. Tarrant believes that Medea and Atreus ‘act with a resolution and single-mindedness that make them perverted mirror-images of the *sapiens*’ (1985, 24). Braden argues rather that there is something perverse in the Stoic ideal itself, viz. its obsession with control and with death, and that this perversity is magnified in the tragedies (1985 Chs. 1 and 2). Our own inclination is to avoid according Seneca’s philosophy implicit priority in interpretation of the dramas. In our view, both the dramatic and the philosophical traditions in which Seneca wrote were shaped by social situations in which radical autonomy, the goal of armouring oneself, became attractive. The Homeric–Sophoclean heroic ideal of personal excellence can be found transformed both in Seneca’s dramas and in his *philosophica*, but it is a more direct ancestor of the former than of the latter.

shows that he has not found contentment in rural exile, while what the countryside represents for Hippolytus is a refuge from his anxieties about personal interaction, particularly with women, and an opportunity to displace his aggression onto wild animals.<sup>35</sup> Tragedy as a genre is not, after all, in the business of directly proposing alternatives. It is more properly concerned with Thanatos, with those processes built into the structure of human life which lead to its destruction: *ὡς γενεαὶ βροτῶν*, 'sorrow for the generations of mortals.'

Nowhere is the ambivalence of self-assertion more clearly revealed in the Senecan plays than in the figure of Hercules. Because of the prestige of the heroic tradition in the ancient world, Hercules' heroic intransigence and self-sufficiency would no doubt have commanded greater respect from Seneca's original audiences than from a modern audience. Hercules and his supporters can claim that his heroic achievements have benefitted the world, by clearing it of monsters and tyrants (e.g. *Herc.* 249, 633, *defensus orbis*). But the play reveals that behind this drive to construct a heroic *persona* is a raging egomania, an obsession with violent conquest and destruction of others, which is barely controlled and which turns all too easily against the wrong targets. It also reveals how such a *persona* becomes a straitjacket for the authentic self: Hercules' heroic self-concept prevents him from relating adequately to father and wife (626–39), or weeping for the family he has destroyed (1226–9), or responding wholeheartedly to his father's need for love and support.<sup>36</sup>

The destructiveness of self-assertion through violent domination of others is dramatised in a less ambivalent context in *Medea* and *Thyestes*. Even here, however, Medea's language reveals how close her self-assertion is to the heroic ethos, with its competitive drive for *arete/virtus* and its quest for the glory of public approval, e.g. *faciet*

<sup>35</sup> On *Thyestes* see Tarrant 1985, 148–9; on *Hippolytus* see Segal 1986, Ch. 3, 'The Forest World'.

<sup>36</sup> Seneca's play brings out an ambivalence which is inherent in the Hercules figure in myth: see Fitch 1987, 15–20 and the full study of G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Oxford 1972). On later dramatic heroes of the Herculean type, see Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden* (New York and London 1962). Braden 1985 studies a long tradition of ambivalent portrayals of heroic self-sufficiency, especially in tragedy but also in philosophy (e.g. 72 and 89 on Petrarch's *de remediis utriusque fortunae*).



*hic faciet dies/quod nullus umquam taceat* (423f. ‘This day will do a deed about which no day can be silent’),<sup>37</sup> and *non in occulto tibi est / perdenda virtus; approba populo manum* (976f. ‘You must not let your *virtus* be lost in secrecy; show to the people the excellence of your deed’). The fact that heroic language can so readily be appropriated for evil deeds reveals an ambivalence in the heroic ethos itself. We suggest that an audience might respond to Medea or Atreus with a corresponding ambivalence, one of fascinated repulsion: they might be repelled by the destructiveness and monstrosity of such self-construction, and yet fascinated because the process taps into such inner strength—and because all humans are implicated in the attempt to impose themselves on others.

However, the desire for power and domination over others is not the only issue in the quest to construct the self. The quest may be more concerned with attempting to find oneself, as with Phaedra, or with completing a definition of oneself, as with the Oedipus of *Phoenissae*. The ambivalent value of self-construction in all its forms, and the ambivalence of our response to it, is well expressed by Salman Rushdie:

A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the creator’s role, according to one way of seeing things: he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk.<sup>38</sup>

As audience, we certainly register the monstrosity of the attempt to construct oneself. But we can also admire the struggle, even sympathize with it—in a man or a woman, we would add—because we are all involved in a similar struggle on our own accounts, beyond any matter of choice.

Northrop Frye noted that it is characteristic of tragic figures to be isolated from society. This isolation is associated with an attempt to find or live by a certain concept of themselves. Frye even suggested that one aspect of the tragic hero may be the *alazon*, the imposter, ‘someone who pretends or tries to be something more than he is.’<sup>39</sup> If

<sup>37</sup> Atreus uses similarly heroic language, though more explicitly oriented towards evil, e.g. 192f., *age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet, / sed nulla taceat*.

<sup>38</sup> *The Satanic Verses* (London 1988) 49.

<sup>39</sup> *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton 1957) 39.

we allow for the distinctions among tragic modes which Frye recognized, his formulations apply cogently to *dramatis personae* of tragedies from widely separated periods: to the figures of Sophoclean tragedy, from Ajax to Oedipus at Colonus;<sup>40</sup> to the figures of Senecan tragedy whom we have discussed; to some of the figures of Arthur Miller's dramas, such as Willy Loman. Miller spoke of this aspect of his work:

I think that in the plays the people have some preconception of having been displaced from what they should be or even what they 'really' are, and the tension consists in their trying to arrive by one means or another at where they 'ought' to be.<sup>41</sup>

This pursuit of a place where one 'ought' to be, however, is fraught with tragic potential, as Senecan tragedy makes clear. This is in part because the pursuit is perverted by the power element in human relations, and in part because it is coloured by a regression to idealized states of infancy or childhood. Many of the Senecan figures long to revert to the past. Medea, for example, remembers her powerful position as Colchian princess, and her destruction of her ties to Jason permits her to feel, at least momentarily, that she has regained it. Similarly Atreus' revenge returns him in fantasy to a pristine time before his wife was seduced. Thyestes feel nostalgia for his youthful position as prince of Argos; Phaedra wants to recapture her position as princess of Crete, and her first love for Theseus; Oedipus longs to return to the 'home' of his infancy.<sup>42</sup> To achieve this place where one 'should' be can have disastrous consequences, as in the case of Hercules, Atreus and Medea, and to fail in the pursuit of it can be equally destructive, as with Phaedra.

If Frye is right, the attempt to find one's metaphorical place is central to the patterns of tragedy. Our argument has been that we as audiences respond to tragedy in part because we are individually drawn into attempts to find the place where we can 'be ourselves', to our selves and to others. Such attempts are tragic insofar as

<sup>40</sup> The classic study of this aspect of Sophoclean drama is B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley 1963).

<sup>41</sup> R. L. Evans, *Psychology and Arthur Miller* (New York 1969) 58.

<sup>42</sup> Respectively *Med.* 209–19, 982–6; *Thy.* 1098–99; *Thy.* 404–11; *Pha.* 85–91, 646–56; *Phoen.* 12–33.

construction of the self is always a mis-construction. They are also coloured in part by a quest for the 'beginning of all beginnings', the primal unity, which cannot be recovered by any means, and least of all by language. 'Only when you begin to lose that Alpha or Omega do you want to start to talk and to write, and then there is no end to it, words, words, words.'<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> R. D. Laing, *The Bird of Paradise*.

---

## Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?

*Patrick Kragelund*

The problem is old and much debated: On the one hand there is an overwhelming amount of evidence, from archaeology as well as literature, which testifies to a rich and varied theatrical life at Rome's imperial centre as well as in her provinces, from the second century BC well into the third AD.<sup>1</sup> At the same time we are in the odd position of possessing the complete text of ten tragedies from the mid-first century AD (eight by Seneca, two by authors unknown)—and of the theatrical fate of precisely these ten tragedies we know nothing at all.

In Classics, this is not in itself alarming. Indeed, there are large sections of life for which there is no direct evidence; in some cases, vital information has only been preserved by chance. The lack of direct evidence for the performance or otherwise of these specific tragedies does not, therefore, automatically rule out their having been performed.

There is, however, a factor which in this case complicates matters. As standard works of reference will not hesitate to claim, these tragedies can from clear internal evidence be shown never to have been intended for performance; indeed, they are—according to the leading modern authority—*unaufführbar* ('un-performable'). Instead, they were intended for recital.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beacham 1991, 126f., surveys the evidence for performances throughout the period.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Zwierlein 1966, repeatedly; on the co-existence of performance and recital, see *ibid.* 158–61.

Now, such recitals were frequent occurrences throughout the imperial age; in auditoria, fora, and public baths you would, *nolens volens*, be exposed to much reading aloud; the repertoire included great as well as minor poets, epic no less than drama.

But the popularity of such recitals is of course no proof that all the extant tragedies belong in that category. Tragedies continued to be performed, in private as well as public. If I am not mistaken, the case against the performance of Senecan tragedy therefore boils down to arguments of two kinds: one is *e silentio* and not particularly strong (nothing is heard of performances, therefore there were none), whereas the other, which is far more intriguing, is based on internal evidence, that is on aspects of structure and coherence which seem to prove that the plays could not possibly have been performed in the ancient theatre as we know it.

This latter objection is, however, not as weighty as it may at first appear. The reason is that our knowledge of the modes of performance in imperial Rome is fairly limited. What figure as certainties are sometimes assumptions for which the evidence is flimsy or doubtful. Still, the indications are that the rules which supposedly dictated what could and what could not be performed were far less rigid than has often been presumed.<sup>3</sup> If this is correct, the interpretation of Senecan drama should as a consequence be allowed a somewhat wider scenographic latitude—and as we shall presently see, this is very much what the reading of these dramas requires. In fact, it is the central tenet of this paper, that assumptions about modes of performance have had a distorting impact on modes of reading and interpreting a corpus of texts which has had a tremendous impact on western theatre.<sup>4</sup>

One of the aspects of Senecan drama which often has been quoted as proof that they were not intended for performance is their propensity to depict murder and mutilation on stage (for example Beare 1964, 235; 352f.). In this *oeuvre*, Medea does not for instance kill her

<sup>3</sup> As von Albrecht 1994, vol II, 937 has observed, discussions of this problem have commonly been biased: either 'one tends to underestimate the options of the ancient stage, or one ascribes universal validity to the aesthetic norms of a given period' ('unterschätzt man die Möglichkeiten der antiken Bühne, oder man verabsolutiert ein zeitgebundenes Geschmacksurteil').

<sup>4</sup> For a useful survey, see for instance the articles in Lefèvre 1978.

children prior to the pivotal meeting with Jason. The murder takes place in the father's horrified presence, at centre-stage as it were. And to increase its horror the murder is drawn out, so that Medea first kills her eldest son, cruelly allowing Jason to plead for the life of the second, until she finally kills her youngest as well.<sup>5</sup>

This is of course a highly dramatic and almost uncannily modern departure from Euripides' scenography. There, the audience was presented with an off-stage *fait accompli*, here the murder would, in a performance, take place at centre-stage—but would it have been possible to perform? In Euripides' Athens, the answer would probably be negative. And Horace, some fifty years prior to Seneca, did not hesitate to admonish dramatists 'not to let Medea murder her children on stage' (AP 185).

But the problem is whether such Attic standards still dictated how plays were performed in the Rome of Nero, or, for that matter, of Horace. Briefly put, the hypothesis that Seneca's dramas never were performed seems to rest on the assumption that little or nothing ever changed in the performance of ancient tragedy. But in my view, this hypothesis rests on sand.

When Horace, in his most prescriptive mood, offers such firm guidelines for proper scenic conduct, he is after all hardly adopting an uncontested stance. Among his coevals, there were dramatists (Ovid?)<sup>6</sup> who (from what Horace considered undue taste for the sensational) had failed to observe this golden rule—that seems the obvious inference. The excesses which Horace attacks may well be exaggerated, but they are unlikely to be completely imaginary. What would be the point of insisting on classicistic rules if there were no departures from these rules?

Notwithstanding, discussions of Senecan drama often seem to take it for granted that procedures and norms which were operative in

<sup>5</sup> Sen. *Med.* 995ff.; such cruelty would be 'unimaginable on stage' ('unvorstellbar auf der Bühne'): Zwierlein 1966, 26 (with bibliography).

<sup>6</sup> At *Tr.* 5.7.25ff. Ovid denies to have written for the theatre, but the context suggest that he merely refers to pantomimes. In any case he refers to his *Medea* as a work for the tragic stage (*tragicis ... cothurnis*): *Tr.* 2.553; on its fame, see Quint. 10.1.98. Zwierlein 1966, 159 (with bibliography) regards *cothurnis* as a reference to the tragic genre, but *a priori* nothing speaks against the alternative; on the contrary, Tac. *Dial.* 12.6 mentions Ovid's *Medea* along with Varius' *Thyestes*—and it is only from the chance survival of a *didascalica* that the latter is known to have been performed.

Euripides' Athens, had retained their validity in Nero's Rome. As a consequence, all departures from these rules are viewed as proof that Seneca wrote for recitals, not performance.

An example: In Senecan drama, persons will sometimes reveal their innermost secrets in lengthy soliloquies which others apparently cannot hear. It is, to be sure, hard to find clear parallels to this in Sophocles—but from this it does not necessarily follow that Senecan drama therefore was unperformable. It is at least equally possible that this was an area where dramatic conventions had changed. We are sadly ignorant about Hellenistic tragedy, but the audiences of Plautus and Terence had apparently no difficulty in understanding the status of such asides—and if comic authors could adopt such techniques, it is hard to see why tragic authors (during the republic often one and the same) should abstain.<sup>7</sup>

But scholars have found other, and seemingly more serious, obstacles to the hypothesis that Senecan drama was written for the theatre. These plays are, so is it claimed, defective in logic and inconsistent in motivation. Plans are adopted and then, inexplicably, abandoned. And the playwright sometimes forgets who is on stage and even where they are supposed to be.

The problem with this approach (which often has been conducted with a grasp of logic worthy of a Hegel or a Kant) is, firstly, that far from all readers find these plays equally inconsistent. A tragedy is not a dissertation on logic; it focuses on human dilemmas and passions, on the sometimes fatal consequences of weaknesses and inconsistencies. And even in those cases where Seneca has indeed been careless, it still seems problematic to conclude that he therefore wrote with recitals rather than performance in mind.

World literature is not unfamiliar with dramas which combine glaring inconsistency with remarkable dramatic effect. The famous example is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the dramatist at one point allows the age of the protagonist to change from late-teens to early thirties.<sup>8</sup> This would, on the basis of the criteria adopted in discussions

<sup>7</sup> I owe this point to discussions with my student, Mette Brandenburg; for a wide-ranging survey of such 'temporary suspension of time', see Tarrant 1978, 231ff.; 242–4 (with examples from Plautus and Terence). Cf. e.g. Beare 1964, 235 on Sen. Ag. 108–24 and Zwierlein 1966, 66, on *Phae.* 583ff.

<sup>8</sup> To judge from Acts I–IV, Hamlet is in his teens, but at Act V sc. 1 the gravedigger's words seem to imply that the prince is thirty years old. This may stem from a

of Seneca, be quite sufficient to prove that *Hamlet* is 'unperformable'—which of course is absurd. So perhaps the problem does not lie with the plays themselves, but with the methods adopted.

Taken as a whole there is indeed a serious difficulty with the methods and criteria by which scholars have attempted to distinguish between texts meant for performance as opposed to recital: these criteria presuppose that those listening to a recital are less demanding when it comes to logic and coherence than those seeing a drama performed. But is this assumption corroborated by experience? Or at all reasonable? Those listening to such a recital would after all be expected to participate actively in creating the relevant scenery for themselves (much as audiences listening to a drama broadcast on the radio are today). Then as now, such audiences would surely be disturbed and bewildered if they were offered a drama marred by inconsistencies as grave as those which modern critics have detected in Seneca.

But it is time to turn from premisses and principles to actual drama and to look anew at a few, but salient points where Seneca and one of his epigones—allegedly—are so 'vague and inconsistent about the implied scenography'<sup>9</sup> that it becomes entirely unclear where the action is supposed to take place (a vagueness which then, in turn, is used as proof that the drama was never intended for performance).

In discussions of *Phaedra*, for instance, it is commonly taken for granted that Seneca somehow was restricted to a kind of fixed 'in-front-of-the-palace' setting<sup>10</sup>—but as a brief examination will reveal, Seneca clearly cared little for such restrictions; indeed, it is only with difficulty that scholars have succeeded in making this tragedy conform to the supposedly obligatory in-front-of-the-palace setting—but in the process they have made a mess of what in fact is a clear and well-disposed, symbolic scenography.

previous version of the tragedy, or the gravedigger may use rounded figures—but no one would therefore dismiss the playwright as incompetent; in Senecan studies, the conclusion would be different.

<sup>9</sup> Zwierlein 1966, 38–45 has a whole chapter on such 'vague or inconsistent informations about the scenography' ('unklare und widersprüchliche Angaben über den szenischen Rahmen').

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. Miller 1917 in the preface to *Phaedra*: 'THE SCENE is laid throughout in the court in front of the royal palace at Athens'; similarly, Grimal 1965 and Watling 1966; see also n. 15.



In the drama's prologue, Hippolytus briefly outlines his favoured geography: he begins and concludes with jubilant praise of the forests (*silvas*, 1; 82) to which he is now irresistibly drawn (*vocor in silvas*, 'I am called to the woods', 82)—without knowing that there, in his beloved seclusion, he will meet his fate.<sup>11</sup>

A change of scene brings Phaedra on stage; she too is drawn towards the forest—but her motives are different (110–14). Her passion for Hippolytus leads her on, irresistibly, and at the end of the first (or brief second) act, the stage is set for a new and dramatic change of scene. In her answer to the questions of the chorus, Phaedra's nurse points towards the palace. Its doors open to reveal its interior where Phaedra, in a grand symbolic scene (with wonderful opportunities for a good scenographer) puts aside her queenly robes and dresses herself for the hunt.<sup>12</sup> As if in a ritual, Phaedra describes every detail of her transformation from queen to hunter, flattering herself that she now resembles Hippolytus' Amazon mother: 'Thus attired I am drawn towards the forests' (*talīs in silvas ferar*, 403).<sup>13</sup> Deeply disturbed, the Chorus urges the nurse to placate Diana, the goddess of the forest (404–5).

At this point, it was, I believe, Seneca's intention that we should imagine or—at a performance—see a change of scene taking place.

This is of course what often happens when the Chorus has had its final say (and, for what it is worth, the manuscripts agree).<sup>14</sup> But at this particular point the narrative structure not only suggests a

<sup>11</sup> According to Zwierlein 1966, 104, Hippolytus' departure at 82ff. is in flagrant contradiction with his reappearance at 424ff.: 'he departs ... for the hunt, in the forest—and yet we soon after see him (424ff.) alone and praying at the altar in front of the royal palace' ('er bricht ... auf zur Jagd, in den Wald—und doch sehen wir ihn wenig später (424ff.) allein am Altar vor dem Königspalaste beten'). But on the reading advocated here, this supposed inconsistency is in fact the product of a false premiss, namely that the whole drama takes place in front of the palace.

<sup>12</sup> *Contra*, Zwierlein 1966, 103–4 and Zwierlein 1987, 19 who sees the dressing scene as 'an inorganic insertion' ('ein inorganischer Einschub'), based on a lost Greek original; so do Coffey and Mayer 1990, *ad* 358ff.

<sup>13</sup> Most modern editors would delete Phaedra's reference to Hippolytus' mother at 398: cf. Coffey and Mayer 1990, *ad loc.*; *contra* (in my view rightly), Grimal 1965 *ad loc.*, Segal 1986, 64 n. 9, and Williams 1992, 143–5; on the parallels between the *exit* of Phaedra and Hippolytus, see Stähli-Peter 1974, 194.

<sup>14</sup> At 406, after the first (or second) act Chorus' final line, the MSS indicate a change of scene, to HIPPOLITVS.NVTRIX (thus the *Etruscus*; similarly, the A tradition).

transition from one act to another, but also a change of scenery. Hippolytus was drawn 'towards the woods' (*silvas*), and so is Phaedra (82; 403). Phaedra has dressed for the hunt, and so had Hippolytus. Where then, is it natural to assume that their fatal encounter takes place? In the forest, of course, which to Hippolytus seems a refuge from the temptations he shuns, while to Phaedra it promises the fulfilment of the longings she can no longer resist.

Admittedly, this differs completely from accepted notions about the staging of Roman drama. But the text seems unmistakable.

The new act begins in grand style. In order to avert disaster and to seek out the sanctuary of its great goddess, the nurse has followed her mistress into the forest. Standing at Diana's altar, she now implores the 'goddess of forests' (*regina nemorum*, 406), 'great among forests and groves' (*magna silvas inter et lucos dea*, 409) to help Phaedra. The standard view locates this episode in front of Theseus' palace,<sup>15</sup> but surely, the altar of Diana suggests a forest. And so does the ensuing dialogue, again and again. When, for instance, Hippolytus chances upon the nurse, he is surprised at what has led the feeble old woman out 'here' (*huc*, 431)—if he had met her in front of the palace, such surprise would have been groundless. And similarly, when the nurse encourages Hippolytus to embrace the sensual pleasures of the city,<sup>16</sup> which he has hitherto avoided (*urbem frequenta*, 482), and he extols the purity of the countryside and the woods (cf. 483ff.; 501ff.) as opposed to *urban*<sup>17</sup> depravity, their words, once again, seem curiously pointless if they were in fact already there, within the walls of Theseus' city.

Which they, clearly, are not: at the end of the act, when Hippolytus rejects the advances of his stepmother and runs away, invoking 'O forests, O wild beasts!' (*o silvae, o ferae!*, 718), Phaedra swoons

<sup>15</sup> Grimal 1965, 10; Zwierlein 1966, 104; and Coffey and Mayer 1990, *ad* 424 are among those who maintain that the altar of Diana should be imagined as situated in front of the palace of Theseus.

<sup>16</sup> Here, Zwierlein 1966, 122, detects a 'pretext' (*Eselsbrücke*) which offers Hippolytus (and Seneca) a possibility to deliver an otherwise irrelevant 'rhetorical show-piece' (*Prunkrede*) on the Golden Age and the pleasures of simple living. Yet, the immediate relevance of Hippolytus' words are evident, once the reader imagines—or the audience sees—the dialogue within its proper scenic framework, in the forest, far from the odious city.

<sup>17</sup> Hippolytus sees *urbes* as the seat of crime (494), war (532), and lust (561).

and the nurse (once again, in accordance with the idea of a woodland scene) implores the Athenians to ‘carry her (that is Phaedra) to the city’ (*perferte* <*sc. eam*> *in urbem*, 733).<sup>18</sup>

At this point a number of scholars (for whom the alternative clearly seemed unthinkable) suggested changing the text in order to save the supposedly indispensable ‘in-front-of-the-palace’ setting. With *perferte in aedes* (‘carry her indoors’)<sup>19</sup> the problem has seemingly been solved—but only if one discards all the other indications that the stage represents a forest. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the nurse is asking the Athenians to bring the news to the city (*perferte* <*novitatem*> *in urbem*).<sup>20</sup> The solution is not implausible—but the problem remains: why bring news to the city, if they were already there?

The answer is that they are not in the city. Instead they are where the text tells us to imagine them, in the forests outside Athens.<sup>21</sup>

But, one may ask, could this be performed? The answer is probably affirmative (see below), but even if it could not, it seems clear that a Roman audience, at a recital, would have no difficulty whatsoever in imagining such a setting.

Troy in flames, the departure of Aeneas’ fleet from Carthage and Anchises addressing Marcellus in Elysium (at which point Octavia, at a famous recital, swooned)—if this is what Virgil’s audiences could handle, it is unreasonable to assume that Seneca’s would have been less competent. And if a forest is what Roman audiences, at a recital, were expected to imagine, modern critics will, as the saying goes, fail to see the wood for the trees, if they do not follow their example. This

<sup>18</sup> Ahl 1986 translates ‘take her on into town’; similarly, Segal 1986, 156 n. 12 (but without discussing the scenographic implications).

<sup>19</sup> *aedes* is the conjecture of Herrmann 1924; ‘indoors’ Watling 1966 *ad loc.*; ‘inside’ (‘dentro’) A. Traina in Biondi 1989; but Biondi’s text retains *urbem*.

<sup>20</sup> Grimal 1965 *ad loc.* rightly observes that Seneca prefers using *perferre* in connection with messages (cf. Sen. *Tr.* 802 and *HO* 100); his reading is endorsed by Zwierlein 1986 (in the *app. crit.*), by Coffey and Mayer 1990 *ad loc.* and by Chaurmartin 1999 *ad loc.*; still, the reading favoured by Ahl 1986 *ad loc.* and by Segal 1986, 156 n. 12 *perferte* <*eam*> *in urbem*, is equally possible: Sen. *Ep.* 108.7 *pauci illam quam conceperant mentem, domum perferre potuerunt*.

<sup>21</sup> At Sen. *Phae.* 1000, the messenger describes how Hippolytus leaves the city (*urbem liquit*) but there is no contradiction here: having fled Phaedra, he must have returned to Athens to fetch his carriage and horses (1055ff.).

is particularly so in a case like the present one, where the forest<sup>22</sup> serves as a symbolic backdrop which invests the basic conflict between the protagonists with a deeper meaning.

As for the alternative scenario, namely performance on a stage, the text of the drama is, to be sure, all the evidence we have, but *a priori* nothing seems to stand in its way. After all, the Roman theatre took great pride in its ability to change one set into another. How precisely this was done is a complex issue, which need not concern us here. What matters is that the scenographic repertoire ranged from city-squares and harbours to rivers and mountains;<sup>23</sup> a forest would therefore hardly have been unmanageable. And whichever way the trick was done, with painted back-drops or otherwise, there is a semiotic and linguistic fact which should be kept in mind: given the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified, virtually anything can, on a stage, be used to signify something else. As long as an audience is familiar with the code, it merely needs a few indications in order to accept that a stage which previously represented, say, the square in front of Theseus' palace now represents the forest in which Hippolytus finds himself. A set of painted back-drops, a statue of Diana and the words of the actors may well have been all that it took.

But it is time to look at another example, not from Seneca himself, but from the *Octavia praetexta*, a text which in this context is of particular interest, since it represents a type of drama which clearly relied on a wider range of traditions than mythological tragedy.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the dramatist's handling of basic dramatic entities such as time

<sup>22</sup> On the role of Diana and symbolic significance of the 'forest world', see Segal 1986, 60–76 (with bibliography).

<sup>23</sup> For the evidence and scenographic options, see Beacham 1990, 169ff., 176ff., 180ff.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Leo 1897, 513: 'It is evident, that the *Octavia* by no means only relies on Seneca, but that it reflects a wider range of dramatic writing and more varied deployments of the genre than are recognizable in the schemata used by Seneca' ('Es ist offenbar, dass die *Octavia* nicht einzig von Seneca abhängig ist, sondern auf einen reicheren Vorrath an dramatischen Produkten und mannigfaltigere Abstufungen der Kunstform hinweist, als die Schablone Senecas erkennen lässt'). For a survey of the problems, see Schmidt 1985, 1443ff. The question of authorship is of little consequence here. For scholars favouring Seneca as the author, see most recently Whitman 1978; on AD 68 as the *terminus post*: Helm 1934, 300ff. and Zwierlein 1986, 445–6 (with bibliography); to judge from similar dream narratives, the dream of Poppaea (712ff.) foretells the deaths of Poppaea and her ex-husband Crispinus and the suicide of Nero: Kragelund 1982, 35ff.; they died (in that order) in AD 65, 66, and 68—all of them after Seneca.

and space exhibits so many departures from the tradition *as we know it* that the *Octavia* merits a far more prominent place in discussions of the ancient theatre than it has hitherto been accorded.

As a consultation of standard works will show it has, for instance, frequently, but quite wrongly, been maintained that we are here, once again, dealing with the supposedly standard in-front-of-the-palace scenography<sup>25</sup>—but in fact only one scene of this drama is expressly located at the entrance of the imperial palace (646ff.), whereas at least three can be shown to presuppose a very different backdrop—be it real or imaginary.

A case in point are the two parallel scenes at the beginning of the drama's first and third day: both feature an empress talking with her nurse (1ff.; 690ff.). While the first of these scenes, with Octavia and her nurse, is located *in* her bedchamber (*thalamus*), Nero's second empress, Poppaea, meets her nurse at the very entrance to this chamber.

Now, an indoor scene like the first is, to put it mildly, not a common occurrence in classical drama, and its authenticity has therefore been contested.<sup>26</sup> Still, the text seems unambiguous: the drama opens with an anapaestic soliloquy by Octavia (1–33) which is interrupted by a delayed iambic prologue from her nurse (34–56). Without taking any notice, Octavia then resumes her anapaestic dirge and brings it to an end (57–71). At this point the nurse acknowledges hearing Octavia—and then announces that she will join her mistress *in the bedchamber* (72ff.).

vox en nostras perculit aures  
tristis alumnae;  
cesset thalamis inferre gradus  
tarda senectus?

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. Fuchs 1977, 72: 'the scene is the square in front of the imperial palace in Rome' ('der Ort der Handlung ist der Platz vor dem kaiserlichen Palaste in Rom'); similarly, Stoessl 1959, 2499 and Schmidt 1985, 1444. According to the preface to the *Octavia* in Miller 1917, 'THE SCENE is laid throughout *in* different apartments of the palace of Nero' (emphasis added) whereas Ballaira 1974 *ad* 1–33 locates the first act in 'a chamber in the imperial palace' ('una sala del palazzo imperiale'), but neither pursues the problem.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. e.g. Zwierlein 1966, 44: 'an indoor scene at the beginning of an ancient drama ... would be without precedent' ('eine Innenszene zu Beginn eines Stückes im antiken Drama ... <wäre> unerhört'); the problem is discussed neither by Schmidt 1985, 1443–4 nor by Sutton 1983, 34 (the latter complains that the dramatist uses the word *thalamus* much too often, but fails to wonder why).

Ah! The voice of my sorrowing child  
 strikes my ears.  
 Must I be slow to enter her room  
 through tardy old age?

From this point onwards they seem to stay together in the imperial *thalamus*—and at a recital this would hardly create any problems for the audience to imagine.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, I seriously doubt that it would have been beyond imperial stagecraft somehow to suggest that Octavia's nurse at this point joins her mistress in the imperial *thalamus*—the very chamber which Poppaea, terrified by her sinister dreams, leaves in panic at the beginning of the drama's third day, the morning after her wedding night with Nero.

But does it matter where they are? Or is it not a mere technicality?

Far from it, it is a matter of great importance, the reason being that the *thalamus*, in this drama, is the recurrent symbol of the empress' position and power.<sup>28</sup> In fact the dramatist describes the fall of Octavia and the rise of Poppaea in terms of two movements, which, though parallel, are in opposite directions, one leading away from the *thalamus* and one leading towards it. It is therefore crucial that the two scenes featuring Octavia and Poppaea are staged against this symbolic backdrop. This is the position from which Octavia is evicted—but the tragedy seems to repeat itself when Poppaea, on the first morning after her wedding, is driven away from the *thalamus* by dreams which show that her entering this cursed chamber will also prove her undoing.

The final scene of the *Octavia* offers yet another instance of spatial symbolism.

Unusually, this scene takes place at a harbour. The protagonist's references to a ship with sails, to sailors, and to a helmsman establishes the scenic framework (907; 969f.); and so does the chorus when taking leave of Octavia as her ship departs for the island of exile, Pandateria (972ff.).

Needless to say, the implied setting is so unorthodox that there has been a tendency to decry it as an inconsistency of the type which is only explicable if one assumes that the drama was not intended for

<sup>27</sup> Thus Kragelund 1982, 58ff. (with bibliography).

<sup>28</sup> On the importance of the *thalamus* in the *Octavia*, see Kragelund 1982, 22ff.; 31f.

performance; after all, a ship can hardly be seen, or a helmsman addressed, from the summit of the Palatine.<sup>29</sup>

The difficulty with this type of reasoning is once again the basic premiss, namely that the action of this play takes place in front of the imperial palace. Yet, the text suggests a harbour, and if the play was intended for recital, the audience would have found no difficulty in imagining such scenery. But even if it were intended for performance, there is in fact evidence which suggests that such a set would by no means be beyond the possibilities of imperial stagecraft. But prior to examining this evidence it is, I think, useful to consider why the dramatist would have chosen such a setting for the final scene of the tragedy.

First of all, the ship, of course, suggests a parallel with the murder of Nero's mother, Agrippina, which the chorus describes in graphic detail at the beginning of the play (309ff.). The parallel is made explicit by Octavia herself, for whom the ship at first seems identical with Agrippina's ship of death (908f.). But there is a second factor to be reckoned with, namely that *exile* is a central theme in this play. The theme is introduced by Seneca. In his great soliloquy, the philosopher himself reminds us of his own exile; to enhance its effect, the passage is at times a *verbatim* quotation from the philosopher's own treatise on exile. In the subsequent scene, the pivotal confrontation between Seneca and Nero, the subject is the fate of two exiles (439ff.). Seneca pleads for *clementia*, Nero insists on their execution, and, at the end of the play, the tyrant orders the exile and execution of the drama's protagonist, Octavia.<sup>30</sup>

The choice of a harbour scene for the drama's final act is effective in underlining this theme. In antiquity, the return and departure of

<sup>29</sup> Cf. e.g. Münscher 1922*b*, 210: 'In the real world one cannot of course see the ship when standing in front of the imperial palace in Rome, in front of which the action otherwise takes place' ('Freilich vor dem Kaiserpalast in Rom, vor dem das Stück im übrigen spielt, kann das Schiff in Wahrheit nicht sichtbar sein'); similarly, Ballaira 1974 *ad* 907; Schmidt 1985, 1444 adopts a similar position. As a compromise, Cizek 1972, 364 suggests a scene 'at some distance from the imperial palace' ('à quelque distance du palais impérial')—but it is better to abandon the problematic idea of an identical scenery for the whole play: Kragelund 1982, 58f.

<sup>30</sup> On the theme of exile, see Kragelund 1982, 50 (with references). On the quotations from Seneca in the soliloquy at *Oct.* 377ff., see Ballaira 1974 *ad loc.* On the confrontation between the prefect and Nero, see Kragelund 1988, 492ff.

exiles from their home and *patria* were often great occasions. On the day of departure, the relatives, clients and friends of the condemned would apparently turn up, be it at the house of the relegated or in the harbour, the adherents to display their *pietas*, the enemies to rejoice.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the subject of leave-taking had long since taken on a literary form. Ovid turning on his threshold and describing the dangers of his sea-journey (*Tr.* 1.3; 1.2) is only the most eminent representative of a tradition which—not surprisingly—appealed strongly to the Roman upper classes. After Nero's fall (which anyway seems to be the most plausible period for the drama's composition) this tradition reached a new flowering. Whether written or oral, tales of individual heroism, of faithful wives, friends and slaves, would perpetuate the memory of suffering and endurance.<sup>32</sup> It is, I believe, against this background and with such connotations in mind that we should see this harbour scene with the chorus of faithful Romans lamenting the fate of the exiled empress.

This does again, of course, pose the question of whether such a scene was at all performable. And here, for once, there seems to be positive evidence. In the *Fasti*, Ovid narrates the story of Claudia Quinta who proved her chastity by pulling the ship with the famous black stone up the Tiber—and if we do not believe the tale, Ovid exclaims, the stage would testify to its truth: *mira, sed et scaena testificata loquar*.<sup>33</sup>

Now, what Ovid seems to imply is that this was what could be *seen* on stage (he uses a very similar expression when referring to the iconography of Cybele).<sup>34</sup> But whatever the nature of this spectacle, its very existence does not, of course, prove that the *Octavia* benefited from an equally spectacular production. Nor has that been my ultimate goal. What matters here is, first of all, to acknowledge that the texts discussed in this article presuppose a scenic framework (be

<sup>31</sup> For such rejoicing at a harbour, see Plin. *Pan.* 34–5 (the exile of Domitian's *delatores*); on the exiles and condemned after the fall of Nero, see e.g. Kragelund 1998, 152ff. (with bibliography).

<sup>32</sup> For a Galban or early Flavian date for the *Octavia*, see n. 24; on those exiled by Nero, see for instance the long list in Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.

<sup>33</sup> Ov. *Fas.* 4.326; Schilling 1993 *ad loc.* argues for a performance illustrating the miracle, probably staged at the *ludi* in the honour of the Magna Mater.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ov. *Fas.* 4.218 (lions would accompany Cybele)—*id curru testificata suo est*.



it imaginary or real) which is far more varied than Horace would have wished and modern scholars will allow. And secondly, that the deviations from what hitherto has been viewed as infrangible rules, by no means constitute a proof that these texts were meant for recital. What they suggest is rather that standard ideas about Senecan dramaturgy and ancient stagecraft are in dire need of a thorough revision.

## Staging Seneca: The Production of *Troas* as a Philological Experiment

Wilfried Stroh

Anyone who speaks of staging the ancient dramatists is thinking of Aristophanes, and above all of the three great Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides: it is principally they who are still alive, or again alive, in the programmes of today's theatre. But it is news to most modern directors, and indeed to the educated theatre audience, that besides these Greeks there is also a Roman tragedian: L. Annaeus Seneca, the Stoic moral philosopher famous as Nero's friend and teacher. Ten tragedies, of which eight are unquestionably authentic, have come down to us under his name; and they display all the stylistic merits of the brilliant man who formulated the grammar school speechday motto: *non scholae, sed vitae discimus*.<sup>1</sup> All in vain, so far as his own tragedies are concerned! Today they are no longer even learnt *scholae*—and that is hardly surprising, since they were

This essay, together with a contribution by Barbara Breitenberger ('Tagebuch der Inszenierung'), first appeared in German in Bierl and von Möllendorff 1994 248–63. The bilingual script (cf. below, n. 2) and a video of the 1993 Munich performance may be obtained from Antike zum Be-Greifen, Panoramastr. 23, D-82211 Herrsching ([www.antike-latein-spann.de](http://www.antike-latein-spann.de)) or the Munich *Sodalitas* (see below, n. 15). Individual aspects of the Munich performance have been discussed by Fantham 1982, Volk 2000, and Keulen 2001. There are two photographs of it in Marion Giebel, *Seneca* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1997), 87, 96. A comparable account of a Senecan performance in Basel in 2000 on a philological basis but with no 'experimental' character is given by Achim Wolfgang Lenz in Zimmermann 2001, 1–119.

<sup>1</sup> 'We learn not for school but for life.' Seneca himself puts it ironically the other way round (*epist.* 106. 12): *non vitae, sed scholae discimus*.

long written off even by classical scholars as rhetorically overloaded and bloodthirsty plays that serve as the negative to prove ‘that the Hellenic ideal of beauty remains unsurpassed and any departure from it always brings its own punishment’ (Martin Schanz 1901).<sup>2</sup>

That was not always so. Julius Caesar Scaliger, the greatest and most influential critic of the sixteenth century, judged that Seneca was inferior to none of the Greeks in grandeur, and even greater than Euripides in refinement and elegance ( . . . *nullo Graecorum maiestate inferiorem . . . cultu vero ac nitore etiam Euripide maiorem*). And the chorus of his admirers extends, despite some persistent naysayers, down to the young Lessing.<sup>3</sup> It was really the literary pope of German Romanticism, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, who excommunicated Seneca’s tragedies as aesthetic artworks. At the same time he denied them (almost a graver fate) the character of stage plays, alleging that they were ‘infuriating on account of the most absurd ineptitudes, and so devoid of all theatrical insight, that I think they were never intended to advance from the schools of the rhetors to the stage’ (1809). Schlegel’s judgement was itself devoid of all historical insight—it is out of the question that tragedies were composed or recited in Roman rhetorical schools<sup>4</sup>—but nevertheless it marked a

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte der römischen Litteratur*, ii 2 (Munich, <sup>3</sup>1913), 69. Leading judgements on Seneca’s tragedies are collected in the bilingual programme for the Munich *Troas: Senecae Troadis libellus bilinguis*, composuerunt Sabina Vogt, Valahfridus Stroh, Philippus Trautmann (Munich, 1993: copies available in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and the Universitätsbibliothek München), including text and translation with an essay ‘De Senecae Troade’, 96–109; see also Boyle 1983, 1–3. For more recent views of Seneca see especially Lefèvre 1972, Harrison 2000, and now Billerbeck and Schmidt 2004. On Seneca’s enormous influence from the Renaissance onwards see Lefèvre 1978. Further recent literature will be found in Liebermann 2004, and in the contributions and research reports in ANRW II 32.2 (West Berlin, 1985). See too the bibliography at: [www.klassphil.uni-muenchen.de/~stroh/seneca\\_trag.htm](http://www.klassphil.uni-muenchen.de/~stroh/seneca_trag.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Scaliger, *Poetics libri septem* (Lyon, 1561; repr. Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt, 1987), 323. On Lessing cf. Wilfried Barner, *Produktive Rezeption: Lessing und die Tragödien Senecas* (Munich, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> The quotation is from A.W. v. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, ii (Heidelberg, <sup>2</sup>1817), 27–8. Schlegel confused (perhaps because he thought Seneca ‘rhetorical’) the rhetoricians’ declamation (practice speech) with the totally different recitation of literary works by their author. Similar confusions are not rare even today, e.g. Lefèvre 1990, 12, who speaks of ‘poets who learnt to recite in the declamation schools’; similarly confusing is Goldberg 2000, 226. Friedrich Leo understood the matter clearly when he coined the term (admittedly open to misunderstanding) ‘tragoedia rhetorica’ (1878, 147ff.).

turning point, for from then on it was taken to be self-evident that Seneca's plays were 'reading dramas' or rather 'recitation dramas'. The earlier scholarship is expanded in the impressive but by no means conclusive dissertation of Otto Zwierlein (1966), later well known as an editor of the poet.<sup>5</sup>

The history of scholarship is partially reflected in that of performance. Beginning with the Roman Pomponio Leto, who put on *Phaedra* in 1486,<sup>6</sup> the Renaissance staged Seneca repeatedly, in Italy, Germany, and England, albeit only in academies and schools. Martin Opitz, in publishing his German translation *Trojanerinnen* in 1625, clearly was not thinking of the theatre; that was not, however, because he doubted that Seneca's tragedies were meant for the stage, but because original antiquity (as opposed to its mediated imitation) disappeared altogether, then and long afterwards, from music and theatre.<sup>7</sup> When ancient drama was finally resurrected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Seneca, degraded in the meantime to a writer of plays for reading, was left to slumber on in his Latin grave. Not till the most recent experimentalist decades have a few directors, often on the advice of theatre-loving Latinists, again tackled the man whom the originator of the Theatre of the Absurd, Antonin Artaud, had described in 1932 as 'the greatest tragic poet in history.'<sup>8</sup> Now we can

<sup>5</sup> My view that in ancient Rome there were dramatic recitations, but not 'recitation dramas', is justified at greater length in an unpublished article 'Senecas Troas als Bühnendrama' (forthcoming in *Antike and Abendland*). It is nearly always overlooked in the discussion that the well-known *recitatio* of the imperial period—see Funaioli, 'Recitationes', *RE* IA1 (1914), 435–46, which is somewhat misleading—was not a kind of artistic performance (like a 'recital'), but an author's reading of a completely unpublished work, meant to help him revise it for publication (we might nowadays speak of 'Workshops').

<sup>6</sup> Margret Dietrich, 'Pomponius' Wiedererweckung des antiken Theaters', *Maske und Kothurn*, 3 (1957), 245–67; cf. Sabine Vogt, "'Senecas Helden sind modern": Aufführungen, Nachdichtungen und Beurteilung der *Troas* in der Neuzeit', *Literatur in Bayern*, 35 (March 1994), 52–6.

<sup>7</sup> Flashar 1991, 35ff. We may similarly observe that (humanistic) musical settings of Horatian odes (as of other ancient texts) almost cease with the end of the 16th c., beginning again only in the 18th: Joachim Draheim, *Vertonungen antiker Texte vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart* (Amsterdam, 1981), 44. Settings of lyric portions of *Seneca tragicus* appear not to pre-exist the 20th c.; see Schubert 2004, esp. pp. 408ff. (based on Draheim's researches).

<sup>8</sup> 'Le plus grand auteur tragique de l'histoire', cited by Christiane Wanke in Lefèvre 1978, 226–7. On Artaud and Seneca see most recently Citti and Neri 2001, 117–19.

almost speak of a minor Senecan renaissance on the stage.<sup>9</sup> But compared with such names as Sophocles and Euripides, reluctance still predominates. It is significant, for example, that the last complete German translation which is at all performable, by Wenceslaus A. Swoboda, dates from 1821–25; the current prose translation by Theodor Thomann, which for all its merits reads quite awkwardly, would never suggest to anyone that Seneca could have been a man of the theatre, let alone a dramatic genius.<sup>10</sup>

And yet in my opinion that is the case. Ever since, over forty years ago, spurred on by Ernst Zinn and Wolfgang Schadewaldt, I began to concern myself with Seneca's tragedies, it has been my firm opinion, stated again and again in seminars and lectures, that Seneca is not only a theatrical author, but an extremely ambitious and successful dramatic poet, concerned far more than the Greeks with the visual effect of his words, and that winning his oeuvre for the modern stage

<sup>9</sup> It was mainly philology and scholarship that inspired the performance of *Phaedra* by the Exeter University Classical Society in 1973, appraised in Fortey & Glucker 1975 (which does not reveal whether the play was done in translation). Philological advice seems also to underlie the performances of *Le Troiane* at Segesta in 1981 and Catania in 1982, in Filippo Amoroso's translation (cf. id., *Seneca uomo di teatro? 'Le Troiane' e lo spettacolo* [Palermo, 1984, with bilingual edition and commentary], 19); *Fedra* at Segesta in 1983, in Alfonso Traina's translation; *Les Troyennes* at Tarbes and Toulouse in 1991, translated for the stage by Marie-Hélène François-Garelli (a pupil of Alain Michel) and Jean-Claude Bastos (printed with photographs of the performance in *Sénèque, Les Troyennes*, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1991). Other recent performances are listed by Davis 1993 5 esp. n. 4; see too the detailed survey of *Thyestes* stagings from 1953 to 1999 in Davis 2003, 27–36. In Germany this play, currently Seneca's most successful, was put on twice in 2001, in Mannheim and Stuttgart, particular attention being attracted by the highly unconventional translation by the German lyric poet Durs Grünbein, ed. Bernd Seidensticker (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig, 2002). Other more general references in Filippo Amoroso, 'Spettacoli senecani nel ventesimo secolo: l'attività dell'Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico', in *Atti dei Convegni 'Il mondo scenico di Plauto' e 'Seneca e i volti del potere' (Bocca di Magra, 26–27 ottobre 1992; 10–11 dicembre 1993)* (Genoa, 1995), 219–24 and (in more detail) in Citti and Neri 2001, 82–7. The most recent performances known to us since 1993 are listed in the Appendix; cf. to gauge the distance from e.g. Euripides, David Gowen in Edith Hall et al. (ed.), *Medea in Performance 1500–2000* (Oxford, 2000), 234–74.

<sup>10</sup> W. A. Swoboda, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1828–30). New, performable German (verse) translations exist for *Oedipus* (Konrad Heldmann), *Medea* (Bruno W. Häuptli), and *Thyestes* (Durs Grünbein, n. 9), cf. also the script of the Munich Troas (n. 2). Thomann: *Seneca: Sämtliche Tragödien, übersetzt und erläutert*, 2 vols. (Zürich and Stuttgart, 1961–9), with a highly original preface, in which stress is laid on the theatrical qualities that commend Seneca's tragedies to the stage.

is one of the great tasks of Latin scholarship. But for some time now I have not stood alone in thus evaluating him. Above all, Ludwig Braun has recently shown in two important studies, against Zwierlein, that some things in Seneca's text can be understood only on stage; and the proceedings of a conference at Cincinnati in 1998 on 'Seneca in Performance' shows that faith in these tragedies' theatrical nature has become so strong, especially amongst Senecan specialists, that disbelievers are already on the defensive, not to say threatening to die out.<sup>11</sup>

'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'; a stage play needs to prove itself not at the scholar's desk but on the boards of the theatre. When one learns, for example, that in a production of Euripides' *Medea* the leading lady had the witching scene of Seneca's play inserted,<sup>12</sup> that proves the theatrical effectiveness of the allegedly undramatic and unstageable scene more clearly than philological acumen could. It was in this context, that of the theatre, that Wolfgang Schadewaldt used to speak of 'experimental philology'.<sup>13</sup>

For me the challenge to experiment came when in autumn 1992 students at our Institut für Klassische Philologie in Munich asked me for advice and support in performing a tragedy by Seneca. They had in

<sup>11</sup> I could not have written that when this paper was first published in 1994. Braun's articles appeared in 1981 and 1982. For valuable comments on these lines see E.A. Schmidt 2000, 2001, and 2004. Schmidt (pers. comm.) plans a comprehensive account of Seneca's theatrical art in the forthcoming *Brill's Companion to Seneca*. Cincinnati conference: Harrison 2004. On the history of modern research, see M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, ii (Munich, 41935; repr. 1967), 467–8; Zwierlein 1966, 9–11; Hiltbrunner, ANRWII 32.2 (1985), 984ff.; Sutton 1986, esp. l n. 2; Davis 1993 5–10; Fitch 2000; Littlewood 2004, 2–4 (citing further literature); and various contributions in *Dioniso* 52 (1981). Energetic support for theatrical character also in Töchterle 1994, 38–44; Kragelund 1999, reprinted here; and Davis 2003, 19ff.

<sup>12</sup> Margarete Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (Princeton, NJ, 21961), 234.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Schadewaldt, 'Experimentelle Philologie' (first publ. 1966), in *Hellas and Hesperien: Gesammelte Schriften* (Zürich and Stuttgart, 21970), i. 483–96. Comparable experiments in ancient military and cultural history are Marcus Junkelmann's 're-enactments': cf. my foreword to his *Die Legionen des Augustus: der römische Soldat im archäologischen Experiment* (Mainz, 1986), 10ff. and id., 'Das Phänomen der zeitgenössischen "Römergruppen"', in Inken Jensen and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Dino, Zeus und Asterix: Zeitzzeuge Archäologie in Werbung, Kunst und Alltag heute* (Mannheim and Weißbach 2002), 73–90 (also on clothing, sport, gladiators, music, cookery).

mind what we then still called *Troades*.<sup>14</sup> From this grew, suddenly and unintentionally, my first (and as I often prayed only) undertaking as a theatre director. Once I had worked over the play in a two-week intensive course with the students in a word-for-word interpretation including textual criticism, and basic ideas for music, choreography, and scenery had developed (with considerable production costs looming), it became clear to me that I should have to undertake the staging myself, if a performance such as we intended was to be achieved and also financed, above all through sponsorship.<sup>15</sup>

I cannot here give a detailed account of how the stage performance came into being;<sup>16</sup> instead let me say something about the principles. It was to be our highest goal to put Seneca on stage as authentically as possible. That meant that we obviously played in Latin, in accordance with the learned academic Renaissance tradition: the use of a translation would have brought the amateur *Grex Monacensis*, as we called ourselves, into unsustainable competition with the professional theatres. It meant above all that the play had to be evolved from the language, the genuine ancient sound of Latin; so performers had to be trained in the correct pronunciation.<sup>17</sup> In particular the ictus introduced into spoken iambics, contrary to the facts of the

<sup>14</sup> That the true title is *Troas* emerges above all from its presence in the archetype, as proved by the agreement of the A tradition and the *excerpta Thuanea* in the E tradition; it matches the content, and fits the fact that the chorus of Trojan women has only an intermittent presence on stage, even being replaced for the second choral ode by a chorus of men (see n. 55); more detail in my unpublished article (n. 5). That *Troades* is not really suitable has already been established by Wilson 1983, 27–9. The title *Troas* is emphatically supported by Volk 2000, 197 with n. 3; lively agreement in Harrison 2000, p. x. Keulen 2001, 14 reverts to *Troades*, without a serious attempt at justification.

<sup>15</sup> The performance took place as part of the *Ludi Horatiani* celebrations for the 2000th anniversary of Horace's death in 1993 organized by the Munich Latin association Sodalitas LVDIS LATINIS faciundis e.V. ([www.sodalitas.de](http://www.sodalitas.de)). Besides private sponsors we were supported above all by Pegasus Ltd of St. Gallen and the Bavarian Ministry of Education.

<sup>16</sup> This was done in the original publication of this essay by Barbara Breitenberger, who played Helena. Additional details will also be found in the paper by our Andromacha, Katharina Volk (2000).

<sup>17</sup> [The author here details how he corrected the 'grossly distorted' pronunciation of Latin instilled by German schoolteachers. Most English-speaking teachers use the restored pronunciation, for which he cites W. S. Allen, *Vox Latina*, Cambridge, 1968. Ed.]

language, by Richard Bentley in 1726<sup>18</sup> had to disappear, especially at the end of the trimeter (*Tro.* 1: *Quicumque regno fedit aut magnā poténs*). For that it was important to observe the distinction between long and short syllables exactly—no very easy task even for our gifted leading actors, since the individual iambic metron in its commonest form (— — ∪ —) yields a cross-rhythm that to our sensibility is far from smooth (x x' x). In singing and dancing too we attempted to let this rhythm, the bearer of the play, get into our flesh and blood; and thus we and others also became aware what a master of expressive euphony the poet Seneca is. Scholarship has so far failed to listen.

As in language, so in staging we sought to remain as close as possible to antiquity. Naturally we had to make certain concessions to modern theatrical practice: we played not in ancient daylight, but under artificial lighting on a proscenium stage; we did not employ masks; we gave the female parts to women, not—as even the Latin theatre of the Renaissance had done—to males; for the music we used modern instruments (two clarinets, two drums, and grand piano). Even so, there were to be no loudspeakers and no tapes; we did not use lighting to point up the actions, but to bring out the natural progression from late at night (Act I) by way of morning (Act II) and afternoon to sunset (Act V).<sup>19</sup> The costumes were antique without archaeological pedantry. Since Seneca's text uninhibitedly bestows Roman institutions on the Greeks, speaking for example of the 'augur' Calchas (533ff.) or even bringing a full-scale triumphal procession to Mycenae (150–5), we considered this *interpretatio Romana* to be legitimate in the costumes too.<sup>20</sup> We therefore,

<sup>18</sup> *Schediasma de metris Terentianis*; see Wilfried Stroh, 'Der deutsche Vers und die Lateinschule', *Antike und Abendland*, 25 (1979), 1–19 at 5 n. 18, 17 n. 67; id., 'Ars und Thesis oder: Wie hat man lateinische Verse gesprochen?', in *Musik und Dichtung: Neue Forschungsbeiträge, Viktor Pöschl zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 87–116 at 114ff.

<sup>19</sup> Playing Act I in darkness (which was hardly possible in the ancient theatre) is suggested by the fires of burning Troy; furthermore, in Act II sunrise is noted as recent (170–1). Evening is indicated in Act V, even if more by mood than reality, by the extended comparison of Polyxena to the setting sun (1138–42; compare 170 *vicerat noctem dies* with 1142 *nocte vicina dies*). See now Jürgen Paul Schwindt, *Das Motiv der 'Tagesspanne'—Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik der Zeitgestaltung im griechisch-römischen Drama* (Paderborn, 1994), though *Troas* is not discussed.

<sup>20</sup> On Roman elements see E.R. Varner in Harrison 2000, 121–2, and in general Stefan Walter, *Interpretationen zum Römischen in Senecas Tragödien* (diss. Zürich



for instance, dressed Agamemnon as a Roman *triumphator* and had the Greek soldiers come on with Roman standards (*signa, vexilla*) and musical instruments (*tuba, cornu*): that was what a victorious army meant for Seneca's contemporaries.

More important for me than these considerations was not to 'improve' on Seneca with any bright ideas on the director's part, but to play in principle only what was suggested by the text and contributed to its comprehension.<sup>21</sup> The need to act before an audience that would understand the Latin only in part or not at all (despite the availability weeks before the premiere of a bilingual text with a synopsis of the plot) was most salutary here: no superfluous movement could be allowed, everything had to make the action comprehensible. We were surprised at how much stage action was hidden in a text that at first sight—but only at first sight—had seemed boring and full of long-winded speeches.<sup>22</sup> Only a quarter of the text or so had to be cut for the sake of our less Latinate spectators and our inexperienced actors; the proportion of longer speeches to dialogue and spoken text to sung lyric remained roughly the same.

To turn to the content of the play, the dominant idea of *Troas*<sup>23</sup> emerged in our interpretation as the encounter with death and the

1975). We were lent historically accurate costumes, weapons, and so on (made under the direction of Marcus Junkelmann) by the Bezirk Schwaben from the props for the Augsburg bimillenary festival.

<sup>21</sup> This is a fundamental difference from a performance such as that in Xavier University, Cincinnati (1998), which admittedly I know only from the report by the director Gyllian Raby in Harrison 2000, 173–95. Significantly this performance, which began with a passage from *Agamemnon* (176) and brought Achilles' ghost onstage (see Goldberg 2000, 228–9 n. 10), played hardly any part in the scholarly discussions at the conference in connection with which it was put on.

<sup>22</sup> Only the last act, dominated by the messenger's speech, is entirely lacking in action. Even here, however, the chorus, which is obviously present (1178 *captivae*), participates through its reactions.

<sup>23</sup> The basic commentaries are those of Caviglia 1981 and esp. Fantham 1982; considerably more material in Keulen 2001. There are also the commentaries of Amoroso (n. 9) and Boyle 1994, as well as the valuable bilingual edition of Fabio Stok, *L. Anneo Seneca, Le Troiane, introduzione, traduzione e note* (Milano, 1999); note also the translation by Ahl 1986, with brief commentary. Important for understanding the play are Steidle 1941 and 1968; Willy Schetter 1965; Calder 1970; Lawall 1982; Wilson 1983; J. Dingel 1985 1087–94; Vielberg 1994. Of the contributions to Harrison 2000, those most concerned with *Troas* are Fantham, 13–26; Marshall, 27–51; Shelton, 87–118; Raby, 173–95; Volk, 197–208. Further bibliography esp. in Stok's introduction and Keulen.

fear of death, a theme that of course also occupied Seneca as a philosopher all his life down to the suicide that Nero compelled him to commit.<sup>24</sup> Through the example of two especially gruesome and disgusting killings with which the victorious Greeks humiliate the already conquered Troy, Seneca shows that fear of death is by no means unavoidable: Polyxena, Queen Hecuba's youngest daughter, joyfully accepts that she will be slaughtered in a hideous ritual murder for the dead Achilles by his son Pyrrhus; Astyanax, the little son of Andromacha and Hector, who is executed on grounds of *raison d'état* as a potential avenger of Troy with a minimal pretext of religion, leaps of his own free will from the last tower in Troy left standing, to thwart the executioner who is meant to push him. The plot consists of coming to terms with these two killings, which put a conclusive end to the Trojan War; hence the play's title *Troas*.<sup>25</sup>

After Act I, a prelude in which Troy seems already to receive its funeral from Hecuba and the chorus in a wild lamentation culminating in their stripping off, this all-female, all-Trojan spectacle finds its counterpart in Act II, which plays out entirely amongst Greek males—and sets the Polyxena episode in motion: Pyrrhus forces through the sacrifice demanded by the dead Achilles against the victorious commander Agamemnon; and Calchas the seer, brought in as the religious expert, demands Astyanax too as a second victim. There follow two acts governed by the plots against these two in reverse order, first Astyanax, then Polyxena, each ending to great theatrical effect with the respective victim led off to death. First, in Act III, Andromacha attempted to conceal her son Astyanax from Ulixes in the tomb of her husband Hector; Ulixes deploys his cunning against her deception and in a gripping scene of psychological torture, the first criminal interrogation in world literature, he elicits from her the secret and the boy. Then in Act IV Helena, who after the fall of Troy is now back with the Greeks as a collaborator, sets about

<sup>24</sup> See esp. Anton D. Leeman, 'Das Todeserlebnis im Denken Senecas' (first publ. 1971), in id., *Form und Sinn: Studien zur römischen Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 257–67; passages collected in Anna Lydia Motto, *Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* (Amsterdam, 1970), 59–62 (s. v. 'Death'). On the importance of death in *Troades* see esp. Lawall 1982, Shelton 2000 and Fantham 1982, 78–92 ('Death and the Dead in Seneca's *Troades*').

<sup>25</sup> 1167–8 (Hecuba): *concidit virgo ac puer; / bellum peractum est*, 'a maiden and boy have fallen; / the war is finished'.

inveigling Polyxena into a purported marriage with Pyrrhus; but she is willing only once she learns that her own death is involved, and Pyrrhus, who brutally leads his supposed bride away, does not notice that the happy young woman on his arm already knows the fearful truth. Finally the last, fifth act brings together the two hitherto separated strands of action: a messenger narrates in an extended report the double execution and the victims' courage in death. The desperate Hecuba and her fellow prisoners are then summoned aboard the Greeks' ships.

I cannot here discuss the many problems thrown up by the action and the set in this tragedy.<sup>26</sup> Instead, in accordance with Schade-waldt's 'experimental philology', a few points will be stressed in which our work on the staging brought about important advances in our understanding of the play.<sup>27</sup> I shall confine myself to Acts II–IV, which contain the dramatic action proper.

To begin with Act II. How is it that Agamemnon, who at first is presented as a wise and moderate statesman of the kind envisaged in Seneca's *De clementia*,<sup>28</sup> a man firmly resolved not to sacrifice Polyxena (287ff.), suddenly yields to Pyrrhus' demand, brings in Calchas as arbitrating expert, and implies that he accepts the sacrifice? In the

<sup>26</sup> They are discussed in my forthcoming treatment (n. 5). See on questions of principle W. Steidle, 'Die Bedeutung des Bühnenspiels für das Verständnis antiker Tragödien', in his *Studien zum antiken Drama* (Munich 1968), 9–31. Against the currently prevailing opinion—e.g. Fantham 2000, 15, Marshall 2000, 34ff.—unity of scene is to be maintained, cf. Schmidt 2001 345.

<sup>27</sup> At one place the experiment of stage performance even made a contribution to textual criticism. In Helena's deception speech Zwierlein, following Swoboda, objects to the sequence of lines 876–8 *nam te Pelasgae maximum gentis decus / ad sancta lecti iura legitimi petit, / cui regna campi lata Thessalici patent* (observe the euphonious assonance of 877 and 878), and therefore places the apparently lame addition 878 before 877. According to the norms of periodic structure that seems right. But if the lines are spoken on stage, the transmitted order is more convincing: it is from 878 on that the advantages of the alleged bridegroom are seductively portrayed: in 878 his kingdom, 879–82 his noble ancestors.

<sup>28</sup> That Agamemnon represents Seneca's opinions is rightly emphasized by Anliker 1960, 65–7; cf. now E. Malaspina, 'Pensiero politico ed esperienza storica nelle tragedie di Seneca', in Billerbeck & Schmidt 2004, 267–320, at 275–6, 287–8. For a different view see esp. Schetter 1965, 238, who sees in him from the start a man 'tortured by the pangs of conscience', whose moral speeches merely serve 'the achievement of highly self-seeking goals'; cf. too the more cautious appraisal in Steidle 1941, 224. Some other judgements are cited by Keulen 17.

course of our work it became clear that in the first part of the play, more precisely in Act II and the first two-thirds of Act III, Seneca allows the 'affect' of fear to dominate. It is above all through fear that Pyrrhus succeeds in cowing his supreme commander, by ever more openly (though no one has properly noticed it till now) threatening him with death. When first he says (308–10):

... et nimium diu  
a caede nostra regia cessat manus  
paremque poscit Priamus.<sup>29</sup>

we made him put his hand to his sword. At this point Agamemnon for the first time loses his self-control and becomes more spiteful, 310ff. Pyrrhus' later and more emphatic threat, almost an attempt to rouse the soldiers (337–8):

*his* ista iactas, quos decem annorum gravi  
regno subactos Pyrrhus exsolvet iugo?<sup>30</sup>

gave us the important clue that Pyrrhus here (as clearly elsewhere) is wooing the favour and solidarity of the troops present. Similarly Agamemnon—and here crucial stage-directions resulted—in everything he says must worry about the effect on these soldiers, who are torn between loyal devotion to their supreme commander and spontaneous enthusiasm for the heroic son of Achilles. Finally Pyrrhus' self-praise as son of Achilles (344–6) is answered by Agamemnon with a maliciously scornful *sententia* (347): *illo ex Achille qui manu Paridis iacet* ('Of that Achilles whom Paris' hand brought down'). Pyrrhus' retort (348)—*quem nec deorum comminus quisquam petit!* ('But whom none even of the gods attacked in close fighting!)—is not only one of Seneca's many pointed antitheses, but contains the decisive, lethal threat: on the cue *comminus* ('hand-to-hand') Pyrrhus obviously himself strides *comminus*, which most probably means with drawn sword, towards Agamemnon. The king then

<sup>29</sup> '... and all too long now my hand has held back from killing kings, and Priam demands his counterpart.' Correctly understood by Fantham 1982 ad loc., and before her Seidensticker 1969, 171.

<sup>30</sup> 'Do you boast thus before these men, whom Pyrrhus will soon release from the harsh ten-year yoke of tyranny?' The obvious reference of *his* to persons present is denied with linguistically unacceptable arguments by Fantham 1982, 258 (at 148, she was right!); cf. Keulen ad loc.

suffers his final collapse, and in helpless words, with only a partial ring of statesmanship, veils his defeat before his soldiers (349–51):

compescere equidem verba et audacem malo  
poteram domare, sed meus captis quoque  
scit parcere ensis.<sup>31</sup>

With a hypocritical reference of all things to his mercy towards prisoners he delivers Polyxena to the representative of religion, Calchas, for slaughter (351–2):<sup>32</sup>

... potius interpres deum  
Calchas vocetur: fata si poscent, dabo.<sup>33</sup>

Not till we worked on the stage-production did we fully appreciate the internal drama of this scene, which had never been properly understood:<sup>34</sup> in it, Seneca has illustrated the simple truth that, even in a battle-hardened commander, sheer terror of physical violence may triumph over the best moral principles. All the more impressive that it should be two children who at the end of the play overcome the fear of death.

At the end of the act, too—we discovered that Seneca generally concludes his acts with surprise effects on stage<sup>35</sup>—discussion of a staging-problem (this time a long-recognized one) gave us a powerful hint towards interpretation. Why is Calchas, almost the moment Agamemnon asks for him (352), present on the spot? Zwierlein, like

<sup>31</sup> 'I could stop his mouth and subdue the insolent fellow by force, but my sword understands mercy even to prisoners.' *Malo* is the colloquial and comic word commonly used as a euphemism for blows (Krieg, *TLL* viii. 229, ll. 43–67). Even this shows clearly that the confrontation is passing from the verbal to the physical.

<sup>32</sup> The paradox was rightly understood by Anliker 1960, 65, but not Agamemnon's character. Fantham 1982, 259, goes astray: 'Agamemnon's behavior is in keeping with his role of restraint', and likewise Caviglia 1981, 42: 'in modo da evidenziare ancora di più la propria *clementia*' ('in such a way as to show once more his own *clementia*').

<sup>33</sup> 'Rather let the spokesman of the gods, Calchas, be summoned; if fate so demands, I shall yield (her).'

<sup>34</sup> Superficial comments e.g. in Keulen, esp. 258, who sees the confrontation as a purely intellectual debate, in which neither man convinces the other, so that the *fata* have to decide. Cf. Seidensticker 1969, 176; Shelton 2000, 103–4; Schiesaro 2003, 191–3; and most recently Littlewood 2004, 91–2.

<sup>35</sup> Compare the end of Acts III and IV (and much elsewhere in the corpus, especially at the ends of the plays, where the Roman stage-curtain is useful to Seneca). A similar shaping intent is at work in the pointed *sententiae* with which Seneca concludes individual sections of his prose writings.

others, wished to see in this a sign that Seneca had not written for the stage, but in his recitation of the play could make the characters come in as he chose.<sup>36</sup> Another solution emerges if one enters into the spirit of the religious specialist Calchas (which, as the actor who played that part and the son of a Lutheran pastor, I considered myself especially capable of doing): he must have been longing all the time to pronounce on the ritual sacrifice, which is so thoroughly a matter within his competence. No wonder then that even before Agamemnon's summons he is ready and not satisfied with a single sacrifice. We attempted to clarify all this on stage in the following way: while everyone was gazing spellbound in the direction in which Agamemnon's messenger to Calchas had left the stage, Calchas appeared of his own accord on the other side, hence behind the assembled company, with sacrificial attendants, incense etc., quickly organized his entry, and then, supported by a drum-roll, drew attention to himself (and his long-prepared message).<sup>37</sup>

On to Act III. Besides the three chief characters, Andromacha, Astyanax, and Ulixes there is a fourth, the dead Hector. Appearing as a ghost to his widow Andromacha as she is half asleep, he warns her to conceal her son (452–6); present in his tomb on the stage, he takes personal charge of him (cf. 500–2) for a third of the act; even though dead, he is said to frighten the Greeks through his son (534–5): will not Astyanax one day become the new Hector and the avenger of Troy? This fear is in Seneca's mind perfectly justified. Anyone who staged Act III only as a loving mother's futile struggle for her child against the brutality and cunning of the human bloodhound Ulixes would indeed be sure of the audience's tears, but not entirely true to the poet's intentions.<sup>38</sup> He has represented Andromacha, one of his psychologically most interesting creations, as a woman motivated less by mother-love than by patriotism

<sup>36</sup> Zwierlein 1966, 29, citing previous literature in n. 1. His own suggestion of how Seneca, had he been a stage author, might have solved the problem contradicts Seneca's basic idea: Agamemnon could not possibly say, like Oedipus in Sophocles, that he had sent for the prophet long before, since initially he does not wish to have Polyxena killed in any circumstances.

<sup>37</sup> Other reflections, well worth consideration, in Schmidt 2004, 339–40. The opinion he evaluates, most recently espoused by Boyle 1994 on v. 352 and Marshall 2000, 41, that Calchas had been on stage since the beginning of the scene, is refuted by the words *Calchas vocetur*; rightly Keulen on v. 353.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Volk 2000, 198–200 and 207 fn. 7, citing a similar interpretation by Fantham. For hints about the figure of Andromacha I am indebted to Bernadette Schnyder (Basel), who supported our performance with her advice.

and a feeling of obligation to her mighty husband that lasts even after death. As a hero's widow she has the courage to survive only because she is also a hero's mother,<sup>39</sup> who perceives and brings up Astyanax as a new Hector, the avenger of his father, the future restorer of Troy.<sup>40</sup> Even the report of the fearful disfigurement of his body when he is pushed to his death from the tower in Act V draws from her, thinking as always of Hector, Hector dragged behind Achilles' chariot, only the positively heartless enthusiasm of the comment that in this too he is 'just like his father' (1117): *sic quoque est similis patri*. (We made her leave the stage with these words, as if transfigured.)

It was therefore important to bring out in Act III not only the open conflict between Andromacha and Ulixes but above all the imperceptibly increasing isolation of little Astyanax. Whereas at the outset he is still ready to be forced into the role of the young hero and Hector (461 ff.), the first differences between mother and son emerge at the point where he has to enter the tomb: when Astyanax shrinks back in simple childish fear of the dark opening, Andromacha interprets this as a sign of a heroic, Hector-like horror of cowardly concealment (503–5):

succede tumulo nate—quid retro fugis  
 turpesque latebras spernis? agnosco indolem:  
 pudet timere. spiritus magnos fuge<sup>41</sup>

Only stage performance (with the visibly frightened child) allows the contradiction between reality and misunderstanding, which at first must escape the reader, to become clear.

<sup>39</sup> So, explicitly, as early as 418 ff.: *iam erepta Danaei coniugem sequerer meum, / nisi hic teneret*, 'I would have escaped the Danaans and followed my husband, / if he did not hold me.' The conflict between Hector and Astyanax, in which Andromacha finds herself, explains how she subsequently, when Ulixes threatens the tomb, succumbs to the illusion that she can save either the father or the son (642ff.).

<sup>40</sup> New Hector: explicitly at 464ff. *hos vultus meus / habebat Hector, talis incessu fuit* ('This is the face/ my Hector had, this was how he walked'), cf. 504, 659–60, 769. Avenger: 660 *forsan futurus ultor extincti patris* ('Perhaps he will be the avenger of his dead father'), and even more bluntly, 774, when she recognizes the hopelessness of her desire for revenge: *non Graia caedes terga, non Pyrrhum trahes* ('You will not cut down the Greeks in rout, nor drag Pyrrhus'). Restorer of Troy, 470ff.; what she says at 739ff. is thus nothing but clever rhetorical hypocrisy.

<sup>41</sup> 'Go into the grave-mound, my son—why do you flee backwards and scorn the dishonourable hiding-place? I recognize your (inherited) character: you are ashamed to show fear. Fly from so proud a mind.' (*Turpesne*, printed by Zwierlein for *turpesque*, is logically but not psychologically better.)

Or has the director made a mistake here? Is Astyanax in fact a fearless Young Siegfried? No, the end of the act proves unambiguously that we have correctly understood his childish reaction, that of fear. True, even in the touching scene put on by Andromacha after he has been discovered he consistently exhibits the reactions to be expected of the well-brought-up son of Hector, and can therefore only with difficulty be induced to the humiliation of kneeling before Ulixes (708–17). But in the ensuing farewell ceremony he suddenly becomes afraid of his own mother's heroic temperament. She pathetically closes his eyes and then intoxicates herself on the vision of her son's entry into the next world, populated by Trojan heroes (789–91):

... occidis parvus quidem,  
sed iam timendus. Troia te expectat tua:  
i, vade liber, liberos Troas vide.<sup>42</sup>

Now Astyanax, with the only two plaintive words that Seneca allows the otherwise speechless *infans*, appeals to the pity not of the foe, but of his own mother (792): *miserere, mater* ('pity me, mother').<sup>43</sup> And now at last Andromacha briefly allows herself to be swept away with pity for her child (792ff.), but promptly recollects her mission as Hector's widow (799ff.): she charges her son with delivering her last greetings to the deceased; then takes off him the gravecloth that has been permitted to remain in the vicinity of her dear spouse, and in the strange delusion that she may still find his remains there, buries her face in it, completely alone with the dead man, leaving the child to itself (810–12):

... tumulus hanc tetigit meus  
manesque cari. si quid hic cineris latet,  
scrutabor ore ...<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 'You die, small but already to be feared. Your Troy awaits you: go, depart in freedom and behold the free Trojans.'

<sup>43</sup> Fantham 1982, 320, rightly notes 'Here we expect a cry to the attacker for mercy', but she cannot explain his address to his mother; cf. too Boyle 1994 ad loc. Previously the child had not realized the seriousness of the situation (716, *si tua nondum funera sentis* ...); only here does he seem to understand it fully.

<sup>44</sup> 'This [garment] was touched by my [she identifies herself with the deceased!] gravemound and the dear departed. If anything of his ashes is still concealed here, I shall search it out with my mouth.'



What a devastating scene! It would achieve its effect even without the one little producer's inspiration we allowed ourselves here (surely in accordance with Seneca's intention). Astyanax, abandoned by his own mother, looking helplessly now at her, now at the soldiers who are to take him away (but despite Ulixes' command do not venture to do so), finally decides, now truly a hero, of his own free will to accommodate himself to the inevitable: he folds his arms together for the chains and in this state crosses the stage to the soldiers, who quickly march off with him. We were thus able to present our audience with a visual anticipation of his courage in death, which the messenger's speech in the last act will merely narrate.

On to Act IV. This gave us a sure proof that Seneca wrote his *Troas* for the stage. Helena, with bewitching persuasion, sets about talking the princess Polyxena into marriage with the young king of Thessaly, Pyrrhus, and to this end invites her to adorn herself for a wedding (883–5):

depone cultus squalidos, festos cape,  
 dedisce captam; deprime horrentis comas  
 crinemque docta patere distingui manu.<sup>45</sup>

There is no word to inform the reader (or the listener to a dramatic recitation) how the young girl reacts to this request; he reads (or hears) only that her aunt Andromacha is disgusted by the tastelessness of such a marriage in the face of a still-burning Troy (888–902). And yet Polyxena does not, at this point, remain passive, as most commentators seem to assume; for when, sixty verses later, she hears that she is not to marry but to die, Andromacha informs us of both her present and her previous reaction (945–8):

vide ut animus ingens laetus audierit necem:  
 cultus decoros regiae vestis petit  
 et admoveri crinibus patitur manum.  
 mortem putabat illud, hoc thalamos putat.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> 'Put off your filthy costume, put on that fit for feasts, and unlearn the ways of a prisoner; smooth the hair that stands on end and let it be arranged by a skilful hand!'

<sup>46</sup> 'See, how joyfully her great spirit heard of her death: she asks for the glorious splendour of a royal costume, and lets a hand be applied to her hair. She thinks that what was offered was death, and that this is marriage.'

From this it emerges unambiguously that Polyxena had formerly refused the wedding-dress and the festive hairstyle that she now joyfully and actively welcomes. Back then, it follows, chambermaids and hairdressers must have entered with clothes, mirror, comb, etc.—and that was how we staged it:<sup>47</sup> Polyxena had obviously, in utter revulsion, sent them away by dumbshow; Seneca may here have worked in elements of pantomime, that new dance-form of his day.<sup>48</sup> Andromacha's indignant speech is so to speak the accompanying music for an expressive dance which only the spectator can see, and which the reader (or listener) can at best infer after the event from the text.<sup>49</sup> It is unthinkable that something like that was written for a recitation.

The dumbshow in this act goes further, leading to one of the most expressive and most significant visual contrasts that we find in Seneca's tragedies. While Polyxena, on stage, is letting herself be dressed and coiffed as a bride,<sup>50</sup> her mother Hecuba first faints (949ff.) and then bursts into despairing lamentations over her fate (955ff.): on top of the loss of all her children (958ff.) comes her future shameful existence as a prisoner in the enemy's land (967ff.). This visible contrast between the daughter's exultation and the mother's misery expresses a constantly recurrent theme of the play: that those who are allowed to die are happier than those who have to

<sup>47</sup> Steidle 1968, 59 with n. 88, had already inferred rightly from 946–7 taken together with 865–6 and 362ff. that Helena brings the bridal finery with her; but she can hardly do this in person—in the performance we gave her only a red veil, *flammeum*, to hold as an alluring symbol of marriage—just as she cannot herself change the bride's clothes or see to her hair: even the *docta manus* mentioned in 885 (cf. 947) indicates the presence of specialists in wedding cosmetics. So rightly now Keulen 433.

<sup>48</sup> So too now Schmidt 2004, 341. Cf. Bernhard Zimmermann, 'Seneca und der Pantomimus', in Vogt-Spira 1990, 161–7 (who does not discuss this passage). Making Polyxena a properly choreographed dance-role proved very effective in our performance.

<sup>49</sup> Very similar are the two cases adduced by Braun 1982, 45–7 from *Medea* (970–1) and *Thyestes* (1004–5), where an important passage lacks an internal stage-direction that can only be inferred from what is said later. Schmidt 2001, 346ff. speaks in this context of 'retrospective staging instructions'.

<sup>50</sup> Again Steidle 1968, 59 with n. 89, had already recognized that Polyxena at the end of the scene is adorned as a bride. It is very improbable that Polyxena was led offstage for the purpose and then brought back; Hecuba's apostrophe (967) *laetare, gaude, nata* etc., becomes more expressive if the spectator can see her daughter the while. Helena's detailed reports of the lots drawn for the prisoners and the victims' remarks (972–98) are needed to allow sufficient time for the bridal toilette.

survive.<sup>51</sup> This thought, presented emblematically on stage at this point, is heard again at the end of the tragedy (1171ff.).

As suddenly became clear to us while the work was in progress, only a true stage dramatist could have conceived of giving the chief parts, the heroic roles, in this play to two mute children, Astyanax and Polyxena.<sup>52</sup> In reading or recitation drama this would have no point; only on the stage can a character have something to say without speaking. Here Seneca, supported by dancing and dumbshow, can demonstrate that even one very young (in whom, according to Stoic teaching, the reason, *λόγος*, *ratio*, that properly distinguishes the human being, is only beginning to develop)<sup>53</sup> is capable of the most important thing in life: standing firm in the face of death.

The greatest success of our performance, however, we owe to the chorus—with which, remote as it is from today's dramatic practice, modern producers usually have the greatest difficulties, even in Greek tragedies.<sup>54</sup> These difficulties seem all the greater in Seneca because

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the *makarismos* of Priam, 145ff.; in our scene this is said most explicitly by Andromacha 969–71 (cf. Helena 938ff.). It is significant that in the course of the play all three protagonists burst into tears against their will: Andromacha (766ff.; cf. 765 *lacrimis*, 787 *lacrimis*), although she had thought herself turned to stone with grief (409–17); Hecuba (965, *inrigat fletus genas*), although she had seemed protected by foreknowledge against all grief (33ff.); Helena (925, *vix lacrimas queo / retinere*), although as an intriguer she had intended to simulate the joy of marriage (864–71).

Especially expressive of this notion is the final contrast: Polyxena exits as a transfigured bride of death; Hecuba, who presses herself on the butcher Pyrrhus in vain (1000–3), remains on stage, uttering ineffectual curses (1004ff.). When Zwierlein 1966, 46 misses 'a cry of woe or a farewell' from Polyxena here, he clearly has a different understanding of the idea behind this act. On the theatrical effectiveness of Pyrrhus' silent entry see now Schmidt 2000, 416–17.

<sup>52</sup> In Polyxena, who in Euripides had a speaking role (*Hec.* 342ff.; cf. too Seneca's model Ovid, *Met.* 13, 457ff.), the lack of speech effectively increases the impression of her youthfulness; it does not result from anything like an 'untheatrical application of Horace's rule of three participants in a dialogue', as Zwierlein 1966, 45–7 supposes.

<sup>53</sup> Pohlenz 1959, i. 56, *et alibi* (see the index s.v. 'Kinder'). The nubile Polyxena ought already to be a rational being; but it is precisely her death, as Vielberg 1994, 330, aptly remarks, that is not specifically Stoic, since she dies as an 'angry young woman' (1159, *irato impetu*). Both the executed victims are at most images, not real embodiments of Stoic courage in death. And Seneca's tragedy, though it fits his outlook on the world (contrast Dingel 1985; more accurately now Shelton 2000, 87, 106–7), does not actually express it.

<sup>54</sup> This is partly because the chorus is no longer given properly composed songs, like those by Andrea Gabrieli (Flashar 1991, 29–30), Mendelssohn (*ibid.* 69ff.), Lachner (*ibid.* 93–4), and others, of which Flashar and the recording industry have

the chorus often takes almost no part in the action, but merely performs lyric intermezzi between the acts. In *Troas*, however, the first ode, the lamentation, sung by Hecuba *alternatim* with the Trojan women, is integral. The second—sung not by Trojan women as hitherto assumed but by Greek soldiers<sup>55</sup>—stands, as a thoroughly discursive piece of philosophical lyric, in an almost enigmatic relation to the plot; the third, once more sung by the women, and the fourth have only a loose connection with what immediately precedes them. In production it soon becomes apparent that Seneca is not concerned with using these odes to heighten the emotions aroused by the dramatic action, or to deepen them through music; rather these sometimes almost superficial texts are intended to lower the audience's tension and let it get its breath back. Thus the shattering departure of Astyanax, marked for death, is followed by a song in which the surviving Trojan women (as if on a great sightseeing tour) review the various areas of Greece to which they might be dragged off. It was clear to us at once, not only on grounds of historical authenticity, but above all from artistic necessity, that these choruses must be sung in the full musical sense. Everything therefore depended both on finding the right music to give the spectators the necessary respite from overheated tragic pathos without wrenching them out of the appropriate state of mind, and on ensuring, through skilful choreography—for, in the proper antique fashion, our chorus was not only to sing, but also to dance—that the actors' and chorus' parts should not become dislocated, but should through smooth

made the musical world once again aware. Ever since the chorus was denatured to a speaking chorus, it has become unnatural, an invitation to parody (Brecht, Dürrenmatt, Woody Allen, etc.). From Adolf Wilbrandt in 1867 onwards it has been separated into its individual members (Flashar 95–6; cf. 53, on Schiller's *Braut von Messina*), which deprives it of its essence as an expression of the collective. A comprehensive survey of current problems in Detlev Baur, *Der Chor im Theater des 20. Jahrhunderts* (diss. Munich; Tübingen, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> The 'Chorus' that in 166 ff. hears Talthybius' message, and obviously remains on stage down to Calchas' pronouncement, can hardly consist of Trojan women, since later on Hecuba and Andromacha do not know about Polyxena's impending doom; it must therefore be a 'chorus grecorum', as is correctly indicated in the A tradition. I argue this in more detail in my unpublished discussion. Our view has in the meantime been adopted on the basis of the Munich performance by Keulen 165–6, and also in the 1998 performance by Xavier University (n. 21); *contra* Fantham 2000, 17–18, who thinks that such a lyric is not suitable in the mouths of 'professional killers'!

transitions blend into overall unity. For the first task we had the good fortune to obtain in the person of the composer Martin Keeser,<sup>56</sup> with his background in rock music, a man who was prepared to subject himself to the metrical dictates of the scholar, that is to retain exactly the quantitative rhythm of ancient sung verse, even when at first it seemed offputting. In addition he had a deep empathy with the mood and content of the texts and set them to music that flattered the ear without ever sounding trite.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps our student choreographer had an even harder task in constantly redesigning the movements of her (amateur) chorus to make them fit into the tragedy as a whole, which was taking shape only during the rehearsals.

I shall illustrate the problem with the single example, already mentioned, of the third choral ode. If this mental tour of Greece follows immediately on the gripping Act III, the ode is hardly to be endured. The composer had therefore first to write introductory music to which the individual chorus members entered with passionate gestures, looking back in desperation at Astyanax as he was dragged away. They then stopped, as if reminded of their own fate, and, still full of grief and fear, called out one after the other the question that forms the first verse of the choral ode (814): *Quae vocat sedes habitanda captas?* ('What new dwelling-place summons (us) captive women?') Only then was the tension broken as the music struck up a more agreeable melody, in Sapphic 5/8 time;<sup>58</sup> and in addition to its fear of future servitude, the chorus gradually began to betray traces of fascination with the unknown foreign land (815–18):

<sup>56</sup> On the Freiburg musician Martin Keeser (b. 1955) see our programme (n. 2): he has distinguished himself above all as the creator of youth musicals to his own texts—most recently *TraumTrollsNacht* (2002)—and an opera for amateur performers. *Troas* was his first Latin work.

<sup>57</sup> Musically more ambitious, but intended for the concert hall and not the stage, is the dark setting of the tragedy's prologue and the initial lament (1–163) in the Czech composer Jan Novák's *Planctus Troadum* (1969), on which see now Schubert 2004, 408–10, 416, and Wilfried Stroh, 'Jan Novák: Moderner Komponist antiker Texte' (first publ. 1999), in *Dino, Zeus und Asterix* (n. 13), 249–63 at 254.

<sup>58</sup> As Novák has shown (*Schola cantans*, Padua 1973) with the example of Hor. *Carm.* l. 2, this can be produced by introducing a quaver rest at the caesura and the end of the verse. In the fourth choral ode, which is also Sapphic, Keeser allowed 5/8 time to alternate with 4/8, which brought the setting even closer to the ancient metre.

Thessali montes et opaca Tempe?  
 an viros tellus dare militares  
 aptior Pthie meliorque fetu  
 fortis armenti lapidosa Trachin?<sup>59</sup>

Not till near the end of the ode does the tone once more increase in passion (851ff.). The Trojan women sing that they would gladly go anywhere, if it must be so—only not to Sparta, the home of the evil Helen ... who promptly appears on stage at the beginning of the next act.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as we learnt, the choral ode, without furthering or even indicating the action, in the end fits into it as a soothing point of rest.

The result, then? Our performance showed us—and also the audience, so far as we could tell from the very lively reactions—that Seneca at least in his *Troas* had written a genuine stage play, a drama, that absolutely does not, as one often reads, fall apart into individual scenes, but through its very contrasts and discontinuities works as a whole, even on a modern who has little or no Latin. That in itself was a reward, in my opinion, for the effort of more than half a year's hard labour on our philological experiment. However, we did not achieve another, almost more important goal: that of interesting directors and actors, theatre folk and theatre critics,<sup>61</sup> in our enterprise. Our large audience—almost 1500 spectators in three sold-out performances<sup>62</sup>—came almost exclusively from the clientele of the Humanistisches Gymnasium and classical philology. We remained, like the humanists of the sixteenth century, in an academic Latin ghetto. Was it only the language, or also the name Seneca, that put people off? Despite his minor renaissance in our day, at the moment it remains easier to convince scholars that Seneca wrote for the theatre than to inspire directors to put his tragedies on stage as the poet envisaged them. All the same, *nil desperandum*.

<sup>59</sup> 'The mountains of Thessaly and the dark vale of Tempe? Or Phthia, that bears especially valiant soldiers? Stony Trachin, better in breeding mighty cattle?'

<sup>60</sup> By deleting vv. 855–60 we made this relationship clearer for the audience: Helena came on stage at v. 851 and was recognized in 854 by the chorus, which then scattered in horror with *absit, absit*.

<sup>61</sup> The only notices were in *Literatur in Bayern*, 35 (March 1994), 5 (Fidel Rädle) and *Vox Latina*, 30 (1994), 81–3 (Francisca Deraedt).

<sup>62</sup> Further performances were impossible for technical reasons.

## APPENDIX: Performances of Seneca's Tragedies Since 1993

Compiled by Katharina Kagerer and Wilfried Stroh<sup>63</sup>

Further details: [www.klassphil.uni-muenchen.de/~stroh/seneca\\_scaenicus.htm](http://www.klassphil.uni-muenchen.de/~stroh/seneca_scaenicus.htm)

### Hercules furens

- 1996: Théâtre Gérard Philipe, Saint-Denis (France). Directed by Jean-Claude Fall.
- 2002: Queensland Theatre Company (Australia). Directed by Scott Witt.
- 2005: Brasenose College, Brasenose Arts Festival (England).

### Troas (Troades)

- 1993: Grex Monacensis, Universität München. Directed by Wilfried Stroh. In Latin.
- 1994: Théâtre du Lierre, Paris. Directed by Farid Paya. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 1995: Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry, Paris. Directed by Adel Hakim.
- 1995: Compagnie de Lierre, Marseille. Directed by Farid Paya. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 1997: Compagnia Accademia d'Arte Drammatica della Calabria. Directed by Edoardo Siravo. Translated by Filippo Amoroso.
- 1998: Xavier University Cincinnati, Ohio. Directed by Gyllian Raby. Translated by Frederick Ahl.
- 2001: Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (USA). Directed by Alexander Harrington.
- 2003: The Goodman Theatre, Chicago. Directed by Mary Zimmerman. Translated by David Slavitt.
- 2006: Teatro Antico di Segesta (Italy). Directed by Giuseppe Argirò.

<sup>63</sup> The list makes no claims to completeness. Note that some of the data rest on internet searches and could not be checked in greater detail. We do not include productions in which Seneca's text was not foregrounded, but merely worked in. We compared our data with the information provided by the *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama* (Oxford), [www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/)

**Thebais (Phoenissae)**

No performance on record

**Phaedra**

- 1993: Wiener Festwochen with Teatrul National Craiova (Romania). Directed by Silviu Purcarete. Translated by Silviu Purcarete (with material included from Euripides' *Hippolytos*).
- 1995: various theatres in the Netherlands. Directed by Dora van der Groen. Translated by Hugo Claus.
- 1995: Teatro della Tosse in Sant'Agostino, Genoa. Directed by Tonino Conte. Translated by Edoardo Sanguineti.
- 1995/96: Reed College (Theatre Department), Portland, Oregon (USA). Directed by Mary Roberts.
- 1998: Classic Stage Company (CSC) Theatre, New York. Directed by Alison Summers. Adaptation by Susan Yankowitz (with material included from Euripides' *Hippolytos*).
- 1999: University of California, Irvine, California. Directed by Bryan Doerries. Adaptation by Bryan Doerries and Laura M. Weber.
- 2003: Sledgehammer Theatre (USA). Directed by Kirsten Brandt, David Tierney. Adaptation by Susan Yankowitz (with material included from Euripides' *Hippolytos*).
- 2003: Palazzo Pignano (at Cremona, Italy), as part of the project 'Teatro e Archeologia'. Directed by Beppe Arena. Translated by Michele Martino.
- 2005: Teatro Quirino, Rome with Titania Produzioni. Directed by Lorenzo Salvati. Translated by Edoardo Sanguineti.

**Medea**

- 1993: Chamber Made Opera (Australia). Opera, composed by Gordon Kerry. Translated by Beata Berger. Libretto by Justin Macdonnell.
- 1995: Seminar für Klassische Philologie der Universität Mainz. Directed by Jürgen Blänsdorf. In Latin.
- 1995: Théâtre de la Tempête de la Cartoucherie, Vincennes (France). Directed by Gilles Gleizes. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 1996: Max-Reinhardt-Seminar, Vienna.
- 1997: Deutsches Theater und Kammerspiele, Berlin. Opera, composed by Gordon Kerry. Translated by Beata Berger. Libretto by Justin Macdonnell.



- 1998: Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow. Directed by Stewart Laing. Adaptation by Clare Venables.
- 1999: Teatro Greco di Palazzolo Acreide (Italy). Directed by Marco Gagliardo. Translated by Filippo Amoroso.
- 2000: MEDEA 2000 at Kellertheater, Basel (Switzerland). Directed by Achim Wolfgang Lenz. Collective translation made by students.
- 2000: Teatro Antico di Segesta (Italy). Directed by Walter Pagliaro. Translated by Filippo Amoroso.
- 2002: Teatro Maticandelas, Medellín (Colombia). Directed by Luigi Maria Musati.
- 2003/04: Schlosstheater, Moers (Germany). Directed by Christina Emig-Könning. Translated by Bruno W. Häuptli.
- 2003: Grupo del IES Domingo Valdivieso de Mazarrón at Auditorio del Parque, Cartagena (Spain).
- 2004: Seminar für Lateinische Philologie der Universität Bonn. Directed by Christoph Pieper, Tim Dautzenberg. Bilingual. Translated by students (with excerpts from Christa Wolf, *Medea. Stimmen*)
- 2005: La MaMa e.t.c. [Experimental Theatre Club], New York. Directed by Jay Scheib. Adaptation by Jay Scheib (with material included from Euripides' *Medea*).
- 2005: Opera Up Close (England). Opera, composed by Darius Milhaud. Libretto by Madeleine Milhaud.
- 2006: Junges Schauspiel Ensemble München (Germany). Directed by Michael Stacheder. Translated by Udo Seegerer.
- 2006: Teatro dei Due Mari, Teatro Antico di Segesta (Italy). Directed by Alberto Gagnarli.
- 2007: Festival Teatro dei Due Mari, Tindari, Messina (Italy). Directed by Alberto Gagnarli. Translated by Filippo Amoroso.

### Oedipus

- 1994: Die in Debt with Nightwood Theatre, Toronto. Directed by Sarah Stanley. Adaptation by Ned Dickens.
- 1994: Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (KVS), Brussels / Toneelgroep Amsterdam. Directed by Franz Marijnen. Translated by Hugo Claus (with material included from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*).
- 1998: Opéra-Comédie, Montpellier. Directed by Jean-Claude Fall. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 2000: Sydney Theatre Company. Directed by Barrie Kosky. Translated by Ted Hughes.

- 2000: Parco Archeologico di Baratti e Populonia (Italy). Directed by Giuseppe Pambieri.
- 2002: Glasshouse Productions, various theatres in Great Britain. Directed by Michael Chase. Translated by Ted Hughes.
- 2002: Festival del Teatro Classico di Veleia and Plautus Festival in Sarsina (Italy). Directed by Beppe Arena.
- 2005: Théâtre de la Tempête de la Cartoucherie, Vincennes (France). Directed by Sylvain Maurice. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 2005: Academy Drama School, London. Directed by Oliver Plunkett.
- 2005: Theater by the Blind (USA). Directed by Ike Schambelan. Translated by Ted Hughes.
- 2006: University of Nottingham (New Theatre) (England). Directed by Benjamin Ford. Translated by Ted Hughes.
- 2006: Akropolis Performance Lab (APL), Seattle (USA). Directed by Joseph Lavy. Translated by Ted Hughes.

### Agamemnon

- 1992–96: Academia de Teatru si Film, Bucharest (Romania).
- 1995: Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry, Paris. Directed by Adel Hakim.
- 1995: Istituto Nazionale del Drama Antico, Segesta (Italy). Directed by Daniela Ardini. Translated by Vico Faggi.
- 2003: Troupe théâtrale du Grand Marshall (Canada). Directed by Georges de Napierville. Adaptation by Louis Jean Népomucène Lemercier (with material included from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*).
- 2005: Teatro Greco, Tindari (Italy). Directed by Giuseppe Argirò.

### Thyestes

- 1994: The Green Room, Manchester and Royal Court Theatre, London. Directed by James MacDonald. Translated by Caryl Churchill.
- 1994: Amandiers, Nanterre. Directed by Jean-Pierre Vincent.
- 1994: Théâtre du Lierre, Paris. Directed by Farid Paya. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 1995: Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry, Paris. Directed by Adel Hakim. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 1997: Conspiracy Theatre (England). Directed by Tony Singh. Translated by Caryl Churchill.
- 1997: Haileybury College, Hertford (England). Directed by Mark Grant. Translated by Caryl Churchill.

- 1998: Rome (as part of the celebrations for the 2000th anniversary of Seneca's birth). Directed by R. Cappuccio.
- 1999: Théâtre de Gennevilliers (France). Directed by Sylvain Maurice. Translated by Florence Dupont.
- 2000: Teatro Brancaccio, Rome. Translated by Sylvano Bussotti.
- 2001: Nationaltheater Mannheim. Directed by Laurent Chétouane. Translated by Durs Grünbein.
- 2001: Stuttgarter Schauspielhaus. Directed by Stephan Kimmig. Translated by Hugo Claus.
- 2003: Raleigh Ensemble Players (USA). Directed by Glen Matthews. Translated by Caryl Churchill.
- 2004: Kaaithheater, Brussels. Directed by Gerardjan Rijnders. Opera, composed by Jan van Vlijmen.
- 2006: Teatro Antico di Segesta (Italy). Directed by Cinzia Maccagnano.

### **Hercules Oetaeus**

- 1996: Théâtre Gérard Philipe, Saint-Denis (France). Directed by Jean-Claude Fall.

### **Octavia**

- 1997: Grupo Pentagrama del I.E.S. Ramiro de Maeztu, Festival Europeo de Teatro Grecolatino at the Teatro Romano of Segóbriga (Spain).
- 1998: Rome (as part of the celebrations for the 2000th anniversary of Seneca's birth). Directed by M. Cava.
- 2000: Teatro Antico di Segesta (Italy). Directed by Edoardo Siravo.

---

## Seneca's *Oedipus*: The Drama in the Word

*Donald J. Mastronarde*

'In the plays of Seneca, the drama is all in the word . . . ' So writes T. S. Eliot in an often-quoted essay on Senecan tragedy (Eliot 1927*a*, 6–7). The present study is intended to demonstrate one possible application of this phrase through an analysis of selected words and motifs which, by their repetition and interplay, by their associated moods and emotions, unify and give meaning to Seneca's *Oedipus*. Prime attention will be given to the verbal aspect of the composition, for in general Seneca himself, a highly self-conscious stylist in prose and poetry, seems to have laid prime emphasis just there, and only secondarily attended to more conventional considerations of dramatic art. Indeed, one might argue that a fuller understanding of Seneca's peculiar qualities as a Latin poet is to be attained by ignoring the usual questions (as to sources, dramatic unity, number of acts, characterization, moral didacticism or Stoic influence, stage-drama or recitation-drama, etc.) and instead treating his works merely as poems—not portrayals of action, but verbal paintings of almost static situations well known to the reader, but depicted in ever fuller detail as the work progresses.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this version I have added English translations, shortened the notes and the penultimate section of the text (see n. 13), and made very minor adjustments of style; a few references to works later than 1970 have been added in the notes. The original study grew out of part of a senior honours thesis completed at Amherst College in 1969 under the direction of Peter Marshall. In its published form I benefitted from the encouragement and suggestions of Gilbert Lawall. The studies which most influenced my approach were Regenbogen 1927–28, Pratt 1939 and 1963, Henry and Walker 1963, 1965, 1966, and 1967, and Herington 1966. The *Index*

Seneca's prologues are normally of great importance for setting forth both the mood of the poem and the key-words associated with it (Pratt 1939, Anliker 1960), and *Oedipus* is no exception. Just as in *Phaedra* the hunt prologue lays before the reader the verbal and emotional ingredients of Hippolytus' idyllic vision of primitive, natural, innocent life (hills, woods, water, wind, and the chase) (Henry and Walker 1966), or as in *Troades* Hecuba's monologue embodies the grief, fiery destruction, and unnatural cruelty featured throughout the play, so in *Oedipus* Seneca gives not only a physical description of plague-stricken Thebes, but a mental-emotional description of Oedipus (1–81). Guilt and crime are foremost in his mind, and he already senses that he is to blame for the horrors of the plague—*fecimus caelum nocens* ('I have made the heavens baneful' 36). The first five lines evoke an imaginary world consonant with his state of mind and so introduce several key-words:<sup>2</sup>

Iam nocte Titan dubius expulsa redit  
 et nube maestum squalida exoritur iubar,  
 lumenque flamma triste luctifica gerens  
 prospiciet avida peste solatas domos,  
 stragemque quam nox fecit ostendet dies.

(1–5)

Now darkness is driven off, and the Titan returns hesitantly, his beams made gloomy by filthy clouds. As his cheerless fire delivers a sombre light, he will look forth on homes left desolate by the greedy plague, and day will reveal the havoc that night has wrought.

The profusion of adjectives of like meaning is characteristic; the cluster of *dubius* ('doubtful'), *maestum* ('sorrowful'), *squalida* ('filthy'), *triste* ('sad') requires special consideration.

*verborum* of Oldfather, Pease, and Canter 1918 was also essential. On *Oedipus* in particular cf. Müller 1953 and Paratore 1956. Works later than 1970 that address the verbal texture of *Oedipus* as a whole or of particular scenes: Schetter 1972; Bettini 1983 and 1984 (language of incest in the extispicy); Poe 1983; Frank 1995 (rhetorical use of family terms); Stevens 2000 (ode to Bacchus, 403–508).

<sup>2</sup> In this version I use the text and line numbers of Otto Zwierlein's Oxford Classical Text (1986) and use the English translation of J. G. Fitch's Loeb edition (2004), sometimes with slight adaptation toward the more literal in order to emphasize a point. I have not been able to use the thorough commentary of Töchterle 1994.

First, the doubt in *Titan dubius* is a projection of Oedipus' doubt over the cause of the plague and over his own god-ordained guilt (the two considerations belong together in his thoughts). In a characteristic way Seneca has shifted the Sophoclean portrayal of a man quickly dissatisfied with ignorance and uncertainty to fit his own guilt-ridden creation. Seneca's Jocasta tries to give Oedipus encouragement on just this point:

regium hoc ipsum reor:  
adversa capere, quoque sit *dubius* magis  
status et cadentis imperi moles labet,  
hoc stare certo pressius fortem gradu.

(82–5)

The quality of a king lies, I think, in this very ability to take on adversities. The more unsure his situation, the more the balance of supreme power tilts toward falling, so much more firmly should he stand, resolute and unbudging.

The king's attitude toward doubt is evident again later, when he angrily wishes to circumvent it by accepting a hasty conclusion and eliminating the object of doubt:

CR. Quid si innocens sum? OED. *Dubia* pro certis solent  
timere reges. CR. Qui pavet vanos metus,  
veros meretur. OED. Quisquis in culpa fuit,  
dimissus odit: omne quod *dubium* est cadat.

(699–702)

CR. What if I am innocent? OED. Kings regularly take unproven fears for certainties. CR. He who indulges empty fears earns himself real fears. OED. Anyone faulted feels hatred, even if let off; let all that is suspect fall!

These lines, with their repartee of *sententiae*, are not primarily intended to provide clues to the character of a full-bodied dramatic *persona* Oedipus, as such dialogue might do in some Greek tragedies. Rather, their more important contribution is the revelation of the emotional attitude which pervades the play, echoing the emotional attitude of a less life-like *persona* (less life-like because Seneca's interests and intentions lay elsewhere, not through lack of skill or of taste). *Titan dubius* in the opening line thus implies both a physical obscurity and, in relation to Oedipus, an emotional condition. As the embodiment of Phoebus, moreover, the sun indicates by its dubiety

the uncertainty of the oracular god consulted in the play; this sense is assured by the repetitions of the word applied to the Delphic response:

CR. Responsa *dubia* sorte perplexa iacent.  
 OED. *Dubiam* salutem qui dat afflictis negat.  
 CR. Ambage flexa Delphico mos est deo  
 arcana tegere. OED. Fare, sit *dubium* licet.

(212–15)

CR. The oracle's response is entangled, inconclusive. OED. To give inconclusive deliverance to sufferers is to refuse it. CR. It is the Delphic god's custom to conceal secrets in twisted ambiguities. OED. Tell it, however inconclusive.

Again, uncertainty in the god is inferred by Tiresias (328–30) when Manto reports confusing signs for his interpretations; indeed, the adjective *dubius* appears again only to describe the slaughtered bull in the extispicy (340–4):

Quid fari queam  
 inter tumultus mentis attonitae vagus?  
 quidnam loquar? sunt dira, sed in alto mala.

(328–30)

What could I tell, lost in a turmoil of amazement? What am I to say? Terrible evils are here, but deeply hidden.

TIR. Unone terram vulnere afflicti petunt?  
 MAN. Iuvenca ferro semet imposito induit  
 et vulnere uno cecidit, at taurus duos  
 perpressus ictus huc et huc *dubius* ruit  
 animamque fessus vix reluctantem exprimit.

(340–44)

TIR. Was a single wound sufficient to fell each of them?

MAN. When the blade was held out, the heifer thrust herself against it and fell from a single wound. But the bull, after suffering two blows, plunges erratically here and there, and though weakened can scarcely yield up his struggling life.

In this allegory (Pratt 1939, 93ff.), the bull is to be identified with Oedipus (the two blows and struggle prefiguring his self-blinding and drawn-out life), and thus the use of *dubius* in 343 is entirely apt, both to Oedipus and to the divination. The adjective, first introduced in verse 1, occurs in a set of coherent repetitions which contribute to the verbal and emotional texture of the play.

The other three adjectives that first appear with *dubius* in lines 1–5 similarly recur in significant ways. The same image and mood are in Seneca's mind in *maestum* ... *iubar* ('gloomy beams') and *lumen triste* ('sombre light'), but the terms are naturally varied in a passage which exhibits a rhetorical fulness or effusion frequent in Senecan description. In similar conditions of effusive description with variation, the same pair is repeated:

longus ad manes properatur ordo  
agminis *maesti*, seriesque *tristis*  
haeret et turbae tumulos petenti  
non satis septem patuere portae.

(127–30)

A long, sad column hastening in sequence to the shades; but the gloomy line is delayed, since the seven gates do not open wide enough for the crowd seeking graves.

Such a recurrence shows not only the workings of a rhetorical vocabulary, but a uniformity of mood—a gloomy feeling which connects the two passages. In like manner, the pair of *squalida* and *maestum* in verse 2 is recalled when Tiresias, interpreter of Phoebus (cf. *Titan dubius*) and interlocutor with the dead (cf. *agminis maesti*), is described:

ipse funesto integit  
vates amictu corpus et frondem quatit;  
lugubris imos palla perfundit pedes,  
*squalente* cultu *maestus* ingreditur senex,  
mortifera canam taxus adstringit comam.

(551–5)

The seer clothes his body in funereal garments, and waves a branch. The old man steps forward in the squalid clothes of mourning: a gloomy robe sweeps down over his feet, the deathly yew binds his grey hair.

The description is again effusive, as *funesto* ('funereal'), *lugubris* ('mournful'), and *mortifera* ('deadly') compound the effect of *squalente* and *maestus*. And the gloom of *maestus* returns in the echoes of the necromancy (*ter valles cavae sonuere maestum*, 'thrice the hollow chasms groaned [lit. sounded mournfully]', 569–70) and in the visage of the servant who reports Oedipus' self-blinding (912). Squalor is



again emphasized in the appearance of Laius (*paedore foedo squalidam obtentus comam*, 'with his matted hair covered in squalid filth', 625). This whole scene is linked with the prologue by these and other evocative words: e.g., *tristis* ('sad') in 3, 45, and 545. Likewise in Laius' speech, *luctificus Auster* ('the scourging south wind' 632) picks up the idea of heat, dryness, and plague introduced in *flamma . . . luctifica* ('cheerless fire', 3) and elaborated in 37–43 and 49–51. These words of gloom and sorrow draw together sections of the play and aspects of its imaginary world—Oedipus' state of mind, the condition of the heavens, the dead, the necromancer and his contact Laius.

Yet another link between Oedipus and the plague and death results from the consistent application of the adjective *avidus* ('greedy') to the horribly insistent grabbing of death and of its agent, the plague:

prospiciet *avida* peste solatas domos  
(4)

he will look forth on homes left desolate by the greedy plague.

*Mors atra avidos oris hiatus*  
*pandit et omnes explicat alas*  
(164–5)

Dark Death opens his greedy jaws agape, and unfurls his wings to the full.

*vultu sidereo discute nubila*  
*et tristes Erebi minas*  
*avidumque fatum*  
(409–11)

with your star-bright countenance dispel the clouds, the grim threats of Erebus, and greedy fate.

*avidumque populi Pestis Ogygii malum*  
(589)

the evil of Plague, greedy for the Ogygian people.

This association of the word with the grasping force of death has appropriate ramifications in its final use near the end of the play. Oedipus gives himself a strange death-sentence in *morere, sed citra patrem* ('die, but stop short of your father', 951). Its fulfillment is

described by the messenger; *avidus*, because of the earlier uses, emphasizes Oedipus' relation to the plague and the aspect of death in this execution which leaves the criminal alive:

scrutatur *avidus* manibus uncis lumina,  
radice ab ima funditus vulsos simul  
evolvit orbes.

(965–7)

With hooked hands he greedily probed his eyes, and from their base, from their very roots he wrenched the eyeballs and let them roll out together.

One of the most conspicuous systems of recurring imagery in most Senecan dramas is that of fire-words (Pratt 1963), and *Oedipus* makes full use of this group of words. The scorching fire of the sun (Phoebus' active participation, as it were, in the punishment of Thebes) is first mentioned in verse 3. This image is picked up again in 37–40, embracing both the fever of disease (*anhela flammis corda*, 'hearts that pant with flames'), and the heat of the heavens (*ignes auget aestiferi canis Titan*, 'Titan augments the fires of the scorching dog star'), then spreading in 41–3 to the resulting dryness of the earth. *Vapor* (47) continues the heat-group. The sterile grain of 49–51 re-emphasizes dryness (*arente culmo sterilis*, 'barren . . . on its parched stalks'). With a characteristic flourish, Seneca suggests an equation of natural and human phenomena as people's eyes, like the rivers, are 'dried out' (*siccavit*, 58) and human tears, along with crops and animals, also 'die' (*periere lacrimae*, 59). At the same time, the fire-motif shifts to associations with the funeral pyre (55, 59–68). The several connotations of the fire- and dryness-words<sup>3</sup> form a chain, from the pestilential heavens to the suffering humans and scorched earth, to the funeral pyres. Other occurrences of words in this group extend the complex of imagery and ultimately bring it back to Oedipus.

In all, there are 24 instances of the principal words for 'fire' and 'flame' (*ignis, igneus, flamma, flammeus*), to which may be added 12 instances of more specialized words meaning 'blaze', 'burn up', 'fire-brand', 'pyre' (*ardere, cremare, fax, rogas*). Their significance for the poem may best be seen by grouping them according to their

<sup>3</sup> The three remaining uses of *siccus* ('dry') and *areo* ('be parched') are consistent with the prologue, again referring to the noxious dryness of the plague: 152–3, 633. The counter-motifs of moisture are treated below.

associations. For instance, one set refers to the fire of the sun or stars: 3, 39, 122 (cf. 505, of the moon). Three instances convey the sense of the plague's fever—as suggested above, there is a metaphorical transfer from the heavens to the bodies of the victims: 38, 185, 187b. From there the transfer continues to the funeral pyre, with reinforcement by several minor fire-words: 60, 64, 65; 67 (*ardere*); 55, 64 (*cremare*); 61, 68, 550, 874 (*rogus*); 55 (*fax*). Furthermore, as a destructive force, fire is not only a property of the plague and pyre, but also an instrument of punishment, both divine and human:

Rupere Erebi claustra profundi  
turba sororum *face* Tartarea

(160–1)

The throng of sisters with Tartarean torches has burst the barriers of deep Erebus.

telum deposuit Iuppiter *igneum*  
oditque Baccho veniente fulmen

(501–2)

Jove laid aside his fiery weapon, and abhorred the thunderbolt at Bacchus' coming.

OED. Quid quaeris ultra? fata iam accedunt prope.  
quis fuerit infans edoce. PHOR. Prohibet fides.  
OED. Huc aliquis *ignem! flamma* iam excutiet fidem.

(860–2)

OED. Why search further? Now destiny comes close. Tell me fully, who was the baby? PHOR. My loyalty forbids. OED. Bring fire, one of you! Flames will soon drive out loyalty.

The plague itself is, in a sense, a punishment by fire. Thus it is appropriate that when Oedipus recognizes his guilt, he calls for, among other methods, punishment by fire, and the punitive fire is purposely related to the fire of the pyre:

me petat ferro parens,  
me gnatus, in me coniuges arment manus  
fratresque, et aeger populus ereptos *rogis*  
iaculetur *ignes*.

(872–5)

Let father and son attack me with the sword, let husbands and brothers take arms against me, let the people in their sickness seize firebrands from the pyres to hurl at me.

As suggested above, the condition of the heavens seems to be a projection of Oedipus' state of mind. Thus the fire of the sun somehow derives from Oedipus, and the fire-imagery as a whole implies that all types of fire—celestial, of the plague and pyre, punitive—are one, all manifestations of the universe's feeling for Oedipus. Indeed, as the *nuntius* describes the scene, the punitive fire called for in 875 is finally brought back to the beginning of the cycle and internalized in Oedipus—the imagery of his fury brings the fulfillment of his call:

dixit atque ira furit:  
ardent minaces igne truculento genae  
(957–8)

So he spoke, raging with anger. His eyes blazed threateningly with a ravaging fire.

Yet the extent of the fire-imagery is wider still. Allusion is made to the torch of marriage with regard to Jocasta and Merope (21, 272), and the marriage-connotation is linked with the funeral-connotation by the use of *fax* in juxtaposition with *thalamos* in 55:<sup>4</sup>

iuvenesque senibus iungit et gnatis patres  
funesta pestis, una fax thalamos cremat  
(54–5)

The young are joined to the old, fathers to sons by the deadly plague. A single torch cremates married couples.

Finally, there is a set of fire-words related to sacrifice in the extispicy (307, 309, 314, 321, 383) and necromancy (551, 557, 558), linking those important scenes (in fact, essential to Seneca's play) to the rest of the fire-image complex. The sacrificial flames are also explicitly linked to the funeral pyres ('firebrands snatched from the pyres,' *rapti rogis ... ignes*, 550–1; cf. 874–5). More important, these fires are

<sup>4</sup> A play upon these two senses of *fax* is fairly common and often more explicit: e.g. Prop. 4.3.13–14, 4.11.45–6; Ovid *Ep.* 2.120, 6.42, 11.101–4, 20.172, *Met.* 6.430; Sen. *Contr.* 6.6.1.

involved in the ascertaining of Phoebus' will. Like the doubtful sun (*Titan dubius*) and Oedipus' own doubt, the flames also prove uncertain: 309–20, especially 'with no fixed path', *incertus viae*, 312, and 'you would hesitate to say (*dubites*) what color is or is not there', 318. Finally, the fire in the divination has allegorical significance, alluding to the rise and fall of Oedipus (308), to his confused kinship (314–20), to the discord in his family, especially between his sons (321–3), and to his blindness (320; 325–7) (Pratt 1939, 93ff.). The sacrificial fire, like all other types, has a meaningful connection with the Oedipus-situation. As a whole, the group of fire-words is among the most important systems in Seneca's *Oedipus*. Their pervading presence and their transmutations from one association to another draw together elements of the play and suggest a unity of all types of fire as manifestations of one peculiar situation. In their interplay the words almost gain a life of their own and enact their own drama of connotations—what might be termed 'the drama in the word'.

Words of crime form another system with a consistent range of applications unifying the play as poetry. The crimes of Oedipus are the slaying of his father and his marriage with his mother, and the reference in the word *scelus* ('crime') in the play is primarily to these acts and no others (in 11 of 16 uses).<sup>5</sup> Of the five instances not applying specifically to these acts, two gain special irony in that in one case Oedipus does not realize that the *scelus* is his (247), while in the other he vainly asserts his innocence (791). Later, when Oedipus calls Mt. Cithaeron 'spacious locale of crimes' (*scelerum capax*, 930), he alludes to his own criminal existence and also makes an important reference to the hereditary crimes of the Theban dynasty.<sup>6</sup> In the two remaining instances of *scelus*, Jocasta uses the word to accept her share of the guilt in the Oedipus-situation (1024, 1030). Thus the noun has a more particular sense than simply 'crime', and the shifting realization or ignorance of that particularity comprises the 'dramatic' value of the word.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In 17, 35, 629, 631, 765, 879, 916, 937, 941, 1001, 1045.

<sup>6</sup> Actaeon and Pentheus died on Cithaeron, while Oedipus was exposed and saved there: cf. 436–44, 626–9, 751–63, 930–3, 1005–7.

<sup>7</sup> Two other nouns of crime, *nefas* ('impious deed') and *crimen* ('charge'), reinforce this effect: of nine uses, four apply to Oedipus' crimes, two more to the Theban line's heritage, and one to the horrible results of the divination, which have symbolic significance for Oedipus: 18, 373, 444, 661, 748, 875, 1023. Of the other two

Adjectives related to the crime-motif also create unifying connections. In the prologue the cluster 'unspeakable', 'monstrous', 'incestuous', 'impious' (*infandus, dirus, incestus, impius*), together with the nouns *scelus* and *nefas*, is contained in seven lines (15–21). The two acts mentioned by the oracle are to Oedipus 'unspeakable' (*infanda*, 15), and the adjective is naturally transferred to Oedipus himself when the truth is known:

congerite, cives, saxa in *infandum* caput  
(871)

Citizens, hurl stones at this unspeakable body.

praedicta postquam fata et *infandum* genus  
deprendit ac se *scelere* convictum Oedipus  
damnavit ipse

(915–17)

After Oedipus had grasped the fate foretold to him and his unspeakable parentage, and condemned himself as one convicted of crime ...

The two parts of the unspeakable crimes are also described by the related *nefandus*—the father's side when the murder of Laius is termed *nefandum facinus* ('monstrous crime', 274) by an Oedipus as yet ignorant of the word's appropriateness; and the mother's side when Laius accuses his son ('claimed his father's. ... taboo marriage', *nefandos occupat thalamos patris*, 635). Later the word is used of Oedipus and Jocasta in 1014–15: 'it is not right for those who are unspeakably corrupt to come together any more', *congrēdi fas amplius haut est nefandos*. Jocasta's acceptance of guilt in her last speech is marked not only by repetition of *scelus*, but by her self-address with *nefanda* (1031) and *incesta* (1026).

It is not without point, furthermore, that Seneca uses *nefandus* and *infandus* elsewhere in the play only in reference to the Sphinx, whose connection with the present difficulties is affirmed by Oedipus (106–9) and confirmed by the key-words applied to the monster:

uses, *abest pavoris crimen* ('the charge of cowardly fear is absent') in 87 may be ironic if we understand it as 'The charge of fear at least does not apply, though others do'; and *nam te ... nefas invisere umbras* ('since it is taboo for you ... to look upon the shades') in 398–9 may also imply the specific *nefas* of Oedipus facing his murdered father (cf. his horror at facing Jocasta in 1012–23 and Laius' own reluctance to show himself in 619–23).

*cruentos vatis infandae tuli*  
rictus

(93–4).

I braved the bloody gaping jaws of that unspeakable sibyl.

*nodosa sortis verba et implexos dolos*  
*ac triste carmen alitis solvi ferae*

(101–2)

I untied the knotted oracular words, the entwined device, the grim riddle of the winged beast.

*ille, ille dirus callidi monstri cinis*  
*in nos rebellat*

(106–7)

Yes, it is that cunning monster's cursed dust that is renewing war against us.

OED. *Pium prohibuit ullus officium metus?*  
CR. *Prohibent nefandi carminis tristes minae.*

(245–6)

OED. Could any fear prevent that loyal duty?

CR. It was prevented by the grim threat of the unspeakable riddle.

Not only the terms 'unspeakable' and 'grim' (*tristis*: cf. esp. *tristes Erebi minas*, 'the grim threats of Erebus', 410), but also 'bloody' and 'monstrous' provide connections with Oedipus and his ills: 20–1, 330, 634, 642, 961–2. As will be shown below, other words, especially imagery of twisted and tangled confusion, contribute even more to the sharing of epithets—the uniform evocations of mood—relating to Oedipus and the Sphinx. As with the heavens, the divination-scene, and the descriptions of Laius and Tiresias, there is a metaphorical unity of the Sphinx with Oedipus: the monster is simply another manifestation of Oedipus' peculiar *fatum*, of his personality as Seneca reveals it. It is thus with full force that Laius calls the monster 'Oedipus' own' in 641: *magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua* ('a monstrosity more enigmatic than his own Sphinx').

The impiety and shame of Oedipus' crimes also have ramifications in the verbal texture of the play. The adjectives 'impious' and 'incestuous' (*impius, incestus*) are first placed side by side in 21; the former recurs in 935 of Oedipus, the latter in 1026 of Jocasta. The same pair appears in

Laius' curse, where the impiety extends to include the future strife of Eteocles and Polyneices (645–6). *Impius* links the past impiety of mythic history (Agave and Pentheus, 436; the Sparti, 731) with the impiety of modern Thebes—the children of Oedipus and Jocasta (638–40). Oedipus is thoroughly obsessed with the threat of the oracle, and so the same motif appears in his curse upon the slayer of Laius in 260: *thalamis pudendis doleat et prole impia* ('may he find grief in a shameful wedlock and unnatural offspring'). In this curse *pudendis* ('shameful') adds a connection to the shame-motif, introduced in 19 ('I am ashamed to utter my fate', *eloqui fatum pudet*) and used by Tiresias in interpreting the confused signs ('the gods find something shameful', *pudet deos nescio quid*, 334). Laius, through his participation in the whole affair, properly bears a 'shame-faced head' (*pudibundum caput*, 619–20); Jocasta taunts her husband-son with 'as son you feel shame' (*gnatum pudet*, 1010). Thus the shame spreads from Oedipus and reaches Laius and the gods, while Oedipus' impiety is reflected in past and future, embracing the earth itself in her unnatural parturition of the Sown Men of Thebes (*feta tellus impio partu*, 731).

Analysed in this way, the play emerges more and more as a study of a sick situation which centres around and derives from a sick individual. The words are dramatic vehicles of the basically uniform moods of gloom, horror, and abnormality. As often in Senecan plays, the keynote of many features of *Oedipus* is the overturn or reversal of natural order: *natura versa est* (371). The phrase applies specifically to the aberrant physiology of the sacrificial victim, but the passage is allegorical<sup>8</sup> and thus closely associated with the whole complex of abnormal manifestations (the plague, the Sphinx, *Titan dubius*, etc.), the center of which is Oedipus.

Several other words, images, and moods associated with the central figure deserve consideration. Oedipus' sense of not belonging is first reflected in the use of *profugus* ('fugitive') and *exul* ('exile') in the prologue, where he vainly claims there was freedom and no guilt in his departure from Corinth (13, 23). His true attitude is apparent at the

<sup>8</sup> The use of *utero* ('womb') in 371 points to an allusion to Jocasta, who bore not only the unnatural children of Oedipus, but also Oedipus, himself an abnormal monster of sorts. Cf. 1039 and possibly 637 (but Zwierlein deletes 636–7); even perhaps 462, where again an unnatural physiological condition is involved.



close of the prologue, where he calls himself *hospes* ('stranger, foreign guest') and thinks of renewed exile, ironically an exile back to Corinth:

linque lacrimas, funera,  
tabifica caeli vitia quae tecum invehis  
inaustus *hospes*, *profuge* iamdudum ocius—  
vel ad parentes.

(78–81)

leave behind the tears, the deaths, the corruptive maladies in the sky which you bring with you as a fateful stranger. Quickly, make your belated escape—even to your parents!

The combination *profugus* ... *hospes* recurs in the oracle in 234 and again in Oedipus' curse (*non hospitalis exulem tellus ferat*, 'may no hospitable land support him in his exile', 259, and a few lines later, *per regna iuro quaeque nunc hospes gero*, 'I swear by the kingship I now hold as an outsider', 264). Laius' imprecation contains *regem* ... *agite exulem* (647–8), where *exulem* may be legitimately interpreted both as an attributive with *regem* and as a predicate accusative, that is, 'drive the king out as a fugitive' and 'drive out the fugitive king.' The hereditary link with Cadmus, exiled from his Phoenician homeland, is suggested by the same guest-motif in 713 (*Sidonio* ... *hospiti*). Finally, at the close of the play, Oedipus goes into exile again (*profuge*, 1051; *fugio*, 'I depart into exile' 1053). As with other motifs,<sup>9</sup> the exile-guest theme has come full circle in the closing speech, as Oedipus really does leave his native land.

Oedipus is naturally very concerned about his kinship ties because of the threat of the oracle. His fear is evident in the prologue and gives special force to the conclusion 'escape—even to your parents!' Thereafter, words like 'parent' and 'father' (*parens*, *pater*, *paternus*) unavoidably awaken special emotion because of the ever-present undertones of crime and horror intimated by the oracle.<sup>10</sup> With this horror in mind, for instance, Oedipus frames the curse upon

<sup>9</sup> E.g. the baneful maladies which Oedipus brought with him (cf. prologue, esp. 79), the monsters loosed by the plague (160ff.) and by the necromancy (586ff.), all leave the country with Oedipus (1058–61), as Laius foretold (652–3).

<sup>10</sup> Of 32 instances, I would classify 25 as emotionally charged or ironic uses: 18, 20, 22, 81, 261, 271, 375, 635, 636, 643, 658, 663, 787, 793, 794, 795, 802, 806, 807, 836, 866, 938, 951, 998, 1043. Only seven seem to be emotionally colorless and unconnected with the special ironies and horrors of Oedipus' kinship ties: 12, 54, 59, 266, 328, 596, 872 (but 54 and 872 may in fact have an ironic force).

Laius' murderer (*hic et parentem dextera perimat sua*, 'may he even kill his parent with his own hand', 261). The collocation of *parens* and *perimere* ('kill') here recalls the original allusion to the oracle in the prologue: 'I fear . . . that I may kill my father with my own hand' (*ne mea genitor manu perimatur*, 15–16). The verb recurs, consistently related to important aspects of Oedipus' situation—the Sphinx (104–8), Laius (243–6, cf. 218 *interemptum*, 221 *peremptor*), and Jocasta (1040, 1044–5). It is noteworthy how many words of gloom, horror, and crime appear as well in these passages. The keywords of different images tend to act together in creating the unusual verbal texture of Seneca's poetry.

It is, moreover, particularly appropriate that the Sphinx is included by the motif marked by *perimere*. Other verbal links between the Sphinx and the Oedipus-situation were mentioned above. The Sphinx is another form of the plague, another agent of death. In 107 it is in fact called *lues* 'scourge', a word elsewhere applied to the pestilence (29, 652) and, significantly, to the infant Oedipus, as if even then he embodied the destruction which his presence has let loose in Thebes (859) (Paratore 1956, 130). The imagery of bloody jaws and flexing of wings in 93–6 (*cruentos . . . rictus* and *aptaret alas*) is recalled in 164–5 (*Mors atra avidos oris hiatus pandit et omnis explicat alas*, 'Dark Death opens his greedy jaws agape, and unfurls his wings to the full') and further identifies the Sphinx with death. The monster is thus an essential part of the horrible fate of the Labdacids. Its death is parallel to that of Laius: *peremptum* is used in both cases; both seek revenge via the plague; in both cases, Oedipus has the kingship as prize (*pretium* or *merces*) of the slaying (104–5 and 634–5). Its existence, on the other hand, is closely linked with that of Oedipus, both by its action as a force preventing Laius from evading his ordained end and by associated vocabulary. The comparison with an enraged lion (*verbera et caudae movens saevi leonis more conciperet minas*, 'as she developed her menace, lashing her tail like a savage lion', 96–7) recurs applied to Oedipus (*qualis per arva Libycus insanit leo*, 'as a Libyan lion rages through the countryside', 919). The Sphinx, Oedipus, and wrath are thus connected to the Bacchic motifs of the poem, for lions drive Bacchus' triumphal chariot (425) and roar on the prow of the Tyrrhenian pirates' ship (457). It may also be significant that the Nemean lion is mentioned in

the description of the hot, dry heavens (40); and, ironically, real lions have been quieted by the plague (150). Another motif, the rending of viscera with claws ('her talons tore the rocks, anticipating my flesh', *saxa ... revulsit unguis viscera expectans mea*, 99–100), unites the Sphinx with the plague ('groans shake the body', *viscera quassat gemitus*, 191–2), with the extispicy and its uncertainty and abnormality (352, 370, 380), with Oedipus' call for punishment ('what tigress or what savage bird will attack my flesh?' *quae tigris aut quae saeva visceribus meis incurret ales?* 929–30; cf. the Bacchic tiger in 458, the Sphinx as bird in 102), and with the actual blinding (note *vulsos*, 'torn' 966; *unguibus*, 'nails' 968). The Sphinx is thus portrayed as another projection into nature of the abnormality of the Oedipus-situation.

The monster is still further related to Oedipus by means of imagery of entanglement and confusion, a motif that both relates to the motif of doubt and alludes to the king's incest and confused kinship. The monster and its riddles are described with knotty imagery, and the puzzling oracles similarly; moreover, a simile of confusion and doubt in the divination-scene seems to refer to Oedipus' kinship-ties allegorically:

... Spbinga caecis verba nectentem modis  
(92)

Sphinx weaving her words in dark measures.

*nodosa sortis verba et implexos dolos  
ac triste carmen alitis solvi ferae*  
(101–2)

I untied the knotted oracular words, the entwined device, the grim riddle of the winged beast.

*responsa dubia sorte perplexa iacent*  
(212)

The oracle's response is entangled, inconclusive.

*non una facies mobilis flammae fuit:  
imbrifera qualis implicat varios sibi  
Iris colores*  
(314–16)

The flame was changeable, with more than one appearance. As Iris the shower-bringer weaves various colors into herself . . .

These uses all serve as a background to the high-point of Laius' angry utterance, which touches upon Oedipus' kinship and incest; and with a like image of confusion Jocasta heralds the overthrow of normality in her final speech:

invisa proles: sed tamen peior parens  
 quam gnatus, utero rursus infausto gravis,<sup>11</sup>  
 egitque in ortus semet et matri impios  
 fetus regessit, quique vix mos est feris  
 fratres sibi ipse genuit—*implicitum* malum  
 magisque monstrum Sphinge *perplexum* sua  
 (636–41)

Detested offspring—yet worse as a father than as a son, burdening that ill-fated womb a second time; he pushed to his very source, forced unnatural procreation back on his mother, and as scarcely happens even among wild beasts, he sired brothers for himself—an entangled evil, a monstrosity more enigmatic than his own Sphinx.

omne *confusum* perit,  
 incesta, per te iuris humani decus.  
 (1025–6)

Every decency of human law has been confounded and destroyed by you, incestuous woman.

The system of motifs of kinship, incest, destruction (especially parricide), intertwining, and confusion forms another tightly-knit complex of associations.<sup>12</sup> As with other systems, this one too tends to create a unity out of Oedipus' crime, the monstrous Sphinx, the plague, and other events—a unity in which the abnormal is normal, *natura versa est*.

Amid all this gloom and abnormality, are there pleasant, healthy counter-motifs and is there any prospect of release and purity? In

<sup>11</sup> 636–7 are considered spurious by Zwierlein.

<sup>12</sup> There is probably something ironic in *nexa* in 989–92 (*non illa deo vertisse licet / quae nexa suis currunt causis. / it cuique ratus prece non ulla / mobilis ordo*), where the idea of tangled confusion is more appropriate to the Oedipus-situation than the suggestion of some immutable order in the universe.

*Phaedra*, for instance, Seneca plays off two worlds against each other (Hippolytus' 'idyll' and *Phaedra's* 'phantasmagoria': Henry and Walker 1966); but in the end nightmare and death dominate. In *Oedipus*, the alternative motifs are much rarer and weaker, and prospects of order and salvation ultimately seem empty. In the most important contrast, the hot, dry air which is so oppressive in the prologue is balanced at several points by cool, gentle breezes and refreshing liquids (water and wine). On one side, Seneca emphasizes Auster: 'scourging south wind with its oppressive breath', *gravi flatu ... luctificus Auster*, 631–2 (cf. 'heavy vapor', *gravis ... vapor*, 47) and the miasmal air ('dry exhalation', *halitu sicco*, 633). On the other, there is Zephyrus, cooling and gentle and light (*gelido*, 37; *lenis*, 37; *levis*, 38, 884). All the good qualities in 37–9, however, are named only to be negated. Phoebus' oracle gives hope of pure skies once Laius' murder is avenged: 'the sun will give us wholesome draughts of pure air', *haustusque tutos aetheris puri dabit*, 220; 'kindly stars will return', *mitia ... remeabunt sidera*, 233. Laius makes the same pledge: 'the life-giving air will give pure breaths', *spiritus puros dabit vitalis aura*, 650–1. And this at least is to be fulfilled by *Oedipus'* exile at the end:

*mitior caeli status*  
posterga sequitur: quisquis exilem iacens  
animam retentat, *vividus haustus levis*  
conciat.

(1054–7)

a kindlier condition of the skies will come in behind me. You who feebly retain the breath of life on your sickbeds may, lightened, take in life-giving draughts of air.

The repetitions of words like *haustus*, *mitis*, *levis*, and *purus* in close proximity to one another establish the motif of refreshing air that draws together these passages and links them with others. The motifs of clean, open air and purity from pollution again seem relevant when Tiresias asks whether, as the better alternative, the sacrificial flame rises *pure* into the open air (309–11; note the converse—a flame that is heavy, uncertain, and unclean, 312–13), and when *Oedipus* mistakenly says that he can raise *pure* hands toward *heaven* (790–1). Lightness of breath (1056) counters the oppressiveness of 47 and 631; and *levis*, together with *lenis*, *spiritus*, and *aura*, also serves

to make the choral metaphor of Fortune as untroubled voyage (882–91) totally relevant to Oedipus and the plague (note ‘pressed by a heavy breeze’, *pressae gravi spiritu*, 885–6) as well as a reaffirmation of Oedipus’ own simile for Fortune in 8–11.

While the motifs of pure air and gentle breezes might be said to triumph when Oedipus takes the horrors of the plague away with him into exile, the themes of cool liquids and springs are more ambiguous because closely related to two important systems—the Bacchic motifs and the Theban past, which must also be considered here. The Bacchus-ode (403–508) has been recognized by sympathetic critics as an integral part, poetically, of Seneca’s play (Müller 1953, 450–1; Paratore 1956, 125–6). It appears to provide a bright, cheerful contrast of relief and release between the horrors of the plague and extispicy that precede and the more dreadful necromancy that follows. Indeed, set against the rest of the work, it does reflect a happy mood; nevertheless, ominous notes intermittently jar this serenity and below the surface lurk the same crimes and gloom.<sup>13</sup> The phrase ‘with palms lifted in supplication’ (*palmis supplicibus*, 408) may suggest a more sombre note, and the keywords *tristes* and *avidum* (‘sad’, ‘greedy’) have some effect (410–11). The allusion to Juno’s wrath (*iratum . . . novercam*, 418) leads to the theme of metamorphosis and false limbs (419–20). Metamorphosis is unnatural and recalls the monstrous Sphinx and the physiological abnormalities of the extispicy. Moreover, transformation is the common feature of many mythological allusions in the play, most of which are related to Bacchic frenzy or to the Theban past or to both: serpent’s teeth changed into men, Dirce into a spring, Ino and Melicertes into sea-gods, Agave and her women into Maenads, the Proetides into cows, the pirates into dolphins, Actaeon into a deer, Daedalus and Icarus into birds (compare *falsis . . . pinnis*, ‘false wings’, 896–7, with *falsos imitatus artus*, ‘assuming a false form’, 419). There is a certain horror and unhappiness in all these myths. Through the Theban past, the Sphinx, and the deformed womb of the extispicy, the metamorphosis-theme also reaches Jocasta and Oedipus, himself a monster. This Bacchic theme is thus inseparably involved in Theban past and Theban present.

<sup>13</sup> This paragraph and the two that follow are distilled from a more detailed treatment in the original version, 306–12.

The Bacchus-ode ends with six hexameters that emphasize eternal, orderly natural phenomena (503–8). Similar orderliness on a cosmic level is implied in Oedipus' solemn invocation in 248–57. It might legitimately be said that these passages reflect the Stoic vision of an orderly universe and are intended to present the opposite of the chaos of Oedipus' world; nonetheless, it would be quite wrong to give these lines undue emphasis and seek a consistent attitude of Stoicism in Seneca's poetry. Despite these lines, Oedipus' world remains one of crime and chaos; disorder spreads from humans to upset natural processes, and any vision of serene order is indeed futile because countered and overwhelmed by the rest of the work. Likewise, though Laius claims 'you are not ravaged by the gods' anger, but by a crime' (*non ira deum, sed scelere raperis*, 630–1), that makes no difference to the chorus, who in 712 reaffirm Tiresias' interpretation of divine anger, *ira numinum* (331, 333). Jocasta asserts 'no one becomes guilty by fate' (*nemo fit fato nocens* 1019), but this has no effect on her feelings and her subsequent actions. As tragedian Seneca thus offers no consistent philosophical solution.<sup>14</sup> Even the salvation of Thebes at Oedipus' departure is partially empty, for the whole heritage of the Theban royal line stresses impiety and abnormality. The future will be no better: Eteocles and Polyneices are alluded to several times (237, 321–3, 360–5, 646, 749–50).

With its superficial relief of brightness and its underlying irony, the Bacchus-ode prepares for the necromancy and the ode on the Theban past (709–63). The necromancy shifts firmly back to the gloom characteristic of the whole work, but several minor motifs link it to the Bacchic triumph.<sup>15</sup> The significance of metamorphosis, of the Bacchic lions, and of the tradition of impiety has already been mentioned. Four interrelated themes—animals (especially bulls and

<sup>14</sup> With the dominant theme of *natura versa est*, the spirit of the poetry as a whole is averse to Stoicism's vision of an orderly universe. The question of how to relate Seneca's Stoicism to the tragedies is still much debated, although more sophisticated approaches have emerged. Cf. Henry/Walker 1963, 109, on one side, and Herington 1966, esp. 460–1 on the other; after 1970, e.g., Pratt 1983, Motto and Clark 1988, Rosenmeyer 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Note the repetition of forms of *vireo* ('be green, flourish'): 156, 452, 533, 649; the reversal of Bacchic motifs in the description of Tiresias: gloom (554), hair bound not with ivy but with 'deathly yew' (555), shaking a branch instead of a thyrsus (552), wearing a long robe (553, contrast 423).

cows), forests, springs, and Theban royalty also recur throughout the earlier parts of the play. Here we may consider just the royal family. The necromancy brings forth generations of Theban characters. There are the snake-born Sparti (587), and Zethus and Amphion, the former quelling a bull (610–12). Amphion's wife Niobe is a victim of metamorphosis and mother of unhappy children; Agave is compared to her: 'here is a worse mother than she, frenzied Agave' (*peior hac genetrix adest furibunda Agave*, 615–16). Yet the violence of this worst mother is preferable to Oedipus' (625–9). If genuine, *peior parens quam gnatus* ('worse as a father than as a son', 636–7) recalls and demands comparison with 615–16. Bloody Pentheus and Laius complete the scene. The chorus adds to this history of Theban horrors by alluding to Cadmus' arrival in Boeotia, evoking the significant motif of error or wandering.<sup>16</sup>

Oedipus is one of the family, for he was exposed on Cithaeron and saved among the flocks. Without actual transformation, he is none the less identified in imagery with Sphinx and bull. In the end he imitates the Bacchic frenzy of Agave: when he knows the truth, he is like a mad lion shaking its mane (919–20; the Bacchic animal, and the Bacchic hair-motif recurring in a brutal context). He mentions tiger and bird, Cithaeron, and Agave (929–33). Not only does he blind himself in fury (*iratus ferox*, 960), but Jocasta too is another Agave and succumbs to the same Bacchic frenzy (1006). Thus, metamorphosis affects both Oedipus and Jocasta as the latent violence of the Bacchus-ode comes completely to the surface and overwhelms any suggestion of relief and resolution. The Theban past, its metamorphoses, and its miraculous and tragic encounters with forests, springs, and animals appear wholly uniform with the present; the future may well be the same.

The examples already given are not exhaustive, but should suffice to demonstrate one sense in which one might speak of 'the drama in the word' in Seneca's *Oedipus*. Groups of words with their associated moods and imagery recur with shifts of meaning which reinforce and illuminate other uses of the same word, mood, or image. Some interconnections are fairly definite, but the independent life assumed

<sup>16</sup> Note the repetitions of the words of wandering (*error, errare, vagus, vagari*): 173–4, 329, 656, 720, 757, 773, 778, 875, 951, 1047.



by individual words in their interplay may add vague and ominous suggestiveness to a seemingly straightforward passage. For instance, in the choral interlude that follows the full acknowledgment of Oedipus' guilt (882–910), the conventional example of Daedalus and Icarus is used in praise of the golden mean. The final couplet (909–10) recalls Oedipus' own simile about fortune in the prologue (8–11). Is it merely by chance that in the tangle of the boy's punishment for excess (*in ponto manus movit implicitas puer*, 'in the sea the boy moved his entangled hands', 906–7) the word used so effectively of Oedipus' confused kinship (*implicitum malum*, 'entangled evil', 640) reappears? Or, again, since the plague is ultimately one manifestation of the horrid Oedipus-situation, the reader may be invited to further thoughts on the equalizing of fathers and sons and mutual deaths of husbands and wives which it, like Oedipus, causes (54–5, quoted earlier). And when Oedipus calls for public punishment, the relatives he mentions are not only the ones hurt by the plague (52–63), but the ones that his marriages have intermingled and confused (872–5, quoted earlier).

As a final example, consider the description of the grove where Tiresias conjures up Laius (530–47). The language used seems to have vague intimations related to the plot (making the passage more than 'rhetorical ecphrasis'). The cypresses, the oaks, and the unnamed 'massive tree' (542) are all personified. The cypresses, with funereal connotations, are conspicuous, like tall persons in a crowd ('thrust their heads above the high trees', *altis exerens silvis caput*, 532), and circumscribe the whole forest: likewise, death's agent, the plague, makes itself conspicuous in Thebes and embraces the whole population. The oaks, sacred and often oracular trees, are like Tiresias, bent and old and supported by another (cf. Manto). Finally, the huge tree is like a powerful politician (cf. *magno ambitu*, 'great circle', 543, but *ambitus* also connotes political canvassing), oppressive (*urget*) and protective (*defendit*) at the same time (543–4)—suggestive of both the tyrant and the king in Oedipus. But this towering tree (or king) has beneath it a gloomy spring, not unlike Oedipus' troubled mind (*tristis . . . lucis et Phoebi inscius*, 'gloomy . . . untouched by Phoebus' light', 545). Whether one makes such connections or not, the spirit and mood of the passage is consonant with other details of the play, and the long description is a justifiable, an essential element of Seneca's conception, as is the extispicy, which is full of similar suggestiveness.

The words and moods carry a great burden of interest in Senecan tragedy; they require and deserve close attention.

The art of Seneca's *Oedipus* is not stage-art. Indeed, from the above analysis, a case might be made for ignoring the traditional elements of drama (and the traditional questions of research—characterization, sources, Stoic influence, etc.) in an attempt to understand better the peculiar nature of Senecan tragedy as Latin poetry. *Oedipus* is not, as in Sophocles, a dramatic portrayal of a man seeking salvation for his city and a full sense of identity for himself, but discovering in the process his own guilt and meeting disaster. To speak of discovery in Seneca is perhaps somewhat false, since Oedipus' guilt is implicit in the imagery from the prologue on. The Latin play is rather a description of a static situation centered around a guilty man who already feels his guilt, a situation in which the guilt spreads into or has ramifications and responses in the natural universe depicted in the poem. The moods of the play, the mental–emotional situation of Oedipus, the plague, the Sphinx, the Theban past, etc., fuse into one complex entity. The vehicle of this fusion is the words themselves and their 'drama'—the interplay of motifs taken over from many previous poets, but most of all continuing the Latin tradition of Ovid.<sup>17</sup> The peculiar literary form employed evidently offered to Seneca a viable means (and one especially congenial to an artist of words) of verbalizing the themes of evil which seem to have haunted his thoughts and to have appeared rampant in his society. Seneca's tragedies thus seem to be the artistic expressions of a clever, yet deeply brooding mind trapped in the sophisticated but violent society of Neronian Rome (Regenbogen 1927–28, Walker 1957, 170).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Seneca's fondness for an environment completely consonant with the emotional state of his human subjects is an extension of one of Ovid's uses of landscape: on 'cosmic sympathy' cf. Otis 1966, esp. 233, 256, and on Ovid's various uses of landscape cf. Segal 1969. Likewise, many Senecan motifs (such as the hunt and love-chase in the *Phaedra*) have their precedent in Ovid. Almost the entire Theban story, indeed, derives from *Met.* 3, but Seneca has concentrated and interconnected the myths to an extraordinary degree. See further Jakobi 1988, 90–139.

## Gender and Power in Seneca's *Thyestes*

*Cedric Littlewood*

*Thyestes*, Seneca's only tragedy without a real female character, is not at first glance a very promising place to look for gender conflict. Beyond the opening scene in which Furia drives the ghost of Tantalus to infect the royal palace, Atreus and Thyestes are the only two significant characters. In a very masculine drama brother challenges brother for supreme political power. The challenge does, however, have a domestic aspect. Atreus, apparently secure on his throne, describes himself as an exile wandering in fear through a shattered kingdom (237ff.). Thyestes has stolen away his wife and a talismanic animal, and with them the foundations of his power. Now his house is sick, his blood uncertain. In a display of public reconciliation Atreus speaks of crowns and sceptres, the attendant chorus of pitched battles and cities besieged. In private, when confiding his anguish and enacting his revenge, the outward symbols are stripped away. He will use no weapon, no instrument for his revenge but his brother's flesh. At the moment of victory he cries with powerful illogic that he now believes his children are his own and his marriage-bed is chaste (1098–9). His wife Aerope does not appear on the stage, is never mentioned by name, but is very much present in Atreus' anxieties and in the subtext of the play.

Aerope is a figure of some stature in ancient tragedy and Seneca did not lack a model,<sup>1</sup> but arguably she is more effective here as an

This is a revision of an article which appeared in *Materiali e Discussioni* 38 (1997). I have taken Zwierlein's 1986 OCT as my text and used the Loeb translations of Fitch 2004 and Miller 1916 for Seneca and Ovid respectively.

<sup>1</sup> Quintilian, discussing the masks used on the tragic stage, uses Aerope as a canonical sad figure, as Medea is a canonical savage figure (11.73). Mentioned by

off-stage presence. As if too terrible to be voiced openly, the challenge to Atreus' masculinity surfaces obliquely and intermittently—in the triumphant assertion of paternity at the moment of victory, in the incongruity between the reality of his political power (surely unthreatened by a man playing the *sapiens* in the woods) and his private fears of a kingdom in crisis. It lurks also in the memory of the text. Seneca's cannibal banquet is patterned on Ovid's narrative of the Tereus myth in *Metamorphoses* 6.<sup>2</sup> Atreus himself acknowledges that the model for his revenge is the banquet which the Odrysian house saw. For inspiration he calls on Procne and Philomela, who between them represent not only the victim of adultery but of rape. Through the literary device of allusion, by which a story is told without being spoken, through Atreus' incongruous but revealing assumption of the role of the raped, a drama of sexual dominion and threatened masculinity underlies the political tragedy.

This article has three parts. In the first I discuss the figures of the animal and the woman. Atreus recovers his dominion through the constructions he imposes on his brother. In the revenge he so carefully stages Thyestes plays the hunted animal and, in an ugly parody of childbirth, the woman. Through the logic of ritual if not of reason Atreus thus secures the foundations of his kingdom. In the second I discuss Seneca's Ovidian model and the importance of the controlling gaze and of verbal irony as instruments of mastery. In the final section I reflect briefly on the self-defeating paradoxes of tyrannical power in this tragedy and in the philosophical tradition. Thyestes suffers a punishing transformation into an animal and a woman as he succumbs to the mad appetite for power, and this is a metamorphosis which his conqueror Atreus also experiences.

name in Ovid's account of the myth (*Tristia* 2.391–2) Aerope does not appear in any surviving tragic fragments. She may have had a role in Sophocles' or Varius' version of the myth and indeed Pearson 1917, 93, has suggested that she may have been 'one of the most prominent characters'. On Aerope in tragedy see also Tarrant 1985, 40–1, and Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London 1993) 546–7 and 554–5.

<sup>2</sup> Note that in Ovid's grouping of tragic plots at *Tristia* 2.387–92 *Thyestes* follows *Tereus* follows *Medea*). Seneca's Atreus most resembles Ovid's Tereus and, in the absence of Ovid's tragedy, the *Medea* from his own drama. On the association of *Medea's* revenge with Procne's in the *Metamorphoses* see Larmour 1990, 133 and Littlewood 2004, 209 n.60.

## 1. THE ANIMAL AND THE WOMAN

Atreus' grievance against his brother is that he has stolen away his wife and a magical ram, the symbol of his power:

coniugem stupro abstulit  
regnumque furto: specimen antiquum imperi  
fraude est adeptus, fraude turbavit domum.

(222–4)

He stole my wife by adultery and my kingdom by theft; by deceit he obtained our ancient symbol of power, by deceit he brought turmoil upon the house.

The faithless wife was party to the theft of the ram (233–4), but more significantly here the two crimes are linked as instances of *fraus*, political and domestic. The ram produces a golden fleece to adorn the sceptres of the Tantalid kings and very much like a royal wife is enclosed by the stone walls of the royal palace (231–3).<sup>3</sup> The animal and the woman, the twin foundations of royal power, have escaped their prison and the king is king no more:

per regna trepidus exul erravi mea,  
pars nulla nostri tuta ab insidiis vacat,  
corrupta coniunx, imperi quassa est fides,  
domus aegra, dubius sanguis et certi nihil  
nisi frater hostis.

(237–41)

Throughout my own realm I have wandered fearfully in exile; no part of what is mine is safe from treachery; my wife is defiled, my confidence in power shaken, my house tainted, its blood uncertain; nothing is sure—except my brother's enmity.

<sup>3</sup> On the more famous golden fleece in the first voyage overseas as an emblem of imperial crime and luxury see e.g. Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones* 5.18.4, *Medea* 329–34, 607–15, Ovid *Met.* 1.89–150; as an object of insatiable desire see Fränkel 1968, 622f. and especially n. 350 on Apollonius Rhodius 4.428ff.

Ram and wife are paired also in Euripides *Electra* 717–22. Though it fits in the wider context of the ode, desire seems almost displaced here as it appears in the song about the animal but not in the following seduction of the woman: *μολπαὶ δ' ἠϋξοντ' ἐραταὶ χρυσέας ἄρνος* (the lovely song of the golden ram swelled forth, 717–18).

Because of Aerope's adultery Atreus cannot be sure that his children, Agamemnon and Menelaus, are really his and worries whether they can be reliable conspirators in his revenge (294–333—quite some discussion in a tragedy of only 1112 lines). At last he decides it would be best for them to be unwitting agents, but we never see them and the role of persuading Thyestes falls instead to his own son Tantalus. We never hear about the sacred ram or Aerope again either and Atreus' words of triumph at the end of the tragedy come as something of a surprise: *liberos nasci mihi | nunc credo, castis nunc fidem reddi toris* (Children are born to me, now I believe it; my bed is faithful and chaste once more, 1098–9). My contention is that the text is not as careless or forgetful as it first appears. Symbolically if not literally Atreus recovers the animal and the woman (and through her his paternity). Atreus confides in the audience as no other tragic character does, and the nature of his anxiety is visible in the unfolding of his revenge.

The animal and the woman are introduced as distinct but paired figures. I shall discuss Atreus' construction of Thyestes as an animal and as a woman separately below, but the pairing deserves some preliminary comment. In the programmatic opening scene Tantalus makes a stand against Furia (*stabo et arcebo scelus*, I shall stand and block the crime, 95). He will not be reduced to the mindless plague she intends: *me pati poenas decet / non esse poenam. mittor ut dirus vapor . . . ?* (My proper role is to suffer punishments, not to be a punishment! Am I sent forth like some dread exhalation . . . ? 86–7). She makes no reply but infects his body with burning thirst and secures his obedience. The following description of Corinth and Argos parched by a fiery wind at his approach (101–21) seems to confirm his fear. Appetite triumphs over argument, bodily desire over the mind's moral opposition. Later, in a parallel scene,<sup>4</sup> Thyestes explains at length why he should not enter the royal palace; but these arguments are mysteriously lacking in force and he will soon give himself up to gluttony at the criminal banquet, tearing the flesh of his children like an animal.<sup>5</sup> As passion conquers reason, the body takes

<sup>4</sup> Thyestes' *sequor* (I follow, 498) echoes Tantalus' *sequor* (100). See further Tarrant (1985) 160.

<sup>5</sup> *obiecitur feris / lanianda fors corpora?* (Did he [Atreus] perhaps toss the bodies to wild beasts to tear? 747–8); cf. *liberos avidus pater / gaudensque laceret* (Let the father rend his children avidly, gleefully, 277–8), *lancinat gnatos pater* (the father is mangling

over the mind. The non-rationality of animals can be and is distinguished from the irrationality of the vicious, but it remains a popular argument that to act counter to reason is to turn one's back on the exercise of the faculty which distinguishes humanity from the animals (e.g. Juvenal 15.142–7).<sup>6</sup> Animals are not the only creatures in which the desires of the body are dominant. Being locked within and subjugated to one's body is peculiarly feminine (so e.g. Zeitlin 1990, 74). The identification of woman and animal depends, obviously, on a common opposition to man and the figures appear together. Pentheus is turned into a woman before being torn apart like an animal; the topos of erotic pursuit transforms women into animals and, when the roles are reversed, the experience of becoming prey is an emasculating one.<sup>7</sup> The figurative systems, then, are separate but with the potential for elision.

Though the talismanic ram, described in some detail (225–33), is then never mentioned again, Atreus' intention to entrap Thyestes within the royal palace is often expressed in terms of the capture of an animal.<sup>8</sup> In Atreus' first speech (176ff.) Thyestes is introduced in terms which combine the language of hunting and political conflict (185–7); the Satelles quickly adopts the trope (286–7), and Thyestes himself contrasts the treacherous life of the royal palace with the

his sons, 778). In the context of sacrificial ritual, of the substitution of animal for human after the hunt, Thyestes' dinner, the cannibalistic feast, is 'the precise point at where man has become no more than animal' Vidal-Naquet 1988, 152. Davis 2003, 132, records that Hugo Claus in his 1966 adaptation of *Thyestes* 'has Thyestes howling like a dog and moving about on all fours. Atreus even picks him up by the hair and pushes him towards his children's remains.'

<sup>6</sup> Animals cannot suffer anger or any other passion because they are not capable of reason (Seneca, *De Ira* 1.3.4–6). They have 'certain impulses which resemble them' (*similes illis quosdam impulsus*). The representation of reason's battle with unreason as the conflict between human and animal finds its most famous expression in Plato *Republic* 439b–441c. On the topos that to be truly virtuous is to be truly human see McGushin 1977, 292–5.

<sup>7</sup> On women as hunted animals see e.g. Sourvinou-Inwood 1987, Forbes Irving 1990, 89, and Euripides, *Bacchae* 847–61.

<sup>8</sup> There is perhaps a difficulty in identifying the capture of a domestic herd-animal with the capture of a wild beast. This magical ram is no ordinary creature however: in Euripides *Orestes* it changes from a soft attractive creature into a destructive monster (998–1000) and in the same poet's *Electra* it becomes a τέρας (monster, 722) and also φάσματα δεινά (a prodigy, a source of fear, 711).

life of an animal: *Repete silvestres fugas* (hurry back to your forest refuges, 412). The centrepiece of this system of imagery is the soliloquy on Thyestes' arrival: *plagis tenetur clausa dispositis fera* (The beast is held fast in the nets I set out, 491). Atreus' emotions threaten to carry him off like an Umbrian hound which has scented its prey (497–503), but he controls his anger and observes his victim. Thyestes, his face concealed behind unkempt hair and beard (505–7), appears more animal than man. The subsequent scene of reconciliation ends with Atreus crowning him and leaving the stage to perform the sacrifice:

Imposita capiti vincla venerando gere;  
ego destinatas victimas superis dabo.

(544–5)

Wear this bond set on your venerable head. For my part, I shall offer the designated victims to the gods above.

Thyestes is not as remote from the designated victims as he thinks. Like a sacrificial animal he accepts the garland and walks willingly to the destruction which awaits. His children will be murdered with all the ritual of animal sacrifice (685–90) and in such a way as to recall his assumption of the royal diadem: *et maesta vitta capita purpurea ligat* (and binds their sorrowful heads with a purple band of wool, 686). Atreus' anger is finally unleashed and in two similes Thyestes' sons become young bulls, the prey of a tigress and a lion (707ff. and 732ff.). Atreus has long thought of Thyestes himself as a sacrificial animal. In dialogue with the Satelles he asked, *Profare, dirum qua caput mactem via* (Tell me how to slay that fearsome creature, 244). As Schiesaro says, 'the technical use of the verb [*mactare*] cannot surely be too far away' (2003, 91). Thyestes stole the ram whose fleece confers power and authority on Tantalus' successors, the *reges . . . Tantalici* (229). Atreus' first victim is, by way of respect, little Tantalus:

Primus locus (ne desse pietatem putes)  
avo dicatur: Tantalus prima hostia est.

(717–18)

First place (lest you think him lacking in family feeling) is dedicated to his grandfather: Tantalus is the first victim.



In this perverted sacrifice of animal substitution for human, Thyestes restores with his own flesh and blood the creature he stole and legitimates his brother's kingship. More simply Thyestes' metamorphosis into a beast which willingly but unwittingly submits to its own destruction enacts Atreus' supremacy. The ritual is as much an expression of mastery as a means to secure it.

Thyestes' suffering at the close of the tragedy reassures Atreus of his paternity (1098–9, quoted above). To rationalize the statement, to interpret Atreus with Schiesaro 2003, 105 as meaning that Thyestes would not so lament eating two sons if another two (Agamemnon and Menelaus) remained, robs it of much of its power. It is strongly reminiscent of Medea's words to Jason at the end of her tragedy:

Iam iam recepi sceptrum germanum patrem,  
spoliumque Colchi pecudis auratae tenent;  
rediere regna, rapta virginitas redit.

(Medea 982–4)

Now in this moment I have recovered my sceptre, brother, father, and the Colchians hold the spoil of the golden ram. My realm is restored, my stolen maidenhood restored.

There could perhaps be a tortuous logic to the claim to a restored virginity. The children, the visible signs of a stolen virginity, whom Medea has already redefined as Creusa's (921–2), no longer exist. But her basic point, like Atreus', is that the outrages of the past have been paid for and erased by a successful revenge (so Costa 1973, 158). The woman stresses the royal power she has won back (*iam recepi sceptrum . . . rediere regna*) while the man begs for the life and then the bodies of his children which Medea contemptuously returns: *recipe iam gnatos, parens* (Now recover your sons, parent, 1024).<sup>9</sup> Jason consistently fears sceptres (*alta extimesco sceptrum*, 529); only his children can inspire in him the suggestion of resistance (546–9). Medea, once a prize herself (363), threatens to fight with Creon for Jason as the prize (517–18). She makes her home in the political arena which so terrifies her domestic husband. She is much more of a man than he is, and the denouement of the tragedy underlines this

<sup>9</sup> Fitch takes *parens* as nominative rather than vocative, and translates 'as their parent.'

reversal of gender roles.<sup>10</sup> Like Jason, Thyestes is made vulnerable and destroyed through his children. When Thyestes gives up Stoicism's virile self-sufficiency, succumbs to the lure of the palace and surrenders himself to his children (*ego vos sequor non duco*, I am following you, not leading, *Thyestes* 489) he reveals a dependency and hence a weakness which is distinctively feminine.<sup>11</sup>

At the banquet Thyestes, perfumed and luxurious, is troubled by premonitions of disaster.<sup>12</sup> Grief wells up in him for no reason he can understand (*nulla surgens dolor ex causa*, pain arising without a cause, 944). His body feels what he has not consciously perceived: *imber vultu nolente cadit*, | *venit in medias voces gemitus* (tear drops fall from my eyes unbidden, amidst my words there comes a groan, 950–1; see also 966–7, 985–6). A few lines later Thyestes is again interrupted by a groan:

Quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea?  
quid tremuit intus? sentio impatiens onus  
meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit.  
adeste, nati, genitor infelix vocat,  
adeste. visis fugiet hic vobis dolor—  
unde obloquuntur?

(999–1004)

What is this turmoil which shakes my guts? What trembles inside me? I feel a restless burden, and my breast groans with groaning not my own. Come,

<sup>10</sup> On reversal of gender roles in this and other Senecan tragedies see Littlewood 2004, 202–6.

<sup>11</sup> Thyestes is king already because he has the power to die, because he has no fear (442). Explicitly it is his children who bring fear into his life: *Pro me nihil iam metuo: vos facitis mihi / Atrea timendum* (For myself I fear nothing now: you are the ones that make Atreus fearful to me, 485–6). Cf. Andromache on Astyanax robbing her of freedom from fear (*Troades* 419–23). On Thyestes' Stoic posturing see Tarrant 1985, 148–9. There is perhaps an earlier tradition of Thyestes as feminine. See Pearson 1917, 94 on Sophocles *Frag.* 140 *μὰ τὴν ἐκείνου δειλίαν, ἧ βόσκεται*, | *θῆλυς μὲν αὐτός, ἄρσενας δ' ἐχθροὺς ἔχων* 'The parallel to Aegisthus is so close, that one may suspect his father Thyestes is referred to'.

<sup>12</sup> On the effeminacy of the perfumed banqueter in Roman political invective see Corbeill 1997, 107–10. Interestingly, if quite wrongly, Robin 1993, 116 states of Senecan tragedy that 'irrationality, runaway emotions, or lack of bodily or mental control are attributes only ascribed to women' (116). Oedipus, an obvious counter example, is explicitly rebuked by Jocasta for acting like a woman (*Oedipus* 86), and one might argue that others who surrender their self-control are similarly lacking in virility.

sons, your unhappy father calls you, come! Once I see you this pain will vanish. They interrupt—but from where?

One can read this as a monologue of self-division in which the body has realized what the soul has not. In this last line though the groans seem to come directly from the children. They groan and struggle to get out:

volvuntur intus viscera et clusum nefas  
sine exitu luctatur et quaerit fugam.  
da, frater, ensem (sanguinis multum mei  
habet ille); ferro liberis detur via.

(1041–4)

The flesh churns within me, the imprisoned horror struggles with no way out, seeking to escape. Give me your sword, brother—it already has much of my blood: the blade must give my children a path.

The association or deliberate confusion of stomach and womb, food and embryo is familiar. *Viscera* and *alvus* are used for both stomach and womb, and relatedly *satura* can mean full of either food or child.<sup>13</sup> Satire and invective, genres of masculine aggression, are the most productive genres for examples of this parallelism or confusion.<sup>14</sup>

In 1969, 372, Poe recognized in this scene an imitation of childbirth, dismissed his own observation as ‘a comparatively minor matter’, and thus encouraged his successors to pass over it in silence.

<sup>13</sup> This confusion is the substance of a joke at Plautus, *Amphitruo* 667: *Quia Alcumenam ante aedis stare saturam intellego* (Because I see Alcumena standing there ‘full’ in front of the house). On this and parallel passages see Gowers 1993, 75. Association of stomach and womb is neither a narrowly literary nor a narrowly Latin phenomenon. See Dubois 1988, 110–29, on the womb as an oven and 125–6 on Aristotle’s representation of pregnancy as a cooking of the embryo; Dean-Jones 1994, 52 on sympathy between throat and vagina (‘Hansen notes that on several occasions in antiquity authors claim that a girl’s throat expands when she has been deflowered’); and Loraux 1987, 61.

<sup>14</sup> Particularly common are hyperbolic fantasies of masculine penetration in which the tongue or penis invades viscera of various kinds. See e.g. Juvenal 9.43–4, Martial 11.61–6–8. Richlin 1992 has more examples *passim* and especially 11ff. See also Walters 1997, 32–3, on Seneca *Epistles* 95.21. Thyestes’ request (1043–4) recalls most closely Medea’s determination to root out any remaining trace of Jason (*scrutabor ense viscera et ferro extraham, Medea* 1013). Unlike Thyestes Medea doesn’t need to borrow a sword.

In a tragedy with an undercurrent of erotic violence (through the Ovidian intertext and otherwise) it is an observation we should take seriously. When Thyestes speaks of his brother's hatred, it is in the *adynata* of elegiac poetry:<sup>15</sup>

amat Thyesten frater? aetherias prius  
perfundet Arctos pontus et Siculi rapax  
consistet aestus unda ...

(476–8)

Thyestes loved by his brother? Sooner the ocean will soak the Bears of heaven, and the whirling waves of Sicily's tides will halt ...

Ironic humour from Thyestes certainly (Atreus' hatred incongruously patterned on a lover's eternal devotion) but there may be a further irony which he cannot read. The audience has already seen Atreus assume the role(s) of Procne/Philomela. Sense appears through the apparent incongruity. The childbirth scene is grotesque but not without a nightmarish logic of its own. Atreus' paternity has been challenged and his wife stolen. That Thyestes should play the role of a woman in childbirth at the culmination of his revenge is both an extension of the Roman fantasy of raping a male adulterer (thus ritually exiling him from the company of 'real' men)<sup>16</sup> and a recovery of what was lost. Thyestes, stuffed by Atreus, is no longer a rival.

## 2. VIEWING AND IRONY IN OVID'S TEREUS MYTH

The Tereus myth is an important model for this tragedy, a model which Atreus acknowledges (272–7) and which the Fury is determined to surpass (56–7). As is indicated by a host of borrowings (listed by Jakobi 1988, 152–67), Seneca's inspiration is Ovid's account of the myth in *Metamorphoses* 6. In both myths political conflict is carried on in erotic terms, political power figuratively asserted through domination of the woman's body: 'mythic passion

<sup>15</sup> See Tarrant 1985, 159, and Curley 1986, 149–50.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Juvenal 10.314–17, Valerius Maximus 6.1.13 and further references in Richlin 1981, 394, and Edwards 1993, 56.

is a cover story for the violent rivalry between two kings.<sup>17</sup> Ovid's cover story, now an intertext, is Seneca's covered story. Atreus expresses his domination of Thyestes by making him perform as an actor who cannot resist his script or more simply as a visual object. The unequal relationships between director or audience and actor, between viewer and viewed, are expressions of power and quite intelligible without any reference to gender. Seneca tells two real-life versions of the Thyestean banquet in *De Ira*, and in each case the tyrant takes pleasure in the subjugation of his victim, forced into a role he would never choose to play.<sup>18</sup> Revealingly, when Atreus laments his inadequate revenge he regrets that Thyestes and his children were deceived rather than coerced:

cecidit in cassum dolor:  
scidit ore natos impio, sed nesciens,  
sed nescientes.

(1066–8)

My anger was to no avail. He tore his sons in his sacrilegious mouth, but he did not know it, they did not know it.

The viewer's control of the viewed figures prominently in Ovid's myth of rape and revenge and in other narratives of gender conflict.<sup>19</sup> In her influential essay on the dominant male gaze in cinema Mulvey distinguishes between the scopophilic and the voyeuristic (1989, 18). The scopophilic gaze interrupts the narrative frequently to break down the object of its fascination through close-ups. The voyeuristic gaze observes its object driven through a narrative of punishment and (sometimes) controlled redemption. Atreus' enjoyment of the shifting colours of Thyestes' face as he is captured in an eternal

<sup>17</sup> Joplin 1991, 41, on Ovid's Tereus. See also 43–7 on the woman's body as a metaphor for the body politic and read that back into *portus Cecropios intrat Piraeaque litora tangit* (He enters the Cecropian harbour and touches the shores of the Piraeus, 6.445–6).

<sup>18</sup> Pastor at *De Ira* 2.33.3ff. doesn't actually drink his son's blood but suffers as if he were (*non aliter quam si fili sanguinem biberet*). Harpagus not only eats his children but is then obliged to thank the King for his dinner (3.15.1–2). For a Roman reader, living in a world where actors enjoyed very limited civic rights, there is an additional horror in seeing the great and the good transformed into mere performers, whatever the role. See further with bibliography Littlewood 2004, 189–91.

<sup>19</sup> For Latin literature this topic is most familiar in elegy: see Greene 1998, 67–92, Wyke's survey article (1994) and Sharrock 1991 on Ovid's Pygmalion (*Met.* 10).

instant of punishing recognition is clearly scopophilic yet also the culmination of narrative of revenge:

libet videre, capita natorum intuens  
 quos det colores, verba qua primus dolor  
 effundat aut ut spiritu expulso stupens  
 corpus rigescat.

(903–6)

I long to see what colour he turns as he looks on his sons' heads, what words his first torment pours forth, how his body stiffens, breathless with shock.

My aim is not to disentangle the scopophilic from the voyeuristic in Seneca's drama or Ovid's narrative, but to identify two cooperating modes of control which can be seen at work in both texts. A third not unrelated mode of control, prominent in both texts, is the use of verbal irony (Mulvey 1989, 18). There is a significance, in their own words or others,<sup>20</sup> which the victims cannot read, any more than they can perceive with what eyes they are viewed. The hidden meaning and the predatory gaze are both part of the revenger's fantasy.

To argue that deception and duplicitous use of language can be the instruments of masculine aggression may seem peculiar—indeed it has been argued (on these and other grounds) that Atreus and Tereus in some sense play a woman's role.<sup>21</sup> Revengers recreate and recast past crimes and this too is a problem when gendering roles. When Procne plays the rapist what gender is s/he? What gender Atreus when he takes Procne as his inspiration? How, further, can an opposition of gender survive in a tragedy in which Atreus insists that Thyestes is his mirror image? Paradox threatens, assuredly, and I shall discuss the subject in the following section. My argument here for a masculine duplicity depends on its close cooperation with the visual modes of domination. Irony allows Atreus, Tereus and their readers to enjoy the outrage of an innocent—innocent inasmuch as s/he is language's passive object, not its user.

<sup>20</sup> On Thyestes' failure to read the significance of his own words, including intertextual significance, see Schiesaro 2003, 111–16. For another intertextual innocent see Littlewood 2004, 259–301 on Hippolytus who, much more obviously than Thyestes, is an object of erotic predation.

<sup>21</sup> Schiesaro 2003, 73–8, in a gendered poetics of the repressed. On guile as distinctively feminine see e.g. Euripides *Hecuba* 883–4.

Ovid's version of Tereus' rape of Philomela victimizes in both visual and verbal modes. In an irony apparent to narrator, reader and Tereus, but not to Procne, Philomela or their father Pandion, Tereus is praised for the urgency with which he pleads with Pandion to allow Philomela to visit her sister: *creditur esse pius laudemque a crimine sumit* (he is thought to be dutiful and wins praise for his crime *Met.* 6.474). Philomela herself adds her entreaties. The gulf of understanding separating the author of the crime from his victims and the pleasure of this irony is then represented in a visual context:

spectat eam Tereus praecontractatque videndo  
 osculaque et collo circumdata bracchia cernens  
 omnia pro stimulis facibusque cibo furoris  
 accipit, et quotiens amplectitur illa parentem,  
 esse parens vellet.

(*Met.* 6.478–82)

Tereus watches her and by looking already touches her and as he sees her kisses and her arms around her father's neck takes everything as a spur, food and fuel of his madness. And whenever she embraces her father he wishes that he were her father.

Tereus projects himself into the scene and 'by seeing handles her in advance'.<sup>22</sup> There is a pleasure in his fantasy which is not simply the anticipation of its realization. That night he moulds her into the form that he wishes:

repetens faciem motusque manusque  
*qualia vult fingit quae nondum vidit* et ignes  
 ipse suos nutrit cura remouente soporem.

(*Met.* 6.491–3)

Recalling her face her movements and her hands he pictures as he wants what he has not yet seen and himself feeds his own fires, his desire preventing sleep.

Immediately after the rape itself Philomela is described as prey, as a dove impaled on talons: *horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, ungues* (she still shudders and fears the greedy talons on which she had been impaled, *Met.* 6.530). This recalls closely an earlier description of Tereus looking at Philomela:

<sup>22</sup> Curran 1978, 222, notes the special importance of controlling fantasy in this rape narrative compared with others in the *Metamorphoses*.

nusquam lumen detorquet ab illa,  
 non aliter quam cum pedibus praedator obuncis  
 deposuit nido leporem Iovis ales in alto;  
 nulla fuga est capto, spectat sua praemia raptor.

(*Met.* 6.515–18)

He never turns his eye from her, just as when the predatory bird of Jupiter has from its hooked claws dropped a hare in its high nest. The captured animal has no escape, the raptor watches its prize.

Ovid's eagle simile certainly foreshadows the talons of the later rape, just as Tereus' pleas to Pandion suggest to those who can read them truly the action he intends. There is, however, violation in the gaze itself: the rape is as much paralleled by the gaze of the raptor as it is foreshadowed by it, and a similar argument can be advanced for the irony.

Philomela, raped, threatens to expose the crime. Tereus cuts out her tongue and rapes the mute body (*Met.* 6.561–2). The severed tongue murmurs without words and tries to rejoin its parent body. When Philomela finds a voice in tapestry and Procne reads the woven rape she also is silenced; in sympathy with her sister's suffering her tongue seeks in vain for words:

dolor ora repressit,  
 verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae  
 defuerunt.

(*Met.* 6.583–5)

grief choked her speech and her questing tongue found no words satisfactorily to express her outrage.

When Procne plans revenge she suggests, in addition to cutting out Tereus' tongue and castrating him, blinding him (*Met.* 6.616). The final punishment is briefly described but recalls the three crucial elements of Tereus' rape.<sup>23</sup> Tereus is deceived as were Pandion and Philomela, and like them is a victim of irony. Earlier Tereus' pleas were misinterpreted as pity and Pandion, in a disastrous choice of

<sup>23</sup> The description of the murder of Itys recalls that of the rape of Philomela—see Larmour 1990, 134. Philomela's experience of rape as a form of contagious pollution, as both adultery and incest (so Joplin 1991, 46, on *Met.* 6.533–39) brings it closer to the revenge taken on Tereus. On cannibalism and incest see Moreau 1979, Schiesaro 2003, 94, and Plutarch *Moralia* 990f. where a discussion of lust 'beyond the barrier' shifts to an argument on cannibalism without any break or explanation.



words given Tereus' fantasy of assuming Pandion's role, entrusts Philomela to him with the words, *per superos oro patrio ut tuearis amore* (by the gods I beg you to protect her with a father's love, 499). Even more marked is the failure of Tereus, now the victim, to comprehend Procne's announcement, *intus habes quem poscis* (you have inside the child you ask for, 655). He clearly assumes that this must mean 'inside the house' for he looks around the room for Itys. At the banquet Tereus is the innocent and helpless visual object, and his failure to comprehend is expressed in the same visual metaphor used earlier for Pandion: *tantaque nox animi est* (such great darkness blinded his thoughts, 652), cf. *quantum mortalia pectora caecae / noctis habent* (what great blinding darkness covers mortal hearts 472–3). Procne's revenge is enacted in and of Tereus' flesh, but her failure to conceal and spin out her pleasure leaves this visual aspect of the punishing reversal a faint trace.

Seneca's Atreus chooses Procne's revenge as his model, but where Ovid devotes much of his narrative to the original crime and passes quickly over the revenge, Seneca emphasizes the banquet and sketches Thyestes' offence in a single speech (220–41). Procne's intent, to punish Tereus in a manner appropriate to his crime, is more fully realized in the revenge of Atreus who enjoys the pleasures of Tereus while playing the role of Procne. Whoever the vessel, Tereus, Procne, or Atreus, the rhetoric of domination is masculine. If Philomela does find an inviolable voice in her weaving it is not that voice which speaks in the revenge nor with her eyes that we look upon Tereus or Thyestes.<sup>24</sup> Not all viewing is the same. Atreus takes pleasure in forcing Thyestes, and ideally the gods too, to watch what they cannot bear to watch:

utinam quidem tenere fugientes deos  
possem, et coactos trahere, ut ultricem dapem  
omnes viderent—quod sat est, videat pater.

(893–5)

Indeed I wish I could stop the gods fleeing, round them up and drag them all to see this feast of vengeance. But it is enough that the father see it.

<sup>24</sup> So Joplin 1991, 49: 'The women, in yielding to the violence, become just like the man who first moved against them'. I do not share her confidence in the recovery of an alternative voice—except negatively or as fracture—from Ovid's text or the text which might have been. Kristeva's 'Mais, plus profondement, une femme, cela ne

For Medea similarly nothing is achieved without Jason suffering as a spectator (*Medea* 992–4).<sup>25</sup> There is however a distinct mode of viewing, private, so it cannot be reciprocated by its object, predatory and characteristic of both Tereus and Atreus. Tereus focalizes Ovid's reader—one sees Philomela through his eyes—and a similar effect is created in Seneca's text. For much of the final act Atreus is more spectator than actor. As the slaves are opening the doors to the palace, in accordance with his orders, he sees Thyestes' suffering in his mind's eye and thus instructs the audience *how* to view the forthcoming spectacle.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. TYRANNY AND THE PARADOXES OF POWER

As Atreus predicted, Thyestes is lured into the palace and betrayed by his own desire, 'the old passion for power' (*vetus regni furor*, 302). Atreus recognizes this same passion in himself and devises a crime worthy of them both: *dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo: uterque faciat* (The deed is worthy of Thyestes and worthy of Atreus: let each perform it, 271–2). Atreus sees Thyestes as his double, a perception which the chorus seems to share,<sup>27</sup> and one which the

peut pas être' (1974, 59) seems to me nearer the mark. Most particularly I would qualify art's opposition to violence and its power to resist it (53–5): when Procne reads Philomela's tapestry Tereus touches her too (6.583–5 discussed above).

<sup>25</sup> On these contrasting modes of viewing as 'the paradox of the eye' see Barton 1993, 91–8.

<sup>26</sup> In Tony Clarke's production at Birmingham University in 1994 Atreus came to sit in the audience to watch the banquet. Earlier in the year in James MacDonald's production at the Royal Court Atreus observed his brother's progress on a monitor. For more on this latter production see Davis 2003, 33–4. On seeing with Atreus' eyes see Poe 1969, 359, 365; on the Senecan audience more generally being implicated in the crime it watches, Seidensticker 1969, 154, and Schiesaro 2003, 182–3. For a parallel phenomenon Tarrant's analysis of the messenger speech is particularly instructive (1985, 180–204). As he narrates Atreus' crime the messenger comes to resemble him, stylistically and morally. He cannot retell the tale without feeling the inspiration of its author. On messenger speeches as modelling audience response see Nuttall 1996, 27, on *Samson Agonistes*.

<sup>27</sup> *auctorem indica: non quaero quis sit, sed uter* (I do not ask who it might be, but which of the two, 639–40) echoing 271–2 (quoted above). See also 917–18, 1104–10, and Schiesaro 2003, 144–5, on the suggested 'moral equivalence of Atreus and Thyestes'.

very structure of the tragedy seems to enforce. After some discussion it is determined that Atreus' children will lure Thyestes into the palace (294–333), but in fact this role is performed by one of Thyestes' sons, as if to confirm the very confusion and interchangeability which make Atreus' rule unstable. More importantly the major motifs of the drama—the triumph of bestial passion, the imagery of insatiable appetite—are not tied to any one character: Tantalus' burning hunger infects both brothers. Furia's victory over Tantalus' opposition is replayed not only in Thyestes' surrender, but in the madness which carries Atreus off, an inspiration not his own.<sup>28</sup>

Thyestes eats the criminal banquet alone, but the descriptions of him rending the flesh of his sons recall the similes in the sacrifice scene of Atreus as the tigress and more particularly the lion raging beyond the limits of hunger (732–6). Atreus' and Thyestes' desires are satisfied at the same banquet; Thyestes filled is Atreus' metaphorical fulfillment.<sup>29</sup> The revelation itself is closely associated with eating. Philomela threw the head of Itys 'into the father's face/mouth' (*in ora patris*, *Met.* 6.659), as if making him swallow the revelation of what he has eaten. Atreus likewise imagines 'bereavement thrust in the father's face/mouth' (*ingesta orbitas / in ora patris*, 282–3) and later promises, 'I shall fill the father with the corpses/death of his children' (*implebo patrem / funere suorum*, 890–1).<sup>30</sup> Though this would most naturally refer to the act of eating, the banquet seems already to have been in progress for a long time.<sup>31</sup> Atreus' interest is only in the moment of recognition, to watch the father looking at the heads of his children (895, 903–7). What satisfies Atreus Thyestes cannot stomach, but the brothers are brought closer as they taste the

<sup>28</sup> See 250–4, 260–2, and Schiesaro 2003, 46, on Atreus as victim.

<sup>29</sup> *iam sat est etiam mihi* (this is enough now, even for me [Atreus], 889); cf. *iam satis mensis datum est / satisque Baccho* (Enough devotion now to the board, enough to wine, 899–900) and *Satias dapis me nec minus Bacchi tenet* (I [Thyestes] am stayed by a surfeit of fine fare, and equally of wine, 973). See Tarrant 1985, 217–18.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. also Tarrant 1985, 131, on *funus ingestum patri* (his death thrust in his father's face) in *Medea* 132: Absyrtus' death as inspiration for the killing of her own children.

<sup>31</sup> The messenger has described Thyestes eating in the present tense at 778ff. and at 898–900 Atreus says that Thyestes has long (*diu*) been at the banquet and that enough time has been spent on eating and drinking. Time and dramatic coherence is however an issue in this and other Senecan tragedies. Compare the responses of e.g. Owen 1970 and Shelton 1975 to the problem.

recognition together. When conceiving his revenge Atreus' desired 'to be filled with some greater monstrosity' (*impleri . . . maiore monstro*, 252–3), a *nefas* to be experienced more literally by Thyestes.<sup>32</sup> Crucial distinctions between the priest of the crime and his ritual victim, between the controlling viewer and his passive visual object, threaten to break down under examination.<sup>33</sup> The cycle of revenge presumes an alternation of roles (32–6), but this is not the same as a confusion of roles. Atreus does to Thyestes what he claims Thyestes would like to have done to him (1104–9), but he does not acknowledge that in victory he resembles his victim. This final irony escapes him.

The irony that the tyrant is the slave of his passions is a familiar one in ancient moralism. In this tragedy first the chorus and then Thyestes distinguish at length between true power and its false image, the rule of a tyrant (336–470). Plato's seminal sketch of the tyrant represents him drunk with desire at a banquet (*Republic* 573a–b). Animal behaviour (571c), cannibalism (565d, 571d), incest (571c–d), fratricide (565e), and mad challenging of the gods (573c) distinguish his rule. The *Republic* is only introduced into the dialogue which bears its name as a means of making the operation of the soul more visible. Here the tyrant, dining alone at what should be a communal ritual, offers an image of a soul in which Desire, unchallenged by any other voices, drives a man to excess.<sup>34</sup> The bloated lone diner shows a soul and a state in which the boundaries necessary for psychic, social, and political health have been broken down, the different elements

<sup>32</sup> See Schiesaro 2003, 143 n.9. Compare also Juno in *Hercules Furens* who, resolved that Hercules be possessed by madness which is always armed against itself (*in se semper armatus Furor* 98), prays that the Furies overthrow her mind first: *me me, sorores, mente deiectam mea / versate primam* (Harry me sisters, overthrow my mind first, 110–11).

<sup>33</sup> Compare Dionysus' punishment of Pentheus in *Bacchae*. Traditional oppositions of gender are intact as king Pentheus, in female form, is laughed at by the Thebans as he is led through the city (854–6) and has to ask for approval and guidance from a man just recently his prisoner (925–70). In female form Pentheus is also most painfully the victim of Dionysus' verbal irony (967–70). As a woman and even as a beast torn apart he bears witness to Dionysus' mastery but at the same time of course he resembles the effeminate, animal god. Dionysus, ironic and aloof, stages in Pentheus' transformation and death the experience of *being* Dionysus. On Atreus, Dionysus and *Bacchae* see Schiesaro 2003, 133–8 and *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> See Plato, *Republic* 575a, Halm-Tisserant 1993, 107, on the outrage of a solitary banquet and, in the Roman and Neronian context, Goddard 1994.

confused as they are absorbed into one. Parricide, incest, and cannibalism appear together in mythology because they are the same crime in different contexts, and Plato is not the only ancient author to add tyranny to the list. Leigh has valuably recovered some of the impact of Varius Rufus' *Thyestes*, staged as part of Octavian's triumph after Actium, by looking to this tradition and to invective against Antony in particular. In *Thyestes* Atreus seeks fulfillment through viewing and the representation of the tyrant's gaze as consuming its object is again part of the tradition.<sup>35</sup>

The man who defies morality's constraints may appear heroic or divine.<sup>36</sup> The moralists are determined that the tyrant, driven to excess, is less than a man. Plato's tyrant, dominant in the arena of public masculinity, challenges the gods and their laws yet 'lives hidden away in his house for the most part like a woman'.<sup>37</sup> This irony is of course perceptible to the philosopher but not to the tyrant. Euripides' Dionysus, one feels, is master of the paradoxes and confusions which he embodies; above all he is an incomprehensible god. Atreus by contrast is all too easy to read. His victory is ephemeral and he falls victim to the verbal irony which characterized his supremacy over his brother. Atreus' claims to fulfillment do not last. No sooner has he walked equal with the stars, reached the limits of his prayers and declared satisfaction (885–9) than he asks, *sed cur satis sit?* (But why should it be enough? 890). His first reaction to Thyestes' painful recognition is to fear that he has wasted his opportunity, that the revenge could have been scripted more effectively (1065–8). A few lines later he is reassured (1096–9), but has already given every indication that his satisfaction can only be fleeting. The Fury promised an endless cycle of crime and looks forward to the time when a wife turns on her husband and wars go overseas (*immineat viro / infesta coniunx: bella trans pontum vehant*, let husband be menaced by wife's enmity; let them carry war overseas, 42–3). Though Atreus' revenge may surpass the models of the past it is not closural; it merely

<sup>35</sup> Leigh 1996, 194 n.56. See esp. 179–85 for many examples from a variety of sources, Greek and Roman, of the association of tyranny and cannibalism.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. Schiesaro 1994, 207, on Atreus' victory, or Rudich 1993, 84, and Champlin 2003, 103, on Nero: 'By mythologizing himself and his crime, he... clothed himself in the aura of a hero.'

<sup>37</sup> καταδεδυκὼς δὲ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τὰ πολλὰ ὡς γυνὴ ζῆ (Plato, *Rep.* 579b).

raises the bar for the next generation. In the last words of the play when he hands Thyestes over to his children for punishment the audience cannot but be aware that this is not the last word for the house of Pelops. Aegisthus, Thyestes' son, will murder Agamemnon, Atreus' son.<sup>38</sup> Atreus is not privy to a significance in his own words any more than he was privy to the Fury's speech in the first act. Caught in a myth he has not read and in a frame he cannot see, he resembles here his victim more than he does the tragedian or the audience.<sup>39</sup>

In their last song (789–884) the chorus fears that unshapely chaos will crush gods and men alike, that the cosmos is disintegrating. No external power has intervened to defend moral order and to control Atreus' excesses, nor will it. That said, the chaos is rigidly ordered: the same rituals of domination are repeated from one character and from one myth to the next. Individuals dissolve in the larger pattern, but the rhetoric of power, and the modes of its exercise, survive.

<sup>38</sup> *Te puniendum liberis trado tuis* (I consign you to your children for punishment, 1112), cf. *Agamemnon* which resists closure more openly: *Veniet et vobis furor* (Madness will come upon you too, 1012).

<sup>39</sup> Contrast Schiesaro 2003, 68–9, 96–7, for whom the lack of closure at the end of the tragedy is a victory for the insatiable appetites which it mirrors, notably Atreus', and therefore a victory for Atreus even at the price of defeat in more conventional terms in the next generation.

---

The Implied Reader and the Political  
Argument in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*  
and *De Clementia*

*Eleanor Winsor Leach*

Changes in Senecan scholarship find a reliable index in changing perceptions of the interrelationship between the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*, the one frequently judged too scurrilous for the dignity of the Stoic philosopher, the other ranked among the finest products of his humanism. Far from being neglected, the two texts have commanded a virtual lion's share of interest among Seneca's prose writings. The perennial controversy surrounding the authorial identity of the satire entitled *Ludus de morte Claudii* in its manuscripts has allowed its humor to be relished as often as it has been repudiated. *De Clementia* has played a role in the history and philosophy of statecraft.<sup>1</sup> John Calvin chose it for the basis of a learned Commentary which would illuminate Seneca's intellectual and stylistic virtues while also displaying his own.<sup>2</sup>

A shorter version of this paper was presented at the April 1985 meetings of the Classical Association of the Mid-West and South. I wish to thank my colleague Professor James L. Franklin Jr. for his suggestions concerning the work-in-progress, and Professor John Fitch for helpful suggestions concerning this new version.

<sup>1</sup> As what Braund 1998 called a 'proto-panegyric' it has also been important in rhetorical history, figuring as a bridge between such prescriptions for the exercise of power as Cicero's *Pro Marcello* and Pliny's *Panegyric of Trajan*.

<sup>2</sup> Battles and Hugo 1969, Part I. 26–47.

New currents of interest in Seneca as a writer evolving in recent years have led scholars to look more broadly at both works within the total context of his productions, while a concomitantly flourishing interest in Nero and his government has directed attention to Seneca's public career as an 'intellectual' court minister.<sup>3</sup> These new evaluations have brought new moral attitudes to bear upon the historical problems of the period. From these Seneca's reputation has greatly benefitted since the contemporary biographer is less ready to affix such labels as righteous or hypocritical to conduct and more likely to examine the complexities of its motivation.<sup>4</sup> If Seneca emerges from such re-evaluation as a more elusive figure than he had once seemed, he has also become less austere and more human.

Seneca's writing is most closely involved with his public career during the initial months of Nero's reign. Political interaction in this period raises interesting questions to which the historical sources give no answers but only material for interpretation. To what extent did Seneca act upon his perception of inauspicious signs in the young emperor's character? Do his initial actions reveal service to Agrippina's patronage? How did his overnight transformation from tutor to royal counselor play out in the senate?<sup>5</sup> Since the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia* have a bearing on all of these issues, it is surprising to find how little effort has been made to contextualize the reading of these documents as instruments of Seneca's political diplomacy. Momigliano's highly significant reading of the satire as a reflection of contemporary reaction to Claudius' political methods did not clearly identify an audience for the work, and thus fell short of clarifying Seneca's purpose.<sup>6</sup> Most evaluations of the historical import of both documents tend to proceed from external preconceptions of their audiences rather than allowing the operations of the text to inform these conclusions. Since these evaluations commonly

<sup>3</sup> Cizek 1972; Griffin 1976; Grimal 1979; Sørensen 1984; Griffin 1984; Sullivan 1985.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Habinek 1998 illuminates philosophically derived patterns for a new aristocratic ethics adapted to the imperial power structure.

<sup>5</sup> Griffin 1984, 37–99 examines the historians Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio carefully for their information on these questions.

<sup>6</sup> Momigliano 1934, 77. The majority of scholars have actually rejected this interpretation. See Coffey 1961, 260, but most recently Griffin 1984, 96–7. Cizek 1972, 81–87, and Grimal 1979, 111–12, are exceptions.



approach the pieces as unmediated expressions of Seneca's sentiments, they fail to take advantage of our understanding of ancient rhetorical strategies especially as these figured in political writing.<sup>7</sup>

Seneca's mastery of rhetorical strategies constituted no small part of his success and is partially responsible for the complex facade that he presents to interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Tacitus comments upon his facility in cajoling an audience (*Annales* 13.3). When seen in this light his historical personality may appear less as a monolithic structure of fixed attributes than as a series of interactive responses to persons and circumstances. While the deep-seated opinions of such a figure may always baffle discovery, his rhetorical strategies, if they are working successfully, should illuminate his purposes or intentions. What the modern reader's theoretically oriented perspective may contribute to understanding specific examples of rhetorical self-presentation within such contexts is the weight of expectation which they place upon the responses of an audience. The relevant concept of audience, however, involves not merely that immediate intra-textual recipient whom the speaker addresses directly or by name, but also all possible extra-textual readers who will find their interests and convictions touched upon by the documents. Such recipients may be invited to sympathize with the speaker's point of view, or they may find themselves shut out by his approach. Seeing how the speaker's rhetorical strategies play upon the impressions of such an audience will show the creation of the ideal, or persuaded reader.<sup>9</sup> And it is through their address to an implied audience that the fully political character of the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia* is to be found.

This approach will clarify our sense of the two texts as historical sources by showing that the audiences to whom they are directed

<sup>7</sup> This is particularly true of those who make Senecan vindictiveness the primary purpose of the satire. The case for this was most strongly urged, on psychological grounds, by Currie 1962, 91–7. The idea is persistent, often appearing as a secondary motif in interpretive discussion, even when other primary purposes are assigned to the satire.

<sup>8</sup> Dyson 1970 calls attention to ambivalences in his evaluation of Tacitus' critical approach.

<sup>9</sup> Prince 1973 explains the concept of 'narratee' or fictive reader, the rhetorical counterpart of the fictive speaker, who is not identical with the real person reading the text.

may be more nearly coincident than most scholars assume. Although the various readerships proposed for the *Apocolocyntosis* have extended over the whole spectrum of Neronian society in accordance with diverse notions of its purpose,<sup>10</sup> the idea that the *De Clementia* might carry a serious message for contemporary persons other than Nero is fairly recent.<sup>11</sup> Reading the two texts, as they were written, in close conjunction, will lead to a fuller understanding of their approach to their audiences. Their similar portraits of Nero and other shared topics suggest complementation. My focus upon the persuasive strategies of the texts will bring out the importance of their complementation as instruments of Seneca's personal approach to the moment of Nero's accession, concerning whose intermingled danger and opportunity he was keenly aware.

## I

Momigliano argued for the essentially political character of the *Apocolocyntosis* in his influential re-evaluation of the nature and policies of Claudius. The substance of the political message as he saw it lay in the speech where Augustus Caesar enumerates Claudius' crimes against select members of the Roman aristocracy. Commenting on the appropriateness of Augustus, as the alleged model of Claudius' imperial policy, to make this damning revelation of his tyranny, Momigliano proposed that the exposure constitutes 'an impassioned historical judgement' displaying a 'keener sense of the

<sup>10</sup> Coffey 1961, 254–63 gives a detailed discussion. More recent work is summarized by Anderson 1970 and 1982. Most recently major lines of interpretation have been reviewed and synthesized by Eden 1984, 8–13, who himself holds by the familiar theory that it is addressed to Nero as a pleasantly didactic illumination of misgovernment. He does not, however, exclude Senecan revenge as a subsidiary motive. However, the concept of a Saturnalian *jeu d'esprit*, as proposed by Griffin 1976, 97, and elaborated by Nauta 1987, has been given a new and more theoretical turn by Versnel's 1993 assimilation of Saturnalia into Bakhtin's 'carnevalic' discourse, for which now see also Braund and James 1998 and Robinson 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Most recently Cizek 1972, 96–105; Griffin 1976, 133–71; Grimal 1979, 121–26, who speculates that Seneca may have written it for delivery upon his entry into the office of *consul suffectus* in January 56. Sørensen 1984, 149–56 takes the traditional view that it was written explicitly for Nero.

conflicting purposes of Claudius' reign than any later historian has shown' (Momigliano 1934, 76–7).

Although Momigliano was less interested in the rhetorical operations of the *Apocolocyntosis* than in its evidence for contemporary political opinion,<sup>12</sup> his notice of Augustus' speech has useful literary implications. Calling attention to Augustus' revelation as a turning point in the narrative, he shows how it effects a dramatic reversal in the satire's image of Claudius. Until this moment, the Olympian deities judging his qualifications for entry into their celestial company have seen him as a harmlessly grotesque figure. Suddenly the facts of his earthly life expose the deceptiveness of this mild front. Momigliano (1934, 77) explains the bearing of this change on historical interpretation. 'Claudius' hypocritical show of mildness and respect for tradition is exposed in the light of his tyrannous cruelty.' Within the structure of Momigliano's historical analysis, we may see that this reading of the satire provides a figure for his own scholarly revelation: the unmasking of an interpretive tradition based primarily upon literary sources which had devalued both the policies and political imagination of Claudius. For if Claudius' death is to be justified by his political actions, then it is not the bumbling incompetent of the defamatory tradition that we must consider, but rather the controversial, innovative, and self-contradictory emperor whom the historian brought forth to replace the fool.

The literary implications of unmasking Claudius' nature are important to our consideration of the interrelated questions of Seneca's purpose and the audience for whom he wrote. The common view of the satire assigns a uniformly contumelious intention to all mention of the emperor's characteristics, physical, intellectual, and political alike.<sup>13</sup> Thus the halting gait, the shaking head, the stammering

<sup>12</sup> Momigliano 1934, 77. The context, as he sees it, however, is no more than 'light-hearted fantasy'.

<sup>13</sup> Coffey 1976, 170, adopts a typical position in observing that personal invective is difficult to separate from political criticism. However, Braund and James 1998 argue for the inseparability of meanings within the satire's 'contemporary ethical and political context', by which 'we aim to show that Claudius' vile body, his monstrous appearance and lack of control over his body, have a broader ideological function' (285). Relihan's earlier discussion (1993, 78–85) is unusual in its observations of a modicum of sympathy for Claudius who is, in his opinion, as deserving of divine status as any of the foolish gods who discuss his case.

speech (5.2) are equated with such intellectual habits as his pride in his Greek, his antiquarian passions, and dedication to historical research, and these in turn with his political policies and his cruelties. By separating caricature from condemnation, and showing its function as a disguise, Momigliano gives us to understand that the moral point of the satire, so often sought in circumstances extrinsic to the text, is embodied in the structure of the narrative. By this token we may also see that its portrayal of Claudius is not indiscriminately conglomerated for the exercise of spite or showmanship but rather constructed in keeping with an ordered literary design whose purpose is persuasion of its audience.

This observation suggests that the narrative may profit from a careful examination focused upon the interactive relationship between readers and text, with particular attention to the manner in which the progress of the text serves to engage its audience's sympathies and direct their responses. My approach is based upon a combination of ancient and contemporary conceptualizations of the way in which texts communicate with their readers. Both emphasize the reader's own contribution to the process of persuasion. For its part, ancient theory sets out concepts of irony that attest to common recognition of strategies by which an author may make his words signify something different from what they actually seem to say.<sup>14</sup> The way in which audiences may derive cumulative meaning from such discrepancies when they occur within the continuous structure of a narrative can be most effectively described with reference to contemporary theories concerning the reader's mental reassembling of a text.<sup>15</sup> In such an ironic text as the

<sup>14</sup> Rhetorical theorists describe the procedure. In *Auc. ad Her.* 4.53.67, such deliberate ambiguity goes by the name of *significatio: res quae plus in suspitione relinquit quam positum est in oratione*. In Quintilian 8.3.83 there is also mention of *emphasis* which can be of two kinds: *altera quae plus significat quam dicit; altera quae etiam id quod non dicit*.

Ahl 1976, 31–3, 1984a, 1984b, proposes that this practice provided the effective basis of free speech for writers of the empire.

<sup>15</sup> This facet of my approach is, in large part, based upon principles set out by Iser 1978. Connor 1984, 18, reflects upon the appropriateness of such principles to the study of one complex classical text: 'Although many of the techniques needed in such an inquiry are the familiar ones of literary study, though directed in a new way, in one respect a slightly unusual approach is required. If we suspect a progression in the reader's attitudes, then we should be prepared to consider the text itself as a

*Apocolocyntosis*, the conclusions to be reached are closely guided if scarcely predictable.

The narrator's guidance of his audience is facilitated by his chosen literary form. The *Apocolocyntosis* belongs to the species of satire called Menippean. Although our knowledge of this species of the genre is imperfect, scholars generally agree that its substantive content goes beyond the simple mixture of prose and verse that constitutes its formal characteristic.<sup>16</sup> Varro's fragments are scraps from assorted fictions.<sup>17</sup> Some reanimate deceased historical characters to censure the contemporary world. The 'Bi-Marcus' divides the authorial persona into two speaking voices who conduct a self-conscious dialogue with each other. Such work is overtly imaginary, but in Lucian's later dialogues, Menippean satire becomes something now frequently likened to science-fiction which penetrates into an unknown, fantastic world.<sup>18</sup> Like all fictive worlds, however, these have points of tangency with the real world. Seneca's satire assumes a middle position between a known world and a fantastic. The speaker takes us to the familiar epic region of Olympus which becomes fantastic by token of the singular events transpiring there. At the same time, Olympus preserves the logic of reality, first because its divine senate observes known forms and procedures, and secondly because of that insight into real events which its members demonstrate. Their fine perception eventually makes the Olympian world so much more rational than the real world as to rectify its errors. We see certain figures behaving as might be expected. A foolish Hercules espouses Claudius' foolish cause. But Augustus also conducts himself predictably true to character and sponsors the justice which brings

progression, that is, the first part of the work may reflect attitudes, assumptions, ideas that are eventually modified, restated or totally contraverted. The text need not be homogeneous to be systematic. The tensions, apparent inconsistencies and variations may be part of a progression of thought and feeling.'

<sup>16</sup> The discussion by Weinreich 1923, 2-4, 8-12 *et passim*, gives a proper emphasis to the mixture of 'fantastic, grotesque and timeless' with elements of historical reality.

<sup>17</sup> Mosca 1937 reconstructs several plots from the fragments; also Coffey 1976, 155-8.

<sup>18</sup> Fredericks 1976. Focusing on the journey as plot pattern, Relihan (1993, 75) notes that the *Apocolocyntosis* is schematically the most complicated of Menippean satires: 'not a generic paradigm, it represents many Menippean possibilities rolled into one.'

this burlesque to a good and moral conclusion when Olympian authority definitively invalidates the folly of deification executed on earth.

Naturally the narrator who conveys these events does not profess to have imagined them, but rather claims reportorial objectivity (1.1): *Nihil nec offensae nec gratiae dabitur* (No bias either of resentment or favor will be allowed). His purpose, as his opening sentence declares, is to establish historical record by relating privileged factual knowledge to known facts: *Quid actum sit in caelo ante diem III idus Octobris anno novo, initio saeculi felicissimi, volo memoriae tradere*. (What the proceedings were in the sky-chamber on 29 September in the new year at the beginning of this most blessed era, I want to bequeath to remembrance.) *Quid actum sit* lays claim to the historian's factuality; *in caelo* designates the unique sphere of his knowledge while the precise Roman date signals the relationship of the fiction to the world of historical experience.<sup>19</sup> On this premise the narrator addresses himself to a reader whose identity he defines indirectly by his attitude and tone.<sup>20</sup> In the opening sentences this reader's position seems merely that of an over-hearer. The narrator addresses himself to the cause of historical truth, framing rhetorical questions with an impersonal *quis*. Soon, however, a series of second person forms casually slipped into the discourse (*scis, tibi, tu*) reveals the narrator's intention of communicating on freely intimate terms with his reader.<sup>21</sup> The first such address occurs within a context appealing to memory of the historical past when the narrator mentions a witness familiar with events in heaven (1.2): *Appiae viae curator est, qua scis et divum Augustum et Tiberium Caesarem ad*

<sup>19</sup> Weinreich 1923, 14–16, reviews the tradition. As he points out, 19, the very mention of events in heaven belies the premise of truth in this introduction, alerting the reader at once to an expectation of fiction.

<sup>20</sup> This created hearer is the kind of figure modern critics call the 'narratee'. The concept is useful because it allows us to understand the formulation of a variety of potential responses to the narrator's point of view. While the narrator keeps close control over his fictive reader, ostensibly dictating his responses, the actual reader may use this same figure to help him distinguish his own contrary responses. For further discussion of the potential functions of the narratee see Todorov 1981, 40; Prince 1980, 20–4.

<sup>21</sup> Eden 1984, 66, sees primarily a stylistic significance in these forms of address which he typifies as colloquial dialogue.

*deos isse; hunc si interrogaveris, soli narrabit.* (He is the Superintendent of the Appian Way by which you know that both the deified Augustus and Tiberius Caesar went to join the gods; if you will inquire of him, he will tell it just to you alone.) From these immediate and personal words, the reader may understand several functions for his vicarious participation in the drama. He will be called upon to use his own historical memory in understanding its events. Sometimes he may want to intervene and question the account. Although he will remain dependent upon the narrator's authority, he is, nonetheless, expected to be critical and discriminating in his judgement. The intimacy of the address also hints that this role will be confidential, not only as a privileged witness to extraordinary events, but additionally as a private recipient of the narrator's opinionated asides. At this moment the actual reader may choose to accept or to spurn the familiarity of the narrator's approach, but can scarcely reject the responsibility of supplying annotation or commentary by relating new information to prior knowledge. This is to say that we, as readers, will have to concern ourselves with two, theoretically complementary, versions of truth.

This concern will occasion two kinds of mental exercise. Our primary activity will be that of absorbing the fiction. Since the style which conveys this fiction is capriciously interwoven with allusions and digressions this process will require a degree of personal accommodation on the part of a reader who naturally wants to understand its internal coherence and logic. Seeking this coherence within a texture of ironies and ellipses, we involve ourselves in a mental recreation of the text. At the same time, the narrator's claims to authoritative truth urge us to keep our eyes open for interassociations between his idiosyncratic fiction and our knowledge of actual events. Thus we fill in our understanding of the narrative by the simultaneous construction of a glossary, or sub-text, upon which we confer a certain inner logic of our own.<sup>22</sup> While our reconstruction of

<sup>22</sup> Eagleton 1983, 178, gives a useful definition of sub-text: 'a text which runs within [the work], visible at certain "symptomatic" points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis and which we, as readers, are able to "write" even if the novel itself does not. All literary works contain one or more such sub-texts.' A good account of the way in which the reading process generates sub-texts appears in Iser 1978, 163–231, who shows how the reader's participation in a fictional text is activated by 'indeterminacies', or

the text should follow the narrator's guidance, our construction of the sub-text may appear to be influenced by various factors. Often our responses will seem like mere accidents of personal understanding. At times the narrator's presumptuousness may even prompt us to reserve our own private conclusions. Keeping the interrelationship of text and sub-text in mind, we will see that the narrative of the *Apocolocyntosis* offers more to read than meets the eye.

We may first approach the interconnection of text and sub-text within the structure of the chapters leading up to Augustus' critical revelation. These chapters clearly divide themselves into a preamble and a preliminary exposition of events surrounding the emperor's death. With Claudius' arrival outside Olympus, the narrative changes focus. This shift will be marked by the narrator's reassertion of his historical veracity, upon which our dependence will necessarily become greater when the scene moves beyond earthly sight.

In the preamble, the narrator insists upon his historical veracity. At the same time his impertinent lapses from formality imply a certain irreverence toward the historian's task.<sup>23</sup> While avouching the truth of his information, he reserves the right to conceal his sources. Thus he seems to introduce us into an atmosphere of prevarication where truth may be either dangerous or indistinguishable from falsehood. When he does indeed mention a witness, it is one whose testimony has previously been disbelieved: that same keeper of the Appian Way who swore to have seen Drusilla climbing the path of Augustus and Tiberius into heaven (1.2). Skepticism has now made this man so private a witness that he will no longer vouch for the truth of a conspicuous event, even an unconcealed murder in the Forum (1.3). By the overt irony of his professed trust in this witness the narrator makes a complicitous appeal to the reader. He offers a flattering

blanks which demand to be filled out and connected. Naturally different degrees of programming or manipulation of the reader are evidenced by different texts. The strategies of the *Apocolocyntosis* may be included within a category which Iser 1978, 212–29, calls 'negativism' or a denial of the reader's expected norms. This prepares for the communication of information that is unfamiliar and surprising.

<sup>23</sup> Weinreich's observation 1923, 17, that the speaker here casts off the historian's mask and emerges as a buffoon is unsubtle. Rather, he brings out the fallibility of historical truth by emphasizing the unreliability of its human authors. Thus the colloquialism *dicam quod mihi in buccam venerit*.



admission into his unexpressed secrets, and hints at his access to a truth even more authoritative than the common sense which should tell us that Drusilla is scarcely the equal of Augustus and Tiberius. By thus crediting his fictive reader with the intelligence to perceive the absurd political abuse of apotheosis, he solicits our confidence in his ability to separate truth from falsehood. Thus the story begins with text and subtext united in apparent agreement.

In the ensuing account of events on earth, the death of Claudius is presented obliquely. Although we hear that some simple facts, such as the exact hour of the emperor's death, remain uncertain, this uncertainty seems to be explained by a characteristic confusion in Claudius' own conduct. He was looking for his way out of life and could not find his *exitus* (2.4). Since the narrator's asides here manifest his undisguised pleasure in Claudius' death, his attitude would even seem to be informed by the opinions of the court. It reveals a certain Julio-Claudian bias, which I define as a reflection of the hearsay to be found in Suetonius' biography concerning Augustus' own disparagement of the image and potential of Claudius (Suet. *Claudius* 3.2). This Julio-Claudian bias emerges in two ways. We see its direct expression in phrases that glance at Claudius' singular unfitness to be called human. Thus, while he is dying, it is suggested that the very fact of being himself in life was a source of torment (3.2): *Annus sexagesimus et quartus est ex quo cum animo luctatur* (It is the sixty fourth year from that when he began to wrestle with life). His death is a fine distinction in states of being: *Nemo umquam illum natum putavit* (No one ever considered him to have been born). The bias is also expressed indirectly through Vergilian allusions employed in alignment with Augustus' unfavorable opinions. Already we have seen an example in the opening paragraphs where Claudius totters to heaven *non passibus aequis* (1.2). As Ascanius was to Aeneas, so Claudius to Augustus and Tiberius, yet who would consider him a replica of Rome's founding son? Again we find this bias when the narrator quotes *Georgics* 4. 490: *dede neci, melior vacua sine regnet in aula* (Hand him over for execution; let a better one reign in the empty throne room). Here the implicitly political tone of Vergil's line becomes an explicit justification of Nero's succession.

By such references the narrator keeps audience members intellectually occupied while inviting them to share in his own

uncompassionate irreverence towards Claudius. Yet other details provoke interpretation. With his superior knowledge, the narrator looks behind the scenes at Claudius' death bed to report the actions and dialogue of Mercury and the Parcae. Here again cryptic statement poses a challenge. In asking why Mercury 'had always delighted in Claudius' talents', we may produce both a negative and a positive explanation,<sup>24</sup> on the one hand remembering Claudius' notable deficiencies in ready invention, on the other his patronage of commerce. Despite his alleged partisanship, the god does not conceal the message that Claudius' demise is the Fates' gift to Rome. Thus the brutal burlesque of the death scene is urged upon our acceptance. Since the apparatus of the scene is so obviously fictional, the reader will not expect real facts to break through the surface of the narrative. Nor do they. Insofar as Claudius' death is transformed from a murder into a divinely sanctioned hastening of natural process, its facts are wholly concealed.

All the same, the reader who is relating text to reality will find suggestive remarks that the narrator relays without comment. Thus Mercury addresses Lachesis urging her to take up the spindle of Claudius' fate (3.2): *Quid, femina crudelissima, hominem miserum torqueri pateris? nec umquam tam diu cruciatus cesset?* (Why, cruelest woman, do you allow this pitiable man to be tortured? Will he never cease being tortured after so long a time?) Within the context of brutal anti-Claudian jocularitas that the narrator has established, these remarks should seem funny, yet it would seem difficult for any reader constructing a sub-text to refrain from relating these words to whatever facts he knows or suspicions he harbors concerning the *femina crudelissima* who engineered the emperor's death. Even more pointed is the reference to the troupe of comic actors whom Claudius was hearing as he expired (4.3). Their appearance in the narrative enhances the jocular atmosphere surrounding Claudius' death so that we might even think he died laughing as an appropriate conclusion to the farce of his life. But Suetonius tells us that these actors were introduced into the palace by Nero and

<sup>24</sup> Weinreich 1923, 34, cites the double possibilities, while Eden 1984, 72, *ad* 3.1, allows only for the negative: 'Mercury could not take the mumbling, shambling Claudius seriously and in his speech malice sparkles through his pretended concern.'

Agrippina to defer the necessity for a public announcement of Claudius' death (Suet. *Claudius* 45).

Within the same category of innuendo, the reader should understand a witty *sententia* concerning the difficulty of agreement among philosophers and clocks. The passage in which it occurs is a prime example of the narrator's self-contradictory caprice. First he gives us two facts, the month and day of Claudius' demise, but cannot give the hour for certain. Consensus, as he observes, is more readily procured among philosophers than clocks (2.2 *facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conveniet*). Nonetheless, he does give an hour—between the sixth and seventh—upon which he embroiders a poetic excursus concerning the noonday sun. Following this digression, he picks up the thread of his narrative: *Claudius animam agere coepit nec invenire exitum poterat* (Claudius began to labour for breath but could not find a way out).

The joke about clocks and philosophers is frequently cited as evidence for the vagaries of ancient chronometry.<sup>25</sup> Commentators remind us of the notorious inaccuracy of the water clock, used indoors and at night, yet background information renders the remark even more puzzling.<sup>26</sup> By Suetonius' testimony, the hour assigned to Claudius' death was that at which both the death and Nero's accession were publicly announced. To call this hour uncertain challenges memory of a recent event. Our narrator's flourish of versification emphasizes the position of the sun so as to indicate that the hour should have been calculated by means of a sundial rather than the water clock. By pursuing this line of thought, we may arrive at what must surely have been suspected: that Claudius had died some hours before public announcement, either at night or in the early morning, and thus by the unreliable measure of an indoor clock. The prolongation of his final agonies may have made the actual hour even more uncertain.<sup>27</sup> Thus the published hour of his death was indeed fixed by human agreement, and even with philosophical consensus if Seneca, like Burrus, served as a consultant in Agrippina's

<sup>25</sup> Eden 1984, 71. Weinreich 1923, 33, comments only on the philosophical joke, suggesting that Seneca 'puts on' the Stoics for the reader's particular amusement.

<sup>26</sup> Balsdon 1965, 17–18; Eden 1984, 71, *ad* 2. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Tacitus *Ann.* 12.67–8 also specifies that Agrippina was waiting for the hour that astrologers had designated as favorable for Nero's assumption of power.

arrangements.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the narrator's capricious digression underlines the arbitrary choice of the noontide hour (2.3): ... *omnes poetae, non contenti ortus et occasus describere, ut etiam medium diem inquietent; tu sic transibis horam tam bonam?* (All the poets, not satisfied to describe the rising and the setting, even trouble mid day; will you thus pass over so good an hour?). Naturally, the voice asking this question can scarcely be taken for that of Seneca, at whom the speaker might even seem to point an accusing finger in a manner calculated to strengthen the sense of his complicity with his addressee.

But the effect of this complicity seems increasingly to remind us how much more we know than the text is telling us. The text continues to promulgate a false version of Claudius' death interlaced with anti-Claudian humor. This humor turns to an apparent mockery of Claudius' political policy with its remarks on the extension of Roman citizenship (3.3: *Constituerat enim omnes Graecos, Gallos, Hispanos, Britannos togatos videre*, 'Indeed he had decided to see all the Greeks, the Gauls, the Spaniards and the Brits wearing the toga'). Here, suddenly, the reader may think of a different Claudius from the one whose foibles have been travestied. And it is surely just this reader who is aware of the wisdom and far-sightedness of these imperial policies who will look through the mock-brutality of the satirical narrative to the real brutality of the emperor's death which it conceals. Thus a new shade of sympathy infiltrates the subtext, ostensibly at variance with the narrator's expressed opinion, yet actually intensified by his unfeeling disregard for the real issues at stake.

When the narrative setting shifts to Olympus, we become wholly dependent upon the authority of the narrator (5.1: *Fides penes auctorem erit*, 'The truth depends upon the authority of a witness')<sup>29</sup> whom we hear still expressing his own jubilation in Claudius' death.

<sup>28</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.68. Although only Burrus is mentioned, the preparations that Seneca made for the obsequies, which would seem to have followed very quickly, suggest his participation. Bradley 1978, 62–4, *ad* 8, reconstructs the order of public events and their probable times, noting that Seneca also composed the speech which Nero delivered to the soldiers before the senatorial session.

<sup>29</sup> By remarking *scitis enim optime*, the narrator here underlines the fact that he has no further inside information to give concerning earthly events.

Into this fiction, however, there enters a physically recognizable Claudius. His characteristics are reported in indirect speech showing the impression he has made upon a messenger of the gods (5.2). The order of presentation is striking. Beginning with a favorable image of Claudius' imperial appearance, the description proceeds to his mannerisms and his speech. When questioned as to his national origins, Claudius answers so unintelligibly that he cannot be assigned to any nation at all. No matter whether this allusion is to his stutter or to his cultivation of Etruscan, its effect is to isolate him both from human identity and from communication with the gods. Following this impersonal perspective, we next see Claudius' solitary figure through the eyes of Hercules. This much travelled demi-god has been sent as an expert in nationalities to question the newcomer. Because of Hercules' confusion, Claudius is all the more distanced from human identity. Even the fearless hero fears (5.3): *sane perturbatus est . . . putavit sibi tertium decimum laborem venisse*. (He was seriously hot and bothered for he thought that his thirteenth labour had arrived.) By exploiting the humor inherent in Hercules' mental slowness, our text once more urges the brutal Julio-Claudian point of view upon us.

At the same time, however, our sub-text would seem to be registering the image of a man whose isolation in heaven repeats the pathetic isolation of his earthly life. We receive this impression when Claudius seizes upon Hercules' Homeric quotation to let his personal interests emerge. He hopes to find an audience for his histories (5.4). This comment serves both text and subtext, showing on the one hand the self-absorbed hobbyist who imposed his pastimes upon a captive audience, and on the other the scholar who found no appreciation. Likewise, the encounter between Claudius and the goddess Febris, who claims many years' familiar acquaintance, reveals the emperor's isolation. When Febris insistently testifies to his Gallic origins (6.5: *Natus est a Vienna, Gallus germanus*, 'He was born at Vienne, a Gallo-Teuton'), Claudius orders her decapitated, signalling with a gesture unknown to the gods. His hostility may be more clearly understood if we consider a connection between Febris and the Gallic conquests of Q. Fabius Maximus in 121 BC. Having overcome a quartan fever in the battle line when he vanquished the Allobroges at the River Isere (Pliny, *NH* 7.166), Fabius

dedicated a shrine to this deity at Rome in the area later distinguished by the monuments of Marius. To make the association even more humiliating to Claudius' Gallic chauvinism, Fabius' colleague in victory was Nero's ancestor, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, of course, Hercules, whose patronage Claudius claims on the basis of prior acquaintance, will stand up as a stolid Julio-Claudian loyalist, doggedly promoting Claudius' godhood just as blindly as his earthly apotheosis had been promoted. The celestial debate which follows after our textual lacuna juxtaposes points of view that can be considered no more than semi-serious. While Janus opposes the principle of apotheosis on the grounds of general human unworthiness and potential damage to the reputation of the gods, Diespiter takes a more liberal and recreational point of view. His recommendation that the apotheosis be added onto Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (9.5) adumbrates a level of critical sophistication from which the entire history of deification appears as a travesty. Thus the sympathetic bias of our sub-text would seem to have triumphed on Claudius' behalf and he is about to be conceded his harmless apotheosis under Hercules' active sponsorship when Augustus arises to articulate the responsible Julio-Claudian point of view.

Here we come to the sentence which Momigliano found crucial to interpretation (10.3): *Pudet imperii, hic, p.c., qui vobis non posse videtur muscam excitare, tam facile homines occidebat quam canis adsidit* (It's a disgrace to [my] command, conscript fathers, that this one who would not seem to you to stir up a fly, has slaughtered

<sup>30</sup> Why the goddess' intervention should make Claudius so angry is puzzling. Some scholars have sought the key in the person of Febris herself. Thus Waltz 1934, 21, n. 4, made fever out to be the officially given cause of death. Eden 1984, 88–90, *ad* 6.1, however, speculates that the allusion to Claudius' Gallic birthplace must be demeaning, explaining, 'He had been born on the wrong side of a cultural barrier of whose importance he was himself fully aware.' But in fact, Claudius had good reason to pride himself upon the achievements which had distinguished his sentimental relationship to Gaul. See de Laet 1966.

In fact, the episode appears to intermingle remarks *à clef* with those whose meaning is clear. More than one of its themes may be encompassed by an explanation which shows a connection between Febris and Gaul. The long acquaintance with Claudius which Febris claims is generally explained with reference to the location of her shrine on the Palatine, and thus close to the imperial house (Weinreich 1923, 73 n. 2; Eden 1984, 88); but that was only one of the goddess' three shrines in Rome. Dyson 1985, 154, 163–4, suggests a specifically Gallic association for Febris when he mentions the shrine which Fabius established in the Velia to commemorate his victory.

men every bit as readily as a dog squats). There are several reasons for its effectiveness. Since Augustus has quietly awaited his proper turn to speak, his words have the force of liberated emotion. While speaking for himself and his policies in a lofty, impassioned tone, he describes Claudius with coarsely naturalistic imagery that betokens a deliberate lowering of his dignity. Above all, his speech is effective because its sharp turn of phrase reinvoles the pathetic image of Claudius the victim that we have gradually built up in our sub-text only to effect a final, authoritative dismissal of this figure. At this point the reader can see that the narrator's disrespectful confidentiality has been misleading since he knew all along what surprise was in store. It was not, after all, a question of murdering a helpless old man, but rather of requiting crime with crime. As readers digest the catalogue of Claudius' murders, they will retrospectively recall the dark hints of Claudius' unworthiness for divinity running through the text and understand that they had been right to notice them. When Claudius' apotheosis is measured against the Augustan model, he can only appear so disreputable a pretender as to endanger the credibility of apotheosis, and indeed that of divinity itself (11.4): *Dum tales deos facitis, nemo vos deos esse credet* (So long as you create divinities of this kind, no one will believe that you yourselves are gods.) Thus the decision made by the council to expel Claudius from heaven becomes the version of his story most appropriate to the real temper of Julio-Claudian history.

If Augustus' revelation surprises us as a literary strategy, it also effects a new consensus between narrator and audience that prepares for an ethical realignment of text and sub-text. This happens not only in Augustus' speech, where the humor now completely reinforces the content, but also in the subsequent account of Claudius' descent to the underworld. As Mercury guides him through the Forum, he witnesses the joyous clamor of his own funeral. The Roman populace, sharing in the attitude of the narrator, are noisily celebrating their freedom. Only the *causidici* who see the end of their Saturnalia are mourning. The comic report of the funeral works to reconcile the sympathetic reader who might have regretted the death of the emperor with the intelligently informed reader who is justifiably hostile to Claudius. This change is signaled by Claudius' own acknowledgment of his death (12.3): *Claudius, ut vidit funus suum, intellexit se mortuum esse*

(Claudius, when he saw his own obsequies in progress, knew that he was dead). That Claudius has not previously acknowledged his own death is a mark of his insensitivity; the actual pleasure which he now takes in the spectacle is a further proof of obtuseness.

Claudius' funeral dirge is a mixed bag of humour. Quite possibly a parody of the oration written for Nero's delivery at the funeral (Tacitus *Ann.* 13.3), it presents the negative side of Claudius from an ironically positive point of view, combining fabricated deeds of personal heroism with his real actions. Thus we find him pursuing the fleeing Persians *in propria persona*, subduing the Britons with Romulean chains, and judging cases on partial evidence. Allusive irony appears in the comparison between Claudius as a replacement for Minos and the Cato of Vergil's shield of Aeneas, *qui dat populo iura silenti* (who gives laws to a silent constituency), and also in Claudius' desire to linger like Aeneas crossing the underworld and hear more (13.1): *Delectabatur laudibus suis Claudius et cupiebat diutius spectare* (Claudius was enchanted by his own praises and desired to watch a little longer). Now that Claudius' own attitude has proven any sympathy on our part quite redundant, we may feel free to derive unqualified pleasure from the narrator's humour; there is no use in regretting a fate which the victim himself so clearly enjoys. Given Claudius' own insensitivity to irony, a reader can be expected to let it similarly pass by. The same is true when the emperor reaches the underworld to find a crowd of his own victims waiting to demonstrate his foresight in sending them on before. Since Augustus had deliberately passed over Claudius' public murders in emphasizing his cruelty to kinsmen, the most telling point can now be brought home in an enumeration of victims far more impressive than Augustus' previous recital. These are not merely family members, but senators, *equites* and freedmen. Claudius' greeting to them is characterised by his famous absent-mindedness (13.6): *πάντα φίλων πλήρη! quomodo huc venistis vos?* (Ever so many of my friends! However did all of you arrive here?). By thus reserving the numerical count of Claudius' victims for this ultimate indictment, Seneca has made his narrative order climactic. The emperor's case is judged, according to his own habit, with only one side of the arguments heard: *Claudio magis iniquum videbatur quam novum* (this seemed to Claudius more unjust than unaccustomed).



Thus we may see that the order of the narrative which follows after Augustus' revelation bears out Momigliano's point. What we have here is not an indiscriminate slinging of abuse, but an artful counterbalancing of burlesque by valid criticism. The allusions to Claudius' cruelty put forth before the revealing moment were no more than glancing hints which the pitying reader might ignore as symptoms of the narrator's bias. His order to execute Febris for her biographical testimony is ignored as if the gods were his freedmen who never obeyed him (6.2: *adeo illum nemo curabat*, 'so little heed did anyone pay him'). But the overt allusions following upon Augustus' revelation extend the reader's perspective beyond Julio-Claudian court circles to include issues of real consequence to Rome. The death count of senators and equestrians, the abuses of legal justice, bring Augustus' point home to the audience for whom it should have most meaning: the members of the Roman upper classes.<sup>31</sup>

For the sake of Seneca's persuasive strategy, it is highly important that the council of the gods is a Roman senate. It observes a senatorial order of precedence in discussion, and votes in an orderly senatorial manner on Claudius' expulsion from Olympus (11.6): *pedibus in hanc sententiam itum est* (The divisionary vote rendered this decree). From a narrative point of view, this senate is metonymic. While it imitates the action of the real Senate in voting on apotheosis, it diverges from it by debating the propriety of this honor and voting against it. Thus informed readers can feel their own moral wisdom vicariously redeemed by seeing the apotheosis rescinded which they had uncritically condoned. In so doing, they will be able to view the accession of Nero in a new and better light. Nevertheless Claudius' deification had been presented to the Roman senate as a part of the foundation of Nero's rule and all that we have seen so far in the dramatic structuring of the text would seem to support this policy. At this point we may look back at our putative sub-text and the implicit audience of the *Apocolocyntosis* in the light of historical circumstances.

<sup>31</sup> Grimal 1979, 113, believes that the satire was directed towards the general 'reading populace' with the aim of dissolving that loyalty that Claudius had earned through such benefits to the city as a new aqueduct and a port city to expedite the grain supply. But the general beneficiaries of these works were unlikely to coincide with the reading populace.

It is one of the consequences of Momigliano's pioneering reevaluation of the inter relationships between Claudius and the senate that we have come to see the historical sources themselves in a new light and to read them between the lines. This analysis stresses the double nature of Claudius' image. The portrait of the ruler whose foresight and far-reaching policies of empire surpassed his immediate diplomatic skills modifies the Suetonian personal caricature of an incompetent Claudius ruled by his freedmen in such a manner as to place an understanding of the political complexities and tensions of the empire on an entirely new ground (Momigliano 1937, 72–3). More recent studies have qualified the favorable aspects of this picture by underlining the realities of Claudius' authoritarian execution of policy.<sup>32</sup> His policies and attempts to implement them will have aroused a number of reactions both approving and opposed.<sup>33</sup> Where his wisdom met reaction, it was imposed. Gradually, through his admission of provincial senators, the emperor was making the constituency of this body more favorable to himself. What is this group now to make of the new ruling triad of prince, mother and tutor?

<sup>32</sup> Carney 1960 outlines three stages in historical evaluation of Claudius: first, a recognition of his intelligence and organizational skill in the establishment of imperial bureaucracy; secondly a critical analysis of his diplomatic failings in implementing his bureaucratic programs, and finally, the conclusions of more recent prosopographical study which alleges that organized senatorial hostility to Claudius did not exist. Rather, Carney proposes, he had increased the privileges of patrician senators so as to confer a more Republican atmosphere upon the senate. He notes also the positive effects of Claudius' admission of provincial senators who were understandably disposed to favor his plans.

<sup>33</sup> Several scholars have argued that the historians' picture of senatorial opposition to Claudius is greatly exaggerated: McAlindon 1956 and 1957; Carney 1960; Manni 1975. Huzar 1984 provides bibliography to date.

Huzar's sympathetic evaluation of Claudius emphasizes his learning as the foundation of his 'balanced and forward-looking vision of the Roman empire.' In addition she mentions, 613–18, evidence for a favorable contemporary estimate by the Elder Pliny, and notes that Dio Cassius' view of Claudius is relatively favorable. In spite of some negative detail that is clearly Tacitean, the portrait allows Claudius' basic good sense and progressive government policies to counterbalance his adverse personal idiosyncrasies. In assessing Tacitus' derogatory account, whose focus upon the politics of the imperial court grants no attention to the impact of Claudius' policies upon the empire, one should remember how advantageous a light his zeal in defamation of the Julio-Claudians casts upon the ruler of his own day.

The historical accounts of Claudius' death and the events following it give glimpses of Seneca's personal efforts to provide a public answer to this question. The temporary concealment of Claudius' death not only masked the fact of the murder, but also gained time for the court party to shape its policies. A transition was to be effected from Claudius' semi-republicanism to a more fully crystallized imperial rule. At the same time, seeming abuses must needs be rectified. Nero's inaugural speeches laid the ground for this program. Claudius' consular ancestry was stressed in the *elogium*, along with his preservation of peace. These aspects of the speech, as Tacitus represents it, were heard respectfully, whereas no one refrained from laughter at mention of his *temperantia* and *prudentialia* (*Annales* 13.3). The speech prepared for the Senate was intended to allay anxieties, promising respect for senatorial authority and concurrence with the military.

Tacitus suggests that the senate was not deluded as to the true authorship of these policies. His comments on the funeral oration emphasize Seneca's rhetorical facility (*Ann.* 13.3: *ut fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum*, 'as the man had an ingratiating talent, and suited to the ears of his time'). Certainly this oration had demonstrated his skill in inducing his hearers to recognize discrepancies between realities and words at the same time that it made his influence within the court circle clear.<sup>34</sup> Nero's speech to the Senate would seem even to have acknowledged this influence by mention of the *consilia* that would guide his exercise of power (*Ann.* 13.4: *consilia sibi et exempla capessendi egregie imperii memoravit*, 'He invoked the forms of advice given him and the examples for the outstanding takeover of command'). A point seemingly in need of further clarification was Seneca's intention of providing this counsel in independence of Agrippina's compromising patronage.<sup>35</sup> He could find no better means of publicizing this

<sup>34</sup> Potentially negative aspects of silence and innuendo in Tacitus' portrait of Seneca are taken up by Dyson 1970, who even suggests that Nero's inability to compose such a speech reflected poorly on the tutor's training of his pupil. This implication is unlikely. Tacitus is unquestionably emphasizing Seneca's control over the situation.

<sup>35</sup> Griffin 1984, 39, mentions Tacitus' skepticism concerning the strength of Agrippina's influence in the early days; but, paradoxically, her belief that the *Apocolocyntosis* presents the official version of Claudius' death keeps her from seeing any negative reflections of Agrippina (97).

intention, one may think, than his own highly reputed wit. The *Apocolocyntosis* accomplishes this by its implicit treatment of the murder. The many readers who have seen the satire as an official court document give indirect confirmation of its subtlety. Although Agrippina's eye might easily pass over the narrative surface without spotting a single condemnatory implication, the very silence that made the document safe invited the reader to a covert understanding of its secrets. Two points needed to be made: first, that Nero's accession could be detached from the moral taint of his mother's contrivance; secondly, whatever the moral issues, that Claudius was gone for good, leaving the ambiguous fact of the succession to be accepted as a new political reality. To this reality the *De Clementia* addresses itself with a complementary function, diplomatically combining a political warning with Seneca's guarantee of his ability to control the prince.

## II

Some correspondence appears between the laudatory portraits of Nero in the *Apocolocyntosis* and those of the *De Clementia*, yet their images are different. The song of the Parcae focuses upon physical characteristics, illuminating the youthful Apollonian hero in radiant beauty and musical aptitude (4.1). This was a visible Nero for whom Seneca could credibly build a showcase within the Vergilian literary framework of the *aurea aetas*.<sup>36</sup> No musical talents appear in the *De Clementia* whose focus fixes upon the power of the prince. Unlike the young hero of the earlier work, this figure is a largely Senecan invention. The piece has so often been analysed as a constructive philosophy of kingship that its rhetorical dimensions have gone more or less unobserved. To give these their due attention is not to deny the positive aspects of Seneca's doctrine, but only to look more closely at the admonitory urgency that is an inseparable component of the

<sup>36</sup> In an unpublished paper, Boatwright argues that the artificiality and repetition in the encomium make it recognizably a mock-laudation.

public message.<sup>37</sup> Here again, as in the *Apocolocyntosis*, we may concern ourselves with the implicit addressee.

Of course, the piece is not only dedicated to Nero, but also seems to speak privately to him throughout. In this Seneca makes a conventional practice of philosophical writing serve his purpose. The fiction of directed personal exhortation gives the pretext for a straightforward discussion of policies supposedly not intended for other ears. This is not to suggest that Seneca's association with Nero's policies of clemency had itself been kept secret. Tacitus indicates quite the opposite. Not only had the ghost-written speech which the new emperor delivered to the senate insistently proclaimed this policy, but also Nero had mouthed recognizably Senecan formulas upon an occasion when he rectified a case of Claudian injustice: a situation which, in Tacitus's belittling judgement, served primarily the cause of his tutor's self-promotion (13.11.2). Against this background the written treatise might emerge as a confirmatory elaboration of that behind-the-scenes advice whose influence was perceptible in Nero's conduct.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the fiction of private communication which packaged these doctrines served to foreground certain discrepancies between these new statements and what had been publicly pronounced. While Nero's accession speech reportedly contained certain assurances of a quasi-Republican respect for the Senate, such principles are wholly lacking in the *De Clementia*. Here the arguments for the benevolence of the sovereign are based upon a cogent rationalization of that particular form of authority arrogated by the Julio-Claudian emperors.<sup>39</sup> Absolute

<sup>37</sup> Since Griffin 1976, 141, sees reassurance as Seneca's primary purpose, she argues that the views were 'basically acceptable to the reading public,' yet also she notes an admonitory tone which 'betrayed something in Seneca's view that needed urging.'

<sup>38</sup> Griffin 1976, 140, cites Tacitus as evidence that Seneca wrote a speech for Nero on *clementia* in early 55. However, the historian's actual phrase *crebris orationibus* would suggest a number of pronouncements, and not necessarily a single formal speech. The occasion was the restoration to rank of Plautius Lateranus who had been accused of adultery with Agrippina; it is certainly an example of *clementia* as imperial prerogative.

<sup>39</sup> Griffin 1976, 144–5, makes a meaningful distinction between the passages in which Seneca uses *rex* and those in which *princeps* appears. The former comprise the more general passages where the idea of kingship is developed with an abstract, Hellenistic tone. This usage, as she later proposes, is carefully handled to induce the reader to concentrate on the realities rather than the forms. Thus she suggests that

power is the dark side of clemency. The admonitory exposure of this absolute authority is most palatable if disguised as a matter of private communication between adviser and prince.<sup>40</sup>

For this reason the treatise induces a different kind of sub-text from that of the *Apocolocyntosis*. Since its textual addressee is the single, named reader, who theoretically constitutes its ideal audience, additional readers must accept the status of accidental overhearers. From this unprivileged standpoint they will have to calculate the relevance of this work, with its apparently salutary exhortations, to the prospect of their own lives under the new imperial regime. Insofar as this inferential communication is operative, the *De Clementia* resembles the *Apocolocyntosis* in leading its readers to develop their personal conclusions gradually in accordance with the writer's program. So tightly constructed, however, is the apparent bond of communication between speaker and addressee, that its implications for the excluded reader also seem accidental. Since these readers are not the designated audience for the argument, they will not find this program clearly outlined for their personal grasp, but are left to discover it between the lines. Thus while the content of Seneca's argument may be reassuring, the manner of presentation is unsettling.

The hidden program of *De Clementia* Book I shows its effects in two ways: in an argument which does not adhere closely to its announced outline, and in surprising emphases. The oddities of structure are reflected in a number of scholarly discussions concerning not only discrepancies between the styles and tone of the two books but also problems of organization within the first.<sup>41</sup> Those

Seneca's metaphysical description of the principate did, in fact, 'refute the partnership with the Senate' which Nero had promised in his accession speech.

<sup>40</sup> Roller 2001, 186–93, explains how clemency despite its theoretical humanity can function more subtly as an 'in your face' assertion of dominance. He provides a good example of its offence to aristocratic pride in Lucan's picture of Domitius Ahenobarbus' repudiation of Caesar's *venia* after his humiliating defeat at Corfinium.

<sup>41</sup> As a commentator on the logic and doctrine of the *De Clementia*, John Calvin complained of difficulties in following the argument more to be charged to his author's fault than his own. Not least among these is a discrepancy between its declared and actual organization (Battles and Hugo 1969, Part II.78). Grimal 1979, 120–1, comments on the symmetrical balance of the two parts whose structure he compares with that of a *suasoria*, the first part dealing with *ius*, the other with *aequitas*.

who have called its structure thematic come closest to the reality. It reveals the need for clemency by picturing the absolute nature of royal power. Within this context, Seneca procures emphases through characteristic deployment of visual imagery either incorporated directly into the discourse by way of illustrative example, or else indirectly by figurative language. Frequently involved in contexts depicting turbulence or violence in the state, these images assail the reader with forceful *enargeia*, and often serve to sustain the weight of the argument. These effects are present from the opening words of the *De Clementia*.

Seneca introduces the treatise by proposing to act as a mirror (*speculi vice fungerer*) that will make Nero visible to himself. Throughout the discourse this royal image will serve as an organizing motif which is counter-reflected by many diversified portraits of princes, some of which Seneca sketches in cogent visual imagery, and others by metaphorical substitution, as when he compares the monarch's position to that of the universal sun, or the state itself to a bee-kingdom. Although the metaphorical images are generally more doctrinary than the direct portraits, both serve the same persuasive end. The mirror is an apt introduction to these portraits. Although it purportedly gives back a faithful reflection of the emperor's virtue, this is not a fixed and permanent image like that of a portrait bust, but rather shows the sovereign in the process of becoming: *perventurum ad voluptatem maximam omnium*, 'about to achieve the greatest of all gratifications.'<sup>42</sup> The Senecan mirror reflects a Nero of indefinite and unchanneled potential, flattering him that he may rule in accordance with his own taste without obligation to any prior model (1.1.6). This freedom pertains only to the person of the sovereign, but also to the nature of his position.

<sup>42</sup> In discussing 'metaphorical catoptrics' McCarty 1989, 164–5, makes several points that show how this metaphor goes beyond simple flattery, including Plato's idea of illusory status of mirror images; their relative rarity as luxury items in Roman society and, with particular reference to this passage (169): 'Two properties of the physical device are significant to the metaphor here: its responsiveness, mirroring the observer, change for change, in time, and objectification, capturing his changeable image in space and thus seeming to give it an almost independent being. Creating a personality would, then, be an interactive process: not simply adopting an external image of the self, but discovering the self by correspondence with an external world in which the observer finds himself mirrored.'

At its very first appearance this mirror image shows elements discomfiting to the reader. The exclusivity of its focus on the prince turns simple flattery into an image of absolute royal supremacy. This development delays our anticipated definition of the virtue of *clementia* itself until we have absorbed the preliminary lesson that this virtue exists in consequence of the prince's authoritarian sway (1.1.4). Meanwhile the description has shown us a sobering prospect when Seneca fills out his portrait of the prince with a contextual definition of his relationship to his people (1.1):

tum inmittere oculos in hanc immensam multitudinem discordem, seditiosam, inpotentem, in perniciem alienam suamque pariter exultaturam sic hoc iugum fregerit.

Then cast your eyes upon this vast multitude, disorderly, prone to disobedience, violent, and poised to rejoice equally in another's destruction or in its own if thus it breaks the yoke.

Like the portrait of the prince, the dynamics of the populace is represented in terms of future potential. Since the aristocratic reader will predictably exempt himself from this crowd, by that very gesture, he must see how it can threaten his own safety along with the stability of Rome.<sup>43</sup>

This image is a variation upon the traditional picture of the many-headed mob and the man of authority. Its literary ancestry includes Vergil's crowd-calming simile of *Aeneid* 1.148–53, historically grounded in the turbulence of the late Republic. If we readers recall this dignified elder statesman whose place is now filled by young Nero, we will be the more sharply reminded of the irreversible alteration of Roman political order and our own effectual powerlessness before so strong a bond of loyalty uniting ruler and people. Not only, however, must imperial power be acknowledged as the one defense against chaos, but also we should be led further to imagine the inability of any person lacking the immediate power basis of the emperor to exercise an equivalent control over the state. Thus Seneca's image incorporates an unexpressed warning to any such person,

<sup>43</sup> Malaspina (2001, 235 *ad loc.*) observes the force of the phrase *immensa multitudo*, which he glosses as *i sudditi, non l'umanità*, while pointing out that this and 1.3.5 are its sole occurrences in all of Seneca's writings.



or persons, exterior to this alliance who might question it on whatsoever grounds. The warning is followed by a rehearsal of the emperor's many-faceted powers: his sole authority over the destiny of the individual; his absolute authority over the fate of nations. The peace he established may at any moment be broken by his unsheathing of a thousand swords. Images of creative power alternate with those of destructive power in a polar opposition serving to emphasize the distance between the prince and the reading subject. At last the portrait reaches its conclusion with examples of capriciousness transformed into clemency (1.4.5). Only in this exposition is the distance bridged between the emperor and the individual reader. The virtue which we are now given to understand as clemency is not extended to undistinguished men but only to persons of sufficient consequence to be judged *singulatim*.

Elsewhere in the treatise Seneca exercises his visual didacticism by showing the potential force of the undistinguished mob. He pictures the uninterrupted movement of crowds through Rome's broad streets, like a torrent bearing down on impediments to its course (1.6.1). He measures the faceless multitude by its capacity to fill three theatres simultaneously, and to consume whatever produce the earth can supply. Even prior to these vivid images of channelled motion, the reader has seen a warning against popular chaos in a headless state. This warning, based upon allusions to Vergil's *Georgics*, arises within the context of Seneca's theoretical argument for monarchy. To demonstrate the potentially disastrous consequences emanating from the death of a monarch, Seneca quotes directly those lines in which Vergil describes the destruction of the hive by its citizens and their broken bond of faith (*G.* 4. 212): *Rege incolu[m] mens omnibus una:/ amisso rupere fidem* (If their monarch is safe and sound they have all one unified will; with him lost they break trust).

In its original context, this *fides* that binds the colony guarantees its productive stability for the bee-keeper. By making the king the preeminent figure, Seneca has virtually inverted the sense of the original passage. Although Vergil regards the governmental structure of the beehive as natural and instinctive, he does not present it as a model for emulation by Roman government, but rather as a

comparative model.<sup>44</sup> Earlier he had remarked how the blind devotion of these small subjects resembles the subservience of Eastern nations: Lydians or Parthians. Thus the connotations of the image for the Roman world are ambivalent, if not outright negative. The citizens of the hive appear pathetically irrational when they destroy their home and stored up resources in blind dedication to a king. Seneca completes Vergil's inchoate linkage between the bee-kingdom and the human by applying the consequences directly to Rome with an apocalyptic magnification of the catastrophe (1.4.2):

Hic casus Romanae pacis exitium erit; hic tanti fortunam populi in ruinas aget; tamdiu ab isto periculo aberit hic populus, quamdiu sciet ferre frenos, quos si quando abruperit vel aliquo casu discusso reponi sibi passus non erit, haec unitas et hic maximi imperii contextus in partes multas dissiliet idemque huic urbi finis dominandi erit qui parendi fuerit.

This calamity will be the death of Roman peace; this will propel the future of so great a people into ruins; this population will be distant from that kind of danger for so long a time as it knows how to bear the reins; which, if ever it shall have broken or not allowed to be repositioned after some chance displacement, this unity and this fabric of the greatest imperial command will fly unraveled into many pieces and for this city one and the same end will be given to mastery as to obedience.

Once more, as in the opening paragraph, we see the ruler holding the reins of people and empire. The Vergilian image shades into a Platonic, declaring the inseparability of order and imperial rule.

As if this direct warning did not make its own point sufficiently, Seneca emphasizes its appearance of digression from his central topic (1.5.1): *Longius videtur recessisse a proposito oratio mea, at me hercules, rem ipsam premit* (My discourse seems to have retreated rather far from its premise, but, by hercules, it hits upon the critical issue). By this means he moves to the conceptual centre of his discourse, his metaphorical construction of the king as the mind of the state and the people as its passive, obedient body. Thus, on the one hand, he emphasizes the subservient role to which Nero's imperial power

<sup>44</sup> A more extensive discussion of this image in its Vergilian context appears in Leach 1984.

relegates his subjects, and, on the other, the potential danger of the mindless mob. Along with these direfully prophetic warnings against disturbing the balance of the state and ruler, we find another strain of cautionary discourse centered about the difficulty and danger of assailing a king. Here, too, loyalty is touched upon, and the first mention of the subject appears in a context which develops the topic of the subjects' affection for their ruler, yet the applauding people who flock to his presence suddenly assume the aspect of armed guardians hedging him about (1.3.4). These men accompany their ruler both day and night. They are ready to cast themselves against daggers for his safety: *et substernere corpora sua, si per stragem illi humanam iter ad salutem struendum sit, somnum eius nocturnis excubiis muniunt* (and to throw their bodies beneath him if by human slaughter the way of protection must be strewn, they fortify his slumber with nightly vigils.) Within the framework of the peaceful state which Seneca purportedly describes in this treatise, one may wonder about the source of the dangers here so vividly portrayed. The question is not fully answered by the ensuing comment that both nations and cities agree upon the necessity for protecting and cherishing a king.

We may find the presence of the king's armed protectors even more obtrusive when we see them brought into discussion of the ruler's service to the state. At one moment Seneca appears to be placing the power of the people above that of their ruler. We learn that his service diminishes his personal freedom. He cannot go forth unguarded in the manner of ordinary men (1.8.2): *Possum in qualibet parte urbis solus incedere sine timore, quamvis nullus sequatur comes, nullus sit domi, nullus ad latus gladius; tibi in tua pace armato vivendum est* (I am able to go alone into any part of the city without fear, although no escort is behind me, none is at my house, no sword is at my side; you must live your life in a state of armoured peace.)

The ruler cannot stray from his fortune. Wherever he goes he is followed. Although the images are closely bound up with the argument for political absolutism, they are only loosely related to the topic of *clementia*. Rather, in condoling the king upon this burden of ensuring his own safety, Seneca points to the fact that this armed security would be very difficult for one, or even several men to assail. The implied point is further developed when Seneca makes an example of Augustus' decision to employ clemency towards a

would-be assassin. The man is easily detected and easily dissuaded. Augustus himself makes the point that his own death would be profitless to a murderer lacking all conceivable hope of becoming his successor in power (1.9.10–11). Thus again we are reminded of the effective political basis of imperial power and the unprofitable chaos ensuing upon the death of a king.

The unassailability of royal power is also evidenced by the conspicuousness of the prince, who stands out in his constrained eminence like the gods confined to the sky (1.8.3–4). Each gesture he makes, even to his changing of apparel, is a public gesture. The remarks are offered flatteringly with mention of the radiance surrounding the royal presence. *Multa circa te lux est: omnium in istam conversi oculi sunt* (All about you is abundant radiance: the eyes of all are turned toward you.) Unlike the portentous warnings previously cited, this carries its own cautionary implications for the ruler in reminding him of his obligation to maintain his royal dignity, but it looks toward a further description of the terror caused by royal anger.

Given the image of the benevolent prince as the radiant center of his nation, and likewise of this philosophical treatise, it is surprising how many occasions and how many forms Seneca finds for introducing the counter image of the wrathful prince. The potential of royal anger appears in the initial mirror portrait when the ruler contemplates his own supreme power. Although this face of power is rejected, it is nonetheless studied at length (1.1.3): *In hac tanta facultate rerum, non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit, non iuvenilis impetus* (In so great a position of power, no anger has driven me toward unjust punishments; no youthful hot-headedness). Images of princely anger occurring subsequently throughout the treatise are elaborated at some length so that the discord emanating from such passion constitutes a threat equal to that of the volatile populace. In one context, Seneca contrasts the passions of public and private men. While those of the former are negligible in effect, the king's fury disturbs his world (1.5.3): *principum saevitia bellum est*, 'The savagery of leaders is combat'. The virtue of royal clemency can only appear more outstanding, because no force of law restrains royal anger (1.5.5). Again the face of a serene power is compared with the gleam of a sunlit sky, but this radiance is illuminated against the background of a violent storm spreading darkness and terror. At the

climax of this storm the wrathful king exercises his Jove-like prerogative in hurling thunderbolts that spread terror beyond the range of their target (1.8.5): *ut fulmina paucorum periculo cadunt, omnium metu* (as lightning bolts fall to the endangerment of a few, but with terror for all). Ultimately, however, we learn that the cruelest and most capricious kind of prince is the one who lives his own life in fear. The point looks backwards toward Claudius and establishes one of the lessons of *clementia*, but at the same time addresses those who might contribute to the ruler's insecurity.

With these various images of the serene and angry prince, we see how the mirroring function of Seneca's treatise extends beyond simple portraiture to open a wide range of potential forms. Although Nero himself must inevitably be identified with the good, still other possibilities are raised by indirect suggestion. Seneca congratulates him on the fact that his virtue is innate and not merely a mask (1.6.6): *Difficile hoc fuisset si non naturalis tibi ista bonitas esset, sed ad tempus sumpta* (It would be problematic if this good nature of yours were not inborn, but put on to fit the moment.) In this context we hear about Rome's initial uncertainty concerning the direction in which Nero's talents might turn and the relief she has experienced with evidence of his good nature. Naturally such comments sound like flattery of Nero. Insofar as the treatise plays upon the strategies of address to its named recipient, it clearly reveals the purpose of cajoling his better nature through appeal to his own desire for praise. Thus Seneca allows his realistic knowledge of Nero to be apprehended but only in such a way as to hint at his ambivalence while seemingly praising his stability. But the images of good and bad prince together are linked with the doctrine of royal absolutism which is the primary political message of the treatise.

That image and analogy have been the chief vehicles for communicating this message is one of the most conspicuous oddities of the treatise. Although arguments from natural example are an orthodox principle of Stoic thinking, this fact should not conceal the manner in which Seneca has depended upon his reader's extension of these analogies to fill in certain ambiguities in the text. While some points are in fact made indirectly, still others have been left to occur to the reader by significant omission.

The chief among these conspicuous omissions which should occur to the reader the very beginning of the treatise is the naming of any practical source of royal power. Thus while the prince contemplates the magnitude of responsibility surrounding his mirrored image, and construes his role by analogy with that of the gods, the language specifies his authority over mortals, yet does not explain from what divine or human electoral agency his imperial mandate has been derived (1.2): *Egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum vice fungerer?* (Have I out from all mortals been pleasing and been designated as the one who should fulfill on earth the place of the deities?) Neither here, nor at any other place in the treatise is any human institution made the source of Nero's absolute power.

Because of this explanatory hiatus, Rufus Fears argues that Seneca has implicitly adopted a Hellenistic model which gives us to understand the gods as the sponsors of Nero's absolute power.<sup>45</sup> This notion, however, stems from an exclusive focus upon the flattering aspects of the treatise. That Seneca omits naming an actual source for Nero's election in the *De Clementia* can also be seen as an open invitation for the reader himself to supply this information. Certainly Seneca invites him to reflect privately on the ambiguity of Nero's 'election' when he speaks of clemency as an ornament to princes no matter how they have gained their power (1.19.1): *Excogitare nemo quicumque potuit, quod magis decorum regenti sit quam clementia, quocumque modo is et quocumque iure praepositus ceteris erit* (No one can think of anything which is a better ornament to one who rules than *clementia*, in whatsoever fashion and by whatsoever legality he will be positioned at the forefront of all the rest). Thus we may consider the divine analogies defining Nero's power not as a doctrinary principle, but as a strategy of presentation. Although the treatise fills the silence of Nero's legitimation by attributing kingship to the laws of nature, this silence can alternatively be filled by the interpolation of historical circumstances. The absolute nature of Nero's power is closely related to its arbitrary origin.

<sup>45</sup> Fears 1975. This Hellenistic model cannot, in itself, be called wholly positive since Seneca borrows an image from the *de Ira* (3.17.2) of Alexander's anger for his climactic example of the unrestrained wrath of a king.

Another item to be missed in the document is the sense of due legal process in the judgement of the individual. This omission is apparent not only in the analogies of kingship and godhood, but also in the arguments which extol the merits of clemency. In this the treatise conforms to Claudian custom rather than to the facade of republicanism that had openly been presented to the senate.<sup>46</sup> Here, as in the dichotomous metaphor of soul and body, we may see that the document defines no role for the senatorial reader other than as a recipient of Nero's clemency.<sup>47</sup> To this end we may understand why Seneca withholds his philosophical definition of clemency until the reader has clearly understood its practical import. The philosophical dimension alters the tone of the treatise, shifting emphasis from the threatening face of royal authority to its potential benevolence. By this shift of emphasis towards the good monarch, Seneca moves subtly from his definition of Nero's position and policy to arguments in support of himself. This development is one of the major principles guiding the hidden programme. In the ensuing parts of the extant treatise, he introduces a new tack by advancing his own Stoic philosophy as the guarantee of Nero's good faith. To this end the unmistakable differences in style and language characterizing the second book are signs of a new beginning: a new message to be delivered by the speaker from surer ground.<sup>48</sup>

Following upon hints of Nero's own capricious nature, the emergence of the governing intelligence of the Stoic counselor comes as a

<sup>46</sup> Unquestionably Claudius' legal practices were controversial. Huzar 1984, 647, remarks on the mixture of good intention in his efforts to reform the courts and reduce the backlog of cases with carelessness and impatience in his actual performances as judge. She also notes the increasing number of cases that were coming to be tried in secret, a development antipathetic to senators.

<sup>47</sup> Griffin 1976, 150–1, answers the question concerning the political or judicial nature of *clementia* by pointing out Seneca's almost exclusive emphasis on the private administration of justice.

<sup>48</sup> John Calvin (Battles and Hugo 1969, 337) noticed a stronger stylistic presence of Stoicism—a sprinkling of paradoxes and scholastic arguments—marking a difference from the first book which had been accommodated to the popular understanding. Thus the language itself serves as a semantic key to the message. The preface, he added, differed little from the first book where Seneca had exhorted Nero to be like himself rather than to learn clemency. Griffin 1976, 151–2, also comments on the differences between the two books and oddity of the structure, assigning these finally to a double purpose in the work. Book 1, she proposes, comprises a kind of *peri basileos* and Book 2 a philosophical dialogue on the particular virtue.

reassurance to the reader. Seneca creates continuity between the two books by commencing the second with a repetition of his earlier image of king and people as body and mind. This time, however, the image is not one of exclusion, focused upon the inertness of the body, but rather on the active function of the mind as the source of the body's health (2.2.1) The mind, we are further given to understand, can be educated to wisdom, and most effectively by Stoicism which teaches the discrimination of virtue. Nero himself appears as an embodiment of innocent goodness comparable with the pristine virtue of the golden age (2.1.3). His natural instinct for clemency is to be guided toward a rational and practical understanding of this royal virtue. Privileged to share a princely initiation into such wisdom, the senatorial reader may learn to appreciate the value of a Stoic influence behind the throne.

Thus complementing the *Apocolocyntosis* and Nero's ghost-written public speeches, the *De Clementia* fills out a tripartite program of personal communications by which Seneca seeks respect for his influence within Nero's court. In demonstrating a close, interactive relationship among the parts of this triad on the basis of their subtle messages for the reader, I have shown how literary analysis can illuminate the historical significance of texts when it builds an interpretive context informed by contemporary strategies of discourse. A formulation of such principles as Seneca here employs appears in Quintilian's *Institutio* when he mentions a mode of expression called *schema*, which directs itself towards the reader's perception of hidden meaning (9.2.65):<sup>49</sup>

Iam enim ad id genus quod et frequentissimum est et expectari maxime credo veniendum est, in quo per quamdam suspicionem quod non dicimus accipi volumus, non utique contrarium, ut in *eironeia*, sed aliud latens et auditori quasi inveniendum.

Now indeed it's time to arrive at that feature which occurs very often and which is very much to be anticipated, in which by reason of some hesitation we wish what we do not say to be received, not in a contrary manner, as is the case with irony, but as something concealed and as it were for the hearer to discover.

<sup>49</sup> Ahl 1976, 31–3, cites this passage in such a context.



Such expression, he explains, is often used when open speech is not politically advisable. It formed a part of the practices taught in rhetorical schools. We may assume that a Roman senatorial audience was alert to such hidden meanings, just as Seneca himself was well skilled in the manipulation of responses which such communication involved. Here he employs them in an ingenious move not only to secure Nero's royal position, but also to solicit recognition for a personal role hitherto unknown in the history of Roman government.

---

## Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca

Roland G. Mayer

This essay is a revised and abbreviated version of a paper first published in 1991 on Seneca's use of Roman historical examples. When the original paper was written over 15 years ago, the role of *exempla* in Roman culture was certainly acknowledged, but not very extensively investigated. The picture has now changed substantially, and many studies written in the meantime have enlarged our understanding of the scope of *exempla* in a wide range of functions. Before focusing on Seneca, it may help to draw attention to the works of Flower 1996, Skidmore 1996, David 1998, Chaplin 2000, and Wiedemann 2000. All of them have up to date bibliographies which will direct the reader to older studies, as well as contemporary ones.

The tradition of referring moral behaviour to an exemplary standard, whether for rhetorical ornament or as a moral guide, fired Seneca's own ambition. Towards the end of his life he exhorted his correspondent Lucilius to join him in aiming to become an exemplary figure: *nos quoque aliquid et ipsi faciamus animose; simus inter exempla* ('let us personally too act with greatness of soul; let's set ourselves among the exemplary', *Ep.* 98.13). In the event, Nero soon provided Seneca with an opportunity to exercise courageous resolve and achieve exemplary status. The historian Tacitus records the memorable scene when Seneca received the emperor's command to commit suicide (*Annales* 15.60–4). What strikes our attention is the moral synthesis of both following and setting an example. The example Seneca chose to follow was plainly that of Socrates, since he had a store of hemlock ready for use (Tacitus, *Annales* 15.64.3;

see Döring 1979, 18–22). But Roman ambition is at work here too: a Roman imitator always aspired to surpass his model (*aemulatio*). Whereas Socrates had sent his wife Xanthippe away from his death scene, Seneca not only allowed his beloved Paulina to be present, he even consented to her earnest wish to share his death. The wedded pair thus trump the solitary model, and become models themselves, as we realize later at the death of Thræsea Paetus, whose wife Arria yearned to join him, following an *exemplum* set within her own family (Tac. *Ann.* 16.34; see Griffin 1976, 370). In Tacitus' account at *Annales* 15.63.2 Seneca is made conscious of his wife's aspiration to exemplary status when he says he does not begrudge her the opportunity of setting an example. As for himself, he claimed to be leaving to his friends as an inheritance an image of his own life (*imaginem uitae suae*), a model on which to shape their own. Thus in death Seneca crowned his lifelong engagement with *exempla* by becoming one himself. There is a peculiarly Roman quality about this aspiration, which some wider references will make clear.

The imitation of examples was a practice central to Roman social life, moral behaviour, and literary production. Students of Latin literature are used to the concept of *imitatio*, but literary imitation is only one aspect of an all-pervasive tendency among the Romans to seek out what was best in any department and turn it into a pattern for imitation, and if possible emulation. Let us briefly observe the principle at work in the social and moral life of Rome.

Two institutions demonstrate the use of role-models: *contubernium* and the *tirocinium fori*. In the army a young officer was placed under the protection of a senior, whose accommodation he shared. From him were learned the rudiments of military life. But since the life of a camp can easily turn to licence it was important that the senior officer should be a good man whose influence would shape the youth's character. We therefore find Cicero stressing the moral qualities of Q. Pompeius, on whose staff young Caelius served (*Pro Caelio* 73, *Pro Plancio* 27). Tacitus observed that his father-in-law, Agricola, was able to imitate the best men under his commander Suetonius Paulinus (*Agr.* 5.1). The general himself sets an example for his young staff to follow. Seneca himself adopts the image of *contubernium*, when he says that it was not the school of Epicurus that made his followers great men but their life with him (*Ep.* 6.6).

So too in the Forum. Tacitus, once again, provides a statement of the principle of enrolment in public life at *Dialogus* 34. The young man is entrusted to a leading public figure whom he diligently attends so as to learn the procedural ropes. The role-model is in the foreground of Roman training, and obviously role-models in camp or Forum are conscious of their function as the setters of examples.

The appeal to exemplary figures was the cornerstone of a Roman's moral training (see now Skidmore 1996); it operated in a variety of ways. The chief model was one's father or the family generally. Cicero often referred to the *domesticum exemplum* (see *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* v.1869.15), and the younger Pliny claimed he had such a *domesticum exemplum* in his uncle for the writing of history (*Ep.* 5.8.4). Seneca appealed to this home-grown model at *De Clementia* 1.9 where he set before the young Nero an account of Augustus' council of friends as a model to follow. In a yet more flattering manner in his *Consolatio* to Polybius (15.2) he has Claudius, as chief comforter, rehearse examples of grief bravely borne, especially within the imperial household.

Beyond the family, society at large was a pool in which to fish for examples of behaviour both to avoid and to follow. Two literary texts provide evidence. First, in Terence's *Adelphoe* 410–19 the severe father, Demea, is delighted to learn from the slave, Syrus, that his foster son, Ctesipho, has rebuked the more laxly reared Aeschinus. Demea congratulates himself that the boy is turning out like his ancestors (411), a clear hint at the *domestica exempla*, which is picked up later (413). (It may here be mentioned, since the issue will crop up again, that Ctesipho's morals have also been shaped by *praecepta*, precepts (412), a rival medium to examples.) Demea then explains that his technique is to insist that the boy scrutinize, as in a mirror, the life-styles of others, and from them draw an example for himself. These examples are both ones to imitate and to avoid. Now it should be remembered that Terence is himself here imitating Menander, but it does not seem likely that the Greek playwright composed a scene along just these lines. Terence's scene seems to be Romanized, and Demea is being transformed from a Greek to a Roman father, so far as possible. We see this from the second literary text.

Horace defends his function as satirist at *Sermones* (= *Satires*) 1.4.103–26, by arguing that it is no more than a continuation of

the practice of his own father, who accompanied him as a boy on his way to school in Rome (*Serm.* 1.6.81). His father, he claims, singled out individuals as demonstrations (*documenta*) of bad behaviour, whereas for good behaviour he pointed to the select individuals who could serve on juries. This technique of moral instruction by example is explicitly contrasted with the abstract ethics of the philosopher, i.e. *praecepta* (*Serm.* 1.4.115–16). The ancestral custom of Rome, as embodied in or flouted by individuals, is the only standard of correct behaviour; the philosopher can do no more than argue for it, he cannot replace it. Even if this scene is pure fiction, Horace defends his satirical practice by linking it to a form of moral instruction which his readers must have recognized. If they did not see that it tallied with their own experience Horace's defence collapses. So fiction or not, the scene must depict an approved Roman practice, inculcated with all the authority of a Roman father.

There is ample evidence that the Romans were fully alive to their peculiar use of examples as the chief medium of moral training (see Lumpe 1966). Cicero, for instance, is convinced that Rome has outstripped Greece in providing examples of moderation (*De Finibus* 2.62); the city is packed with them (*De Officiis* 3.47). Quintilian later picks up the boast, and says that whilst the Greeks are strong on precepts, the Romans more importantly excel at setting examples (*Institutio oratoria* 12.2.30). In effect, actions speak louder than words. Suetonius records in his *Life of Augustus* 89.2 that the emperor keenly sought out examples which he would transcribe and dispatch to his subordinates. More systematic were collectors of *exempla* like Varro, Cornelius Nepos, Hyginus, Pomponius Rufus, and above all, Valerius Maximus (on whom see now Skidmore 1996 and David 1998).

There are three reasons for offering this preliminary survey of the moral (as distinct from the rhetorical) role of *exempla* in Roman culture. First, it helps to show how Seneca fits squarely into a native tradition of moralizing. However much rhetoric encouraged the citation of examples, the imitation of models was central to an ordinary Roman's moral experience. Secondly, the choice of exemplary material was inexhaustible, nor was it purely historical: the present provided matter too. This differentiates Seneca from contemporary Greek moralists, whose *exempla* tended to be fossils. The

tradition Seneca operated within was altogether more lively, and he quite naturally appeals to his own experience or to the recent past, insisting that we should not always have recourse to antiquity (*Ep.* 83.13). We may usefully compare him here to the teacher of rhetoric, Quintilian, who likewise urges the student of oratory to draw his examples from oral tradition or daily life as well as from what has been written in histories (*Institutio oratoria* 12.4.1). Thirdly, the Roman tradition actively encouraged the setting of an example, and Seneca clearly had just that sort of goal in mind for his letters to Lucilius, as we shall see.

We need briefly to look at the sources of Seneca's *exempla* (see Schendel 1908). Since this essay is concerned with Roman historical exempla, his Greek sources are not our concern, but attention should still be drawn to his acquaintance with Herodotus, who supplies, perhaps not at first hand, a fair bit of material (see Setaioli 1981, 379–96 = 1988, 485–503). Among his Roman sources Seneca cites explicitly the historian Claudius Quadrigarius (*De Beneficiis* 3.23.2), and M. Brutus' treatise *De Virtute* for the exile of the former consul M. Claudius Marcellus (*Ad Heluiam* 9.4). His reading of the letters of Augustus and of Cicero generated *exempla* at *De Breuitate Vitae* 4 and 5, and *Ep.* 97. He may have used Valerius Maximus (see Helm 1939), and he certainly relied, especially in his consolations, upon Cicero (see Münzer 1920). Since Seneca was himself a consummate orator his sources should be seen as providing him with little more than raw material to develop as his context required.

That Seneca's historical exempla contain 'howlers', gross errors, is well known. The most startling is the fictionalized conspiracy of Cinna, a *domesticum exemplum* for Nero (it is discussed by Griffin 1976, 409–11, and Syme 1986, 266). Such an error might be owed to a lapse in memory, but Quintilian offers another explanation that has hitherto been neglected. At *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.128 he praised Seneca's vast factual knowledge, but added that he was sometimes misled by those to whom he entrusted the basic research. The busy man relied on friends or more likely secretaries for information, and their research was not always reliable; especially as regards his Greek *exempla* Seneca is often convicted of error. But he can be scrupulous too. He refers anonymously to that well known Roman leader who, like Leonidas the Spartan, took three hundred men to draw away the

enemy (*Ep.* 82.21–2). Why does he not name the man? Perhaps because in three separate histories he was differently identified. Seneca does not always name the exemplary figures to whom he alludes, but here his silence may be founded on genuine uncertainty.

The contemporary world of the principate as well as antiquity provided Seneca with liberal resources. Attempts to arrange these various stories into a consistent pattern reveal a conventional enough attitude to the principate and the emperors (see Griffin 1976, 210–17): Caligula, for instance, is a monster, whose reign forces into prominence exemplary figures like Pastor (*De Ira* 2.33.3–6). Notable too is Julius Kanus (*De Tranquillitate* 14.4–10), who thanked Caligula for his order of execution; what draws our attention in Seneca's account is the opening remark, to the effect that the fact that Kanus was a contemporary did not rule out the admiration he had earned. Seneca, like Tacitus (*Historiae* 1.3.1), saw that the times were not so degenerate as to be unable still to throw up an exemplary figure or two. That was just the sort of encouragement he will have wanted on his own way to becoming an exemplary figure, and his own fate found a pre-echo in Kanus'. Seneca's attitude to the other emperors is conventional, so far as his use of them or of figures who lived in their reigns indicates his own opinion.

The styles in which he narrates his examples and their presentation generally in the prose works deserve attention. One of Seneca's favourite literary devices, found in his tragedies as much as in his prose works, is the list. He happily groups *exempla* into lists. For instance, in *De Providentia* 3.4 he lists Fortune's adversaries: the fire into which Mucius Scaevola thrust his hand, the poverty of Fabricius, the exile of Rutilius, the torture of Regulus, the hemlock of Socrates, the suicide of Cato the younger. That list reappears at *Ep.* 98.12–13, which is the letter we started out with, in which he exhorts Lucilius to aim at exemplary status. He reduced the personnel to a quartet at *Ep.* 67.7, and then to trios (*Ep.* 71.17, *Marc.* 22.3, *Tranq.* 16.1). (This reliance on canonical figures was noted by Albertini 1923, 216–19.) These figures are the small change of the exemplary tradition, and Seneca's 'hopping' style is justly calculated to give them no more weight than they deserve. What is so disarming about this cumulative technique is Seneca's self-consciousness in its deployment. Consider *Ep.* 24: Lucilius is said to be troubled about the outcome of a trial,

and Seneca encourages him to anticipate the gravity or duration of his misfortune from the many *exempla* with which he can forearm himself (*Ep.* 24.3). Can anything be worse than exile, prison, burning, death? Look at those who have despised such misfortunes. Then our old friends reappear: Rutilius, Socrates, Scaevola. Lucilius at this point erupts in annoyance: these are hackneyed rhetorical tales, and Seneca will surely go on to add Cato. Lucilius is thus made alert to Seneca's rhetorical strategy by anticipating the final *exemplum*; he dismisses them all as outworn. This generates a self-defence of the method: Seneca is not trying to show off, he wants to encourage Lucilius in the face of his worst fears (*Ep.* 24.6 and 9). Nonetheless he does go on to describe the suicide of Cato in all its pathos, even putting into his mouth a lively denunciation of Fortune.

Seneca's art is admirable here. He acknowledges that the *exemplum* is shop-worn (it is found in Persius, 3.44–8), and so he sets about investing it with new importance. The imagined interruption of Lucilius detaches Cato from the rest of the list and thus isolates his greatness. The additional use of direct speech enhances his significance over the others (Seneca often puts words in Cato's mouth: *Prou.* 2.9–10 and *Ep.* 71.15). This speech has rhetorical features, notably 'emphasis', whereby a speaker refers to himself by name.

The deployment of traditional figures in a list is so trite a strategy, that Seneca turns the tables on Lucilius and offers him a brand new *exemplum*, of a morally undistinguished man who nonetheless rose to the occasion of dying well. The suicide in North Africa of Pompey's father-in-law, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio was immortalized by his answer to the question, 'Where is the general?': 'The general is doing fine.' Livy told the story in Book 114 of his history of Rome, and Valerius Maximus included it in his miscellany (3.2.13). But Seneca revitalizes it with rhetorical skill: he sets this Scipio alongside his ancestors, whose fated renown in Africa he comes to share. Conquering Carthage is less than conquering death. Scipio dies in the only way suitable for the superior officer of a Cato (*Ep.* 24.9–10). Seneca improves upon the overworked device of the list, by using a traditional enumeration as foil for the clinching *exemplum* of Scipio. His literary resourcefulness never deserted him.

Now since lists give trouble in their shapelessness, Seneca devised two ways of imposing some order. First, there is a clear tendency to



group the exempla into trios; secondly, the rhetorical crescendo determines the order of the items in the list.

Grouping into threes was something inculcated by the rhetorical schools, as Pliny the younger noted (*Ep.* 2.20.8, and cf. Quint. *Inst.* 4.5.3). Cicero favoured trios of *exempla* himself (see Schoenberger 1910, 60–3), and Seneca produced a good number of them. More impressively he organized the trios into a crescendo, a device to which Grimal 1959, 8 has drawn attention. For example, in *De Breuitate Vitae* 4–6, after urging the moral desirability of leisure, Seneca offers three instances, Augustus, Cicero, and Livius Drusus. In the last it is hinted that Drusus' restless soul could only find repose in suicide. (It is also remarkable that the exempla are in reverse chronological order.) A more striking crescendo is found in *De Prouidentia* 3.5–7. After the list, which has already been referred to, Seneca elaborates on the supposed misfortunes of three of his exemplary figures, Scaevola, Fabricius, and Rutilius. The trio is bound together by the figure anaphora, for each section begins with the phrase *infelix est* 'he is unhappy'. Highly rhetorical too is the development of the sections in a series of ironical interrogatives. The first two are also linked by a sudden change of direction signaled by *quid ergo?* 'what then?'. Seneca goes on to ask further ironical questions, 'would he have been happier . . .?' The last figure is the most dramatic. P. Rutilius Rufus is one of Seneca's favourite role-models because he was a Stoic, a 'new man' in Roman political life, and an exile (Seneca too was all three, though he was recalled to Rome). He had long before entered the traditional ranks of exemplary figures. Seneca sets him apart from his predecessors in the list by abandoning the introductory phrase, and by putting a short defiant speech into his mouth. The use of speech of course raises the emotional temperature, and here too rhetorical devices are prominent. Rutilius speaks three sentences which begin anaphorically. The central sentence lists Sulla's atrocities, visible to those left in Rome (they are linked by the polysyndeton of *et*). The last sentence is a brisk and pointed epigram: 'let those who cannot face exile look upon these things'.

Equally artistic is the placement of the *exempla* within the structure of the composition. Above all the writer's decision to illustrate his point by referring to historical figures indicates to the reader that the topic is important, since it receives this reinforcement. It is not

enough to establish the truth, it must be driven home too. Seneca's techniques in the ordering of his *exempla* have been analysed by Grimal 1960, i.415–16 = 1986, i.496, and by Hijmans 1976, 161–2, who notes that the core of *Ep.* 122 is flanked by *exempla* which thus contribute to the clear articulation of the whole. It seems too that a good place for digressing was just before the peroration, according to Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.80. Seneca follows his advice in *De Constantia Sapientis* 17–18, where he lists men who could or could not endure verbal abuse; he dwells particularly on Caligula before making his conclusion in section 19.

The distribution and use of *exempla* across the prose works deserves attention. One class of treatise, the *consolatio*, traditionally made frequent calls upon a store of *exempla*, as well as *praecepta*. Seneca openly avows this character of the genre at *Ad Marciam* 2.1, and he honours established practice. His innovation in this particular is a reliance upon contemporary instances which are tailored to the addressee (we may contrast the practice of Plutarch in his *Consolation to Apollonius*). The other prose treatises and dialogues more or less constantly draw upon *exempla*. The third book of the *De Ira* is especially rich in historical references, and Seneca announces at 13.7 that he intends to set out a select list of *exempla* illustrating the dangers of anger and the benefits of repressing it. The strategy at this point is transparent. For Seneca has already said in the previous two books just about all that can be said concerning the dangers of anger, and that not without considerable repetition. He seems aware that his argument is running out of steam, so he stokes the fires with the fresh fuel of ample *exempla*. The treatise *De Beneficiis* too abounds in them, especially in references to the emperors and their ways of conferring gifts on their subjects; here, as we shall see later, Seneca uses the device to criticize what he regards as repellent behaviour.

The great exception among his prose works is formed by the *Letters*. These, considered generally, make little use of *exempla*, although some, for example 24 and 71, rely heavily on them. The reasons are not hard to guess. First, the use of *exempla*, just because it was inculcated as a rhetorical ornament of literary style, must have seemed alien to the familiar style appropriate to a personal letter, a style described by Seneca himself at *Ep.* 75.1 as straightforward and

easy. Secondly, where illustration was wanted, the immediate experience of the correspondents was likely to provide it. Scipio Africanus was a traditional *exemplum*, found for instance at *De Beneficiis* 3.33.1–3 and 5.17.2, but his role in *Ep.* 86 breaks the bounds of the ordinary *exemplum*. Seneca's excuse is that he has just visited the great man's villa, and his description of the visit prompts moral reflections upon contemporary luxury. *Vice versa*, Seneca is minded to find fault with modern fashions in travel, which he contrasts with the single horse of Cato the censor (*Ep.* 87.9–10). Moreover the realism of the letters is enhanced by the use of contemporary figures. Claranus of *Ep.* 66 is here remarkable; physically deformed, he was nonetheless well advanced in moral improvement. Seneca says such a man was born to provide a model; when he comes, towards the end of the letter, to refer to Scaevola and his charred hand, we may feel that it is the modern instance which gives fresh vitality to the hoary *exemplum*, rather than the other way round.

It is worth asking, as we turn away from the topics of style and of presentation, what motives prompt Seneca's selection of examples. To be sure, some are so traditional that they could hardly be ignored, but beyond this we may suspect that choice was guided by any number of motives. A basic impulse, noticed but dismissed by Seneca himself in *Ep.* 24.9, was display of skill. The perfect orator, as defined by Cicero at *De Oratore* 1.18, was expected to possess a store of illustrative examples which he could draw upon on appropriate occasions. The speaker's taste or bias determined what was appropriate. Let us consider Seneca's use of *exempla* to flatter or to criticize.

Flattery is unmistakable in two of the consolations, to Marcia and to Polybius (an imperial freedman). The aim in flattering Polybius, whose brother had recently died, is thinly disguised; through him Seneca aims to conciliate Claudius. To this end it is the imperial household which supplies the lion's share of the *exempla*, and even Claudius himself is raised to exemplary status. The strategy is clear, for Seneca deploys the figure of prosopopoeia at section 14, and has Claudius in person rehearse *exempla* drawn from Roman history, a subject close to the emperor's own heart. The list of bereaved Romans is impressive: the Scipios, Luculli, Pompeii, and then the imperial family, Augustus, Gaius, and Lucius, Tiberius and Drusus Germanicus (the emperor's father), even Marc Antony. The parade is closed

with Claudius' own losses. Now this farrago was appropriate enough to the genre of the *consolatio*, but it would also have flattered Claudius' learning. Seneca praised him on that account at section 14, and we still have an example of Claudius' own use of *exempla* in his speech to the senate recommending the enfranchisement of the Gauls (see Braund 1985, 199–201). It was the sort of learning he liked, and so Seneca dished it up to please him by indirection.

The flattery offered by the choice of *exempla* in the consolation to Marcia similarly focuses on the imperial household, but the motive is less easy to identify if the date of its composition falls outside the time of Seneca's exile. He begins by asserting that Marcia's own character is like some exemplar of the olden time. This prompts him to invert the normal progression of topics in consolations: he passes at once to the citation of two *exempla*, both women, and both of the imperial household. But the first, Octavia, Augustus' sister, is an example that deters, for her grief at Marcellus' death was never assuaged. The second, Livia, is dwelt on, both because she sets an example to follow, and because she was specially attached to Marcia (4.2). Moreover Seneca describes how she gave herself over to the spiritual care of a philosopher, Arius Didymus (who in fact composed a consolation for Livia). Arius clearly serves as a role-model for Seneca himself, offering philosophical comfort to a well-born lady.

Late in the work Seneca returns to the use of *exempla* in a passage much indebted to Cicero's self-consolation on the death of his daughter Tullia (see Münzer 1920). This fresh outburst refocuses upon the imperial household (*Marc.* 15), and both Augustus and Tiberius are cited as examples of self-control amid bereavement. This section is capped by the next with a host of *exempla*: Lucretia, Cloelia and two Cornelias, the mother of the Gracchi, also found in *Ad Heluiam* 16.6, and the mother of Livius Drusus; this second Cornelia's presence is probably owed to a recollection once again of Cicero, for she is not a traditional figure in such lists (see Münzer 1920, 399). In the *Ad Marciam* then we see Seneca adapting his selection to the individual: he dwells on women and on the imperial household to appeal to his addressee.

Nero was flattered by the choice of *exempla* as well. Reference has already been made to *De Clementia* 1.9, but what makes the opening of the section especially remarkable is Seneca's candid exposition of

the young Octavian's blood-stained path to the throne. The reason for this is plain enough: Nero's accession had been guiltless, a point he had made in the speech he composed for Nero to deliver to the senate upon his accession (according to Tacitus, *Annales* 13.4.1). Nero's predecessors are also criticized in *De Beneficiis*, Claudius at 1.15.5–6, Tiberius at 1.7–8, and of course Caligula at 2.12. But it would be imprudent to see in these critical *exempla* a dissatisfaction with imperial government. Seneca remained loyal to the system which after all had promoted him to the ranks of the nobility. Indeed we see him still flattering Nero in the story of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus related in *De Beneficiis* 3.24. As Seneca tells it, Nero's great-great-grandfather owed his life to a loyal slave who refused to administer poison to him after his defeat by Julius Caesar at Corfinium. The imperial biographer Suetonius had no such motive and corrected the story: Domitius took poison out of fear, repented of the act and vomited it up; he freed the slave who had sensibly mixed a less than lethal dose (*Life of Nero* 2.3).

Criticism too is found, most obviously to serve as a moral deterrent (some instances have already been mentioned). A subtle use of such an exemplum is provided at *De Beneficiis* 2.27.1–2 by Cn. Cornelius Cn. f. Lentulus. For all his wealth and nobility this Lentulus was a stupid man, rescued from his follies by Augustus, whose liberality he ungraciously belittled when he insisted that public affairs left him no time for his oratorical pursuits. Seneca, a 'new man' whose rise was owed to talent rather than to inherited advantages of birth, is merciless to those whose claim to precedence was founded on pedigree alone (see Syme 1958, 571). Stupidity in an aristocrat is also witheringly noticed at *Ep.* 70.10, describing the suicide of the alleged conspirator M. Scribonius Libo Drusus. Seneca's contempt is devastating: 'a young man as dim as he was well-born, whose hopes exceeded what in that age anyone might have aspired to, or he at any time'. Drusus had lost his grip on reality.

Seneca further retaliates upon a decayed but still privileged aristocracy in the contemporary figures of Q. Fabius Persicus and C. Caninius Rebilus. Persicus owed his advancement to the distinction of his ancestors (*De Beneficiis* 4.30.2); he personally was a degenerate (something of a family trait if Valerius Maximus 3.5.2 and Juvenal 8.13ff. are to be believed). He is linked in depravity with

Rebilus (*De Beneficiis* 2.21.5–6): they both tried to help Julius Graecinus defray the cost of games, but he rose above the temptation, thus providing Seneca with an instance of greatness of spirit. Similarly at *De Beneficiis* 4.31.3–5 Seneca tells an unrepeatably gross story about Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus (his vice is shared with Natalis, *Ep.* 87.16). Seneca thus uses his *exempla* to reflect upon the morality of contemporary aristocratic society.

Syme was surely right to regard all these *exempla* as something more than casual instances of bad behaviour; a prominent sort of well-born parasite is being arraigned before the bar of public opinion. But we must bear in mind also the declaimer's love of strong meat; Seneca's rhetorical training surely contributed something to the choice of Hostius Quadra at *Naturales Quaestiones* 1.16 as an example of the uses to which distorting mirrors could be put. Degraded behaviour had its own fascination, as Juvenal knew.

On the other hand, Seneca may be detected as rehabilitating historical figures who had received a bad press, for instance, Q. Aelius Tubero. His meanness was a byword, and Valerius Maximus says that he deserved defeat at the polls in his candidacy for the praetorship because he served niggardly meals to the Roman people (7.5.1). The plain-living philosopher is of a different mind, not least because he knew that Tubero was an eminent Stoic, a pupil of Panaetius. His frugal public dinners were a lesson in moderation to the Roman state, a critique rather than a feast (*Ep.* 95.72–3). Seneca may be deemed to be setting the record straight on behalf of a fellow Stoic.

This brings us to the central issue, the value of *exempla* to the moralist. Seneca has strewn through his prose works abundant testimony to their use. A number of the passages to which I shall refer are well-known, so it is best to begin with one that has been unduly neglected. *Ep.* 120 opens with a reference to Lucilius' request for instruction on the issue of how we come to conceive of moral excellence in the first place. Seneca says that there are two roads. First, we create an analogy between bodily and spiritual health (§§4–5). Secondly, we observe particular actions in history which were deemed generous, brave, or humane, for example Fabricius' magnanimity towards Pyrrhus, or Horatius Cocles on the bridge. These *exempla* are of course defective morally, but we overlook their flaws in order to create from them an *imago uirtutis* 'ideal image of

moral excellence' (§§5–8); that word *imago* should be borne in mind. On this account, historical *exempla* drawn from Rome's past are not applied ornaments, rather they perpetually represent to succeeding generations the sort of actions which lead us to conceptualize *uirtus* 'moral excellence'. If this formulation is Seneca's own, then we may say that he is trying to do what no philosopher had done before him, namely, to create a basic role for *exempla* within a moral system. This would harmonize with his earlier statement that the remembrance of great men is as powerful as their living presence (*Ep.* 102.30), a theme he will go on to develop in *Ep.* 104.21–2. Exemplary figures never become a cipher.

The chief reason for their continuing value is moral success. The trouble with the average human being is that he believes that what he cannot do is impossible to everyone (*Ep.* 76.22). The exemplary figure—whose function is clearly taken over by the saints of the Church—is living proof that the virtuous life is possible (see Cancik 1967, 23–7 and Trillitzsch 1962, 32–6). Moreover a figure drawn from history is more credible than a myth; Seneca says that we know Cato existed but are bound to discount the poetic fictions surrounding Ulysses or Hercules (*De Constantia* 2.1–2). Whenever someone complains of the difficulty of maintaining a high standard of ethical behaviour, the moralist can point to those who have succeeded, Socrates or Cato (*Ep.* 104.26–33). Such men endured misfortune, and why? 'To teach others to endure it, they were born to serve as examples' (from *De Prouidentia* 6.3). Their lives are a lesson. Since the lesson has to be learned by each and every one of us the value of *exempla* can never be diminished. What is more, the tally of exemplary figures is always growing. Seneca recalls the phrase just quoted when he refers to his crippled friend Claranus: 'in my opinion he was born to be an example' (*Ep.* 66.4).

*Exempla* moreover have an edge, according to Seneca, over other forms of moral instruction. They are more direct than precepts: 'the road of precepts is long, that of examples short and effective' (*Ep.* 6.5). They work better than dialectic or syllogisms. Zeno's proofs that death is inconsiderable sway no-one; what we need is exhortation, fortified with examples of those who defied death, for example, the Fabii or the Spartans at Thermopylae (*Ep.* 82.20). What is worse, a syllogism can be overthrown by experience. Zeno's arguments

against drunkenness are quashed by the counter-examples of Tillius Cimber and L. Calpurnius Piso; syllogisms have less force than the deterrent figures of Alexander the Great and Marc Antony. The foulness of the vice is to be shown by facts, not words (*Ep.* 83.8–27). Seneca is reinforcing a distinction for the disclosure of the truth, made much earlier by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* 3.56, between careful argument and practical examples. It was, for instance, one thing to argue that nature needed very little to sustain existence, another to refer to the honourable poverty of Fabricius. Cicero went on to clinch the moral point: if Fabricius endured poverty how can others refuse to? We see here the persuasive force of historical *exempla*. Drawn from the past which was common to all Romans the exemplary figure was hallowed by national tradition. Reference to him or her made common ground between the moralist and his audience. The philosopher above all, whose essentially Greek intellectual discipline might render his doctrine suspect to some of his fellow Romans, would welcome the historical *exempla* for this very reason. Romans could be shown to embody the precepts of the Stoa.

Seneca carries his exemplary figures right into the citadel of the soul. He sees them not just as vivid proof that the moral life can be lived, but as a sort of guardian angel. At *Ep.* 104.21 he encourages Lucilius (and us, his readers) to live with these exemplary figures, the Catos, Laelius, Tubero. Reflection upon their lives and endurance will prepare us to suffer as well. They provide matter for a spiritual meditation upon the prospect of misfortune, as described by Armi-sen-Marchetti (above, Ch. 4). At *De Tranquillitate* 11.9–12 Seneca shows how misfortunes may be anticipated by contemplating exemplary figures of the past. The wealthy should reflect on the fate of Sextus Pompeius, public figures upon that of Sejanus, rulers on Croesus. In *Ep.* 4.6–7 Lucilius is encouraged to prepare himself for the sort of losses that afflict even the most powerful by reflecting on the fates of Pompey, Crassus, and Caligula. *Ep.* 24, often referred to already, is also a warning to anticipate misfortune. Lucilius' anxieties about the outcome of a lawsuit are to be put into proper perspective by contemplation of the fates of numerous historical Romans who endured far worse than he is likely to. The justification of this exercise is simply stated on two occasions: 'let's imagine that whatever might happen will' (*Ep.* 24.15), and 'whatever could happen can still'



(*Ep.* 98.14, and cf. in another context, 'whatever can happen at any time can happen today' *Ep.* 63.15). Thus *exempla* pass from being rhetorical ornaments back to their essential role in the Roman world, that of helping to shape the moral life of the individual. They become companions of our examination of conscience.

The crown of a life lived in accordance with virtue is the achievement of exemplary status. Seneca's aspirations, as we saw at the outset of this essay, tended in that direction, especially towards the end of his life. He makes a tactful suggestion at the close of *Ep.* 11, where he encourages Lucilius to choose a spiritual director whose ghostly presence will deter him from wrong-doing, Cato perhaps, or Laelius, or 'someone whose way of life and speech and features that reveal the soul meet with your approval: have him ever before you as a guardian or example' (§10). Now the use of oneself as an exemplary figure is hardly unique to Seneca (see Fiore 1986, 84–100). But Seneca came to his consciousness of exemplary status only late in life when he turned to a new literary form, the personal letter. No other literary genre was so well adapted to the role he was creating for himself. The Letters require self-exposure, as the treatises and essays do not. Seneca exploited the new form fully in transmitting the portrait of his moral consciousness. It must be stressed that the portrait is painted with an end in view. First of all, Seneca aspires to immortality; he compares his correspondence to Cicero's with Atticus (*Ep.* 21.4), and more relevantly to Epicurus' with Metrodorus (*Ep.* 79.15–16). The justification for his hopes was that men might contemplate a life lived in accordance with virtue (according to Tacitus at *Annales* 15.63.1). To that end Seneca claimed to be leaving his friends an *imago* of his life (again, Tacitus *Annales* 15.62.1, perhaps derived from the account of his final words recorded by his secretaries). Let us dwell on the connotations which this word *imago* might have had for a Roman.

A Roman who had held curule office acquired the *ius imaginum*, the right to leave to his heirs a waxen representation of his features. Now this *imago* was no mere family portrait, offered as a memento of one's features. It and any others were prominently displayed in the entrance-hall of the family house, and they were a spur to imitation (see now Flower 1996). Thus when Seneca, who had been a consul, at the point of death told his friends that he was leaving them the

representation of his way of life we must see that it was something more than a dead metaphor. He had every right to leave a waxen image, but that would not have been good enough. Wax is inanimate, a dead thing (*Ep.* 84.8). Seneca wanted to be like Cato, a living image of moral virtues (*De Tranquillitate* 16.1). Smoke-stained wax was so much less than a lively representation. Reviewing his career and his moral writings in the face of death, Seneca saw that he had accomplished the goal which he had set Lucilius and himself, to enter the ranks of the exemplary (*Ep.* 98.13). As such, he hoped to live forever in the minds of men, an aspiration he has fully realized.

---

## *In umbra virtutis: Gloria in the Thought of Seneca the Philosopher*

*Robert J. Newman*

The desire for popularity and remembrance which motivates human activity attracted the attention of Roman ethical philosophers because of the important role it played in Roman life. Among these philosophers, Seneca represents an important step in the understanding of glory since, as heir to both Roman and Stoic concepts of glory, he synthesized the two and adapted the synthesis to his philosophy of *Innerlichkeit*<sup>1</sup> by substituting moral definitions for traditional political vocabulary. By analysing the relevant passages in Seneca's writings I intend to show the results of this synthesis, how Seneca subtly but essentially redefined the nature of glory, using this redefinition to his advantage in attempting to convert his fellow Romans to the virtuous life. A short preliminary investigation of the Roman *communis opinio* of glory and of the changes glory underwent in the Stoa will provide a context to see Seneca's adaptations more clearly.

The dominance of *gloria* in Latin literature from earliest times through the Christian period shows its importance as a driving motivation for the Romans.<sup>2</sup> The pageantry of the triumphal

<sup>1</sup> Cuncik 1967, 122, coined this phrase to express Seneca's emphasis on the internal disposition toward Fortune and the *adiaphora*, as opposed to the emphasis on action in the Middle Stoa.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller treatment of the Roman attitude toward glory and its development through the Christian period, see G. Suster, *Il sentimento della gloria nella letteratura romana* (Lanciano 1889); A. M. Guillemin, *Pline et la vie littéraire de son temps* (Paris, 1929) 13–22; Knoche 1934; Earl 1967; and Hellegouarc'h 1972, 369–83.

processions, the *imagines maiorum* lining the atrium of a Roman house, the *laudes funebres* and epitaphs like those of the Scipios all bespeak the importance of glory in Roman life. Cicero, whose writings best represent the Roman attitude toward glory,<sup>3</sup> identified its three basic characteristics: it is a public act of praise; it is the reward for an act of *virtus*, that is for an heroic act performed for the benefit of the state;<sup>4</sup> and it can only be conferred by the *boni*, the aristocrats who, according to Cicero, can best judge what is good for the state.<sup>5</sup> Popularity with the crowd can also constitute a part of glory, but only when the opinion of the masses agrees with that of the *boni* (cf. *de inv.* 2, 166; *Phil.* 1, 29). In the wake of glory come friends and political power (*de off.* 2, 31–9) and even a form of immortality (*Phil.* 14, 32; *Tusc. Disp.* 1, 110; *ad fam.* 5, 12, 1).

In contrast, the Greeks laid less stress on political glory; Greek has no single word which adequately represents the omnipresent Roman concept of *gloria*.<sup>6</sup> The Old Stoa reflected this underestimation of glory by assigning it (both *eudoxia*, good repute among family and

<sup>3</sup> For Cicero's treatment of *gloria* the basic work is Leeman 1949, which details Cicero's opinion as well as the various Greek, Roman and especially Stoic sources for his opinion. Also important for Cicero's treatment of *gloria* are: Knoche 1934; P. Boyancé, *Études sur le Songe de Scipion* (Paris, 1936) and its review by L. Edelstein *AJP* 59 (1938), 360f.; F. Sullivan, 'Cicero and *Gloria*,' *TAPA* 77 (1941), 382–91; J. C. Plumpe, 'Roman Elements in Cicero's Panegyric on the Legio Martia,' *CJ* 36 (1941), 281f.

<sup>4</sup> For the essence of Roman *virtus* as an heroic, civic deed, see R. Martin, *Tacitus* (London 1981) 20; Knoche 1934, 111, 115; Earl 1967, 52. The public nature of *gloria* appeared as early as Plautus where it is already associated with aristocratic *virtus* expressed in holding public office and performing great deeds for the state's sake; cf. Earl 1967, 35.

<sup>5</sup> For Cicero, political affiliation divided the *boni* from the *vulgus*; cf. *ad fam.* 14. 4. 13. A clear example of the political meaning of *boni* is *ad Att.* 7. 3. 2: *Sin vincuntur boni, ubicumque essem, una cum iis victus essem*, 'But if the good men lose the day, I should have lost it with them wherever I was'. To speak of conquering implies a political rather than a philosophical category, since, philosophically, the *boni* can never be overcome. This passage also shows that Cicero associated himself with the *boni* party and opposed it to the anti-Senatorial, popular party headed by Caesar. For the role of the *boni* as judges who alone can confer glory, cf. *Sest.* 139 and *Tusc. Disp.* 3. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Knoche 1934, 106: the multitude of Greek words corresponding to *gloria* is meaningful, 'denn es ist nur ein Zeichen dafür, dass in der Welt des griechischen Geistes dem Ruhm keineswegs die eindeutige Auffassung und Bedeutung zukommt, wie in der römischen: man kann in Wahrheit gar nicht von einem einheitlichen griechischen Ruhmesgedanken sprechen!'

good men, and *doxa*, popularity)<sup>7</sup> to the lowest rank of preferred *adiaphora* (the *proegmena*) among the *di' heteron lêpta*, those things which should only be chosen as a means to obtain other things (Cicero, *de fin.* 3, 57). The successors of Diogenes of Babylon<sup>8</sup> made the first change in the Stoic valuation of glory. Under attack from Carneades, the head of the Academy, they increased the value of *eudoxia* by placing it among the *kat' hautō lêpta*, the *proegmena* which have some value in themselves (Cicero, *de fin.* 3, 57). *Doxa*, since it did not occur in the discussion of this change, presumably remained among the lower *adiaphora*.

The Middle Stoa went a step further in giving increased importance to glory by recognizing a type of glory which is a positive good. A scholion to Plato's *Leges* 625a (*SVF* III 161) formulated this new ranking:

καὶ οἱ Στωϊκοὶ πλατωνίζοντες κλέος φασὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τῶν σπουδαίων γενόμενον δίκαιον, δόξαν δὲ τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσπούδων δόκησιν.

(The 'platonizing Stoics' are certainly Panaitios and Posidonios who incorporated Platonic doctrine into Stoic philosophy.<sup>9</sup>) The scholion distinguishes *kleos*, which applies to wise men (*epi tôn spoudaiôn*) for their virtue (*to dikaion*), from *doxa*, which is restricted to mere opinion (*dokêsin*) among fools, i.e. among the rest of mankind. *Kleos*, the old epic term for glory,<sup>10</sup> seems to have replaced the term

<sup>7</sup> Cicero's insistence (*de fin.* 3, 57) on translating *eudoxia* as *bona fama* and not as *gloria* implies that his Stoic source distinguished these types of glory. *Doxa*, which normally occurs in lists of *adiaphora* (e.g. Diog. Laert. 7, 106), had been translated by Cicero in an earlier passage (*de fin.* 3, 51) as *gloria*. Cicero calqued *eudoxia* in order to stress the aspect of good repute which allowed this aspect of glory to receive greater importance than simple *doxa*.

<sup>8</sup> The exact author of this change has no direct bearing on the present argument. Von Arnim quoted this fragment under Antipater's name (*SVF* III Antipater 57) and Leeman 1952, 59f. also attributed this change to Antipater. Given Antipater's adaptation of Diogenes' *telos* formula to include acquiring the *proegmena* (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* II 75, 11 W) this attribution is probably correct. For discussions of the changes made in the Stoic *telos* definition, see Rieth 1934; Kidd 1971; Long 1967. For a discussion of the change in the Old Stoa's attitude toward glory, see Leeman 1949, 28–31.

<sup>9</sup> For the Platonizing aspect of Panaitios' and Posidonios' philosophy, see Zeller 1963, 581, 599; Pohlenz 1978, 194–5, 214; Long 1974, 213, 220.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of epic *kleos*, see G. Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974) 231–55; id., *Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore, 1974) 111; D. Sinos, *Achilles, Patroklos and the Meaning of Philos* (Innsbruck 1980)

*eudoxia*, since it has the same meaning and *eudoxia* no longer appears in discussions of glory. Panaitios and Posidonios, then, raised the higher form of glory from its former *adiaphoron* status to a positive good because of its connection with the wise man and virtue; *doxa*, existing only in opinion, cannot be good and therefore remained an *adiaphoron*.

Because of its practical concern,<sup>11</sup> the Middle Stoa tended to ignore *kleos* in favor of the politically necessary *doxa*. As a result, except for the above Plato scholion, a similar remark in Philo *de sobr.* 56, v. 2 p. 226W (*SVF* III 603) and the dialectic section of Seneca *Ep.* 102, 3–19,<sup>12</sup> no in-depth discussion of *kleos* survives from the Middle Stoa. *Doxa* consequently occupied the attention of the Middle Stoics almost completely; they divided this *adiaphoron* into true glory based on *virtus*—not the theoretical virtue of the *sapiens*, but rather societal virtue based on opinion and resulting in appropriate actions<sup>13</sup> beneficial to the state—and false glory, mere popular acclaim for a deed whose sole purpose was attaining popularity (cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 3, 3–4). The connection with secondary political virtue seems to indicate that true glory was raised from a *di' heteron lêpton*, its rank in the Old Stoa, to a *kat' hautou lêpton*. The Middle Stoics also recognized that *doxa* has a useful side: although the approval of the *boni* alone sufficed to confer true glory, the approval of the crowd, so long as it agreed with the judgement of the *boni*, was necessary for political success (cf. Cicero *Phil.* 1, 29–30). *Fama popularis* consequently became a *di' heteron lêpton*.

49–50. Leeman 1952, 66, claimed that Seneca in *Ep.* 102 translated *kleos* as *claritas*, whereas Pohlenz 1978, 315, contended that it translated *eudoxia*. Seneca certainly considered *claritas* as a literal translation of *kleos*; the Middle Stoa, however, had already included the idea of *eudoxia* in that of *kleos*. *Claritas* could thus be said to translate both concepts.

<sup>11</sup> For Panaitios' practical concern, see Zeller 1963, 580; Pohlenz 1978, 194; Long 1974, 213–16. For Panaitios' own formulation of his concern for those not yet wise, cf. his remark quoted by Seneca in *Ep.* 116. 5 (frg. 114 van Straaten).

<sup>12</sup> Leeman 1952, 64–79 argues convincingly that Posidonios was Seneca's source for *Ep.* 102. 3–19, and that he was in turn defending Panaitios against a Peripatetic attack.

<sup>13</sup> For the nature of appropriate actions and their importance in the Middle Stoa, see Cicero *de off.*, based on Panaitios' *Peri tou kathekontos* (cf. Cicero, *de off.* 3. 7; Pohlenz 1934, 5; Long 1974, 211) and Long 1974, 204f.

The coalescence of Roman and Stoic attitudes toward glory which occurred by the end of the Republic provided the basis upon which Seneca constructed his own theory. The changed political situation under the emperors required a rethinking of the *communis opinio*, since political ambition and the desire for popularity had become dangerous. Seneca nevertheless recognized the importance which glory had for the Romans and saw that he could use it to attract others to the philosophical life. He changed the prevailing attitude toward glory in two ways: first, he redefined *virtus* and introduced a new 'interior' relationship between it and glory; second, he reorganized the different types of glory which he inherited from the Middle Stoa according to his new definition of virtue.

Seneca hints at his new concept of glory in *Ep.* 95, 73: *o quam ignorant homines cupidi gloriae quid illa sit aut quemadmodum petenda!* ('Those who covet glory are so ignorant of what it is or how it must be sought!'). If the *cupidi gloriae* do not know what glory is and how it must be sought, then there must exist a glory which can legitimately be sought after. *Petenda* implies Seneca's change in the valuation of glory from his predecessors: as an *adiaphoron* glory could be chosen or preferred (*sumenda, praeposita*; cf. Cicero *de fin.* 3, 57); as a good, however, it could be actively sought after.<sup>14</sup> This increase is linked to the change which Seneca made in the definition of *virtus*. The Middle Stoa had distinguished two types of virtue: the wise man's true virtue, the basis for *kleos*, and the politician's secondary virtue in the world of opinion, the basis for *doxa*. Seneca recognized only one virtue (*Ep.* 76, 15f.), the proper interior disposition of the soul in relation to the *adiaphora* (cf. *Epp.* 66, 6; 71, 32; 75, 11; I. Hadot 1969, 103ff.). By unifying the concept of *virtus* Seneca consequently unified the concept of glory: if *doxa* results from virtue, as the Middle Stoics maintained, then it must also be, like *kleos*, a good, since there is only one *virtus*, the Stoic *summum bonum*. *Kleos* and *doxa* thus became different aspects of a single phenomenon (which Seneca translated here in *Ep.* 95, 73 by the single word *gloria*<sup>15</sup>). The glory desired by the

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Stobaeus *ecl.*, 75, I W (SVF III 131) for the Stoic difference between *hairêton* and *lêpton*.

<sup>15</sup> Seneca, like the Romans in general, did not adopt terms to express the Greek distinctions corresponding to the term *gloria* when these distinctions were taken over by the Romans, but merely used *gloria* to cover different types and grades, depending

*cupidi gloriae*, since it lacked a foundation of *virtus*, remained among the *adiaphora*.

Seneca's understanding of *virtus* made the *adiaphora* an important step in acquiring glory. The aspirant for glory must no longer battle the enemies of the state, but rather himself and his tendency to judge the indifferents as really good or evil, as the fools judge them; he must bear what Fortune sends, never admitting that it has power to influence his moral choice. Seneca defined this relationship among *adiaphora*, *virtus* and *gloria* in *Ep.* 82, 12: *Omnia ista per se non sunt honesta nec gloriosa, sed quidquid ex illis virtus adiit tractavitque honestum et gloriosum facit*, 'all these things (viz. the *adiaphora*) in themselves are not honorable or glorious, but whichever of them virtue visits and touches, it makes honorable and glorious'. When some indifferent occurs, whether sickness, poverty, health, or wealth, it gives the wise man the opportunity to act virtuously by showing that he understands that the event is indifferent. According to the Stoics, whatever moves a man to such an act of virtue becomes automatically a good;<sup>16</sup> the *adiaphoron* becomes *honestum*. Since what is *honestum* is also *gloriosum*, the proper response to the *adiaphoron* and, consequently, the wise man who performs this response receive glory.

Seneca illustrates the importance the indifferents have in acquiring virtue with two images. In the first, the Olympic athlete who competes without competition (*de prov.* 4, 2) may win the trappings of victory, but, his abilities untried, he wins no real glory: *Coronam habes, victoriam non habes*, 'you have the crown, you do not have the victory'. Without Fortune's challenge the wise man has an empty enjoyment of his virtue; he cannot know the value and sublimity of his only true possession. Seneca continues his argument with a

on context to avoid ambiguity. He could, when necessary, use technical terms, as he did in *Ep.* 102, which seems to have been derived from a Greek Stoic handbook; cf. Leeman 1952, 56–78. In other passages of a less technical nature the general term *gloria* sufficed e.g., *de brev. vit.* 4, 3; *Epp.* 65, 6; 83, 24; 95, 28. Chrysippus had granted this liberty of speech, permitting the use of non-technical vocabulary when no chance of confusion exists; cf. Plutarch, *de Stoic. rep.* 30; Cicero, *de fin.* 3, 52; Seneca, *Ep.* 65, 36ff. Recognizing this looser method of speaking removes the superficial paradoxes that result when Seneca's statements about glory are taken out of context.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *SVF* III 94 (Stobaeus. *ecl.* II 95, 3 W) and 117 (Diog. Laert. 7, 104).



political metaphor; like the empty glory of the unchallenged athlete, the popular acclaim which attends political *ambitio* has no substance (*de prov.* 4, 2): *Non gratulor tamquam viro forti, sed tamquam consulatum praeturamve adepto: honore auctus es*, 'I congratulate you not as a brave man, but as one who has obtained a praetorship or consulship; you have enhanced your prestige'. The fame which the political candidate enjoys does not come from within himself, not from any virtuous deed, but from the fickle judgement of the masses.

The external response, or virtuous act, also mediates between external *adiaphora* and internal virtue. Fortune's attack makes the wise man's virtue visible not only to himself but also to others. Without such an external act, no one would know who is a *sapiens* (*de prov.* 4, 2): *Magnus vir es: sed unde scio, si tibi fortuna non dat facultatem exhibendae virtutis?* 'You are a great man: but how do I know, if Fortune gives you no opportunity to display your virtue?' The *unde scio* underscores the proper relationship of private virtue to those who observe the wise man. The Stoic belief in an active life and in concern for others does not permit virtue to remain hidden.<sup>17</sup>

Seneca often uses the Stoic 'saints' to illustrate this relationship and the necessity of an external response to the *adiaphora*. *De prov.* 3, 9, for example, makes Regulus' glory proportionate to his torments: *Quanto plus tormenti, tanto plus erit gloriae*; *Ep.* 13, 14 stresses the deaths of Socrates and Cato: *Cicuta magnum Socratem fecit. Catoni gladium adsertorem libertatis extorque: magnam partem detraxeris gloriae*. Not a life of hidden virtue, but an heroic, virtue-revealing act gave these wise men their glory; Cato's defence of the republic would have made him famous, but without his suicide his glory would have been diminished. Tubero fitted out his *lectisternium* with goat skins and clay cups and became, in Seneca's opinion, Cato's equal (*Ep.* 95, 72). This unusual compliment shows the importance Seneca attached to such acts; Tubero's reward, like Cato's, will continue when the rest are long forgotten (§73): *Omnium illorum aurum argentumque fractum est et [in] milliens conflatum, at omnibus saeculis Tuberonis fictilia durabunt*. Seneca did not deny the virtue these

<sup>17</sup> For the doctrine of *oikeiosis* by which a man's first impulse toward self-preservation gradually extends to include family, relatives, friends and finally all of mankind, see Long 1974, 172, 191; S. G. Pembroke, 'Oikeiosis,' in Long 1971, 114–49.

men possessed, but implied that, if undisplayed, their virtue would be diminished since glory would also have been diminished proportionately.

This seemingly paradoxical relationship between *virtus* and glory rests on the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis* (above, n. 17) and Seneca's own conviction that the wise man should be the teacher of the *proficientes*, those still struggling on the way to perfection (I. Hadot 1969, 7–9). The wise man does not act simply to gain the popular acclaim which the politician seeks. His glory is intimately bound up with social responsibility; the essence of glory for the *sapiens* is providing *exempla*. The wise man, moved by love for his fellow human beings, desires to move them to virtue; by his own virtuous actions he provides a model for others to follow in contending with Fortune (*de prov.* 6, 3): *Quare quaedam dura patiuntur (viz. boni)? Ut alios pati doceant; nati sunt in exemplar*, 'Why do good people endure hardships? To teach others to endure them; they were born as exemplars'. The *sapiens* seeks not praise for his virtue, but imitation which shows that both the act and its motivating virtue are known and approved. He does not leave an example accidentally or without thought—he is born for that purpose. The *exemplum*, then, is an equivalent of *virtus*, since man, as a rational animal, is born for virtue alone. *Exempla* are, in fact, nothing other than the outward manifestation of an inner virtuous disposition.

In opposition to the social aspect of true glory, Seneca distinguished two types of false glory. The first type recognizes no social responsibility at all, but rather seeks praise for itself. The lack of a social aspect underlay Seneca's condemnation of this false glory, even when virtue seems to be involved (*Ep.* 113, 32): *... nihil ad rem pertinere quam multi aequitatem tuam noverint. Qui virtutem suam publicari vult non virtuti laborat sed gloriae. Non vis esse iustus sine gloria? At mehercules saepe iustus esse debetis cum infamia, et tunc, si sapis, mala opinio bene parta delectet*, 'it is irrelevant how many people know about your fairness. One who wants his virtue to be publicized is working for glory, not virtue. Are you unwilling to be just without glory? By heaven, you will often have to be just with infamy, and then, if you are wise, you should be pleased with your well-won ill-repute.' (The opposition of *virtus* and *gloria* in this passage shows clearly that Seneca is speaking of false glory or

popularity; the rhetorical flow would have been disrupted by adding the epithet *falsa*.<sup>18</sup>) The intention of the act, then, is the primary determiner: even a potentially virtuous act loses its connection to virtue if the social aspect is absent; the accompanying glory is therefore also corrupted, becoming mere popularity with no connection to virtue. This glory is false because it moves a man to desire popularity for himself rather than recognition for his virtuous deed. The second type of false glory does have a social aspect, but one directly opposed to that of true glory; it provides an *exemplum*, but moves others to false opinion, that is to vice, rather than to virtue. Seneca detailed this process in *Ep.* 94, 54: *Nemo errat uni sibi, sed dementia spargit in proximos accipitque invicem. Et ideo in singulis vitia populorum sunt quia illa populus dedit. Dum facit quisque peiorem, factus est; didicit deteriora, dein docuit, effectaque est ingens illa nequitia congesto in unum quod cuique pessimum scitur*, 'People do not err just for themselves, but they sprinkle folly onto their neighbours, and receive it from them in turn. And so individuals' vices are communal ones, because the community bestowed them. Each person, in making someone worse, becomes worse; he learns greater evil, then teaches it, and that vast mass of wickedness is created by the piling together of the worst known to each individual'. Following a good example is the highest praise, since imitation bestows recognition and approval; following a bad example also suggests recognition and praise. Since it moves to vice, however, this false glory is a positive evil.

In brief, then, Seneca changed the concept of glory which he inherited from Roman society and the Middle Stoa by unifying and interiorizing the foundation of glory, *virtus*, and by introducing the aspect of social responsibility. A detailed examination of the different types of glory which Seneca distinguished, first *claritas*, the glory of virtue in itself, then *gloria*, the praise of a virtuous act by others, and, finally, the opposite of true glory, *fama* or mere popularity, will reveal how Seneca used the new principles he established to clarify the nature and interrelationships of the different aspects of glory.

Seneca furnished the most detailed treatment of *claritas* in *Ep.* 102 by attempting to answer the question whether *claritas* after death is a

<sup>18</sup> For the problem of using ambiguous vocabulary, see above, n.15.

good (*Claritatem quae post mortem contingit bonum esse* § 3).<sup>19</sup> The letter can be divided into three sections: the first (§§ 1–2) serves as an introduction and establishes the theme of the soul's immortality; the second (§§ 3–19) answers unnamed objectors to the above question in § 3 in dialectical fashion; the third (§§20–30) returns to a meditation on the soul.

The second section of this letter provides the Middle Stoic understanding of *claritas* which forms the background for Seneca's own answer in the third section to the proposed question.<sup>20</sup> Although Seneca's denunciation of dialectic in § 20 warns the reader not to dwell on this section, the arguments nevertheless establish three important principles.<sup>21</sup> Seneca first distinguished *claritas* and *gloria*: *gloria*, like *fama*, requires the opinion of many; *claritas* requires the opinion of a single good man, since all good men share the same opinion and hence cannot disagree (*Dissidere non possunt; ita pro eo est ac si omnes idem sentiant, quia aliud sentire non possunt* § 12). An act of virtue implies automatic approval from good men; it does not depend on their recognition, but rather causes them to approve.

The second principle improves on the first: the approval of *claritas* need not even be openly spoken (§ 17): *Fama vocem utique desiderat, claritas potest etiam citra vocem contingere contenta iudicio, plena est non tantum inter tacentis sed etiam inter reclamantis*. Like its

<sup>19</sup> Leeman 1952, 67, maintained that Seneca did not actually answer the objection to this statement. The dialectic section (§§ 3–19) does not, in fact, answer the proposed objection. Seneca, however, strongly dismissed this line of argumentation (§ 20): *Cavillatoribus istis abunde responderimus*, 'This will be an amply sufficient answer to such quibblers'. The objectors are not simply members of an opposing philosophical school; they are 'sophists,' pseudo-philosophers only interested in empty verbiage. *Istis* reinforces this impression with derogatory weight. Given the cursory nature of Seneca's answer to these objectors, the adverb *abunde* is packed with contempt; even the little time given these critics was far more than they deserved. (For further examples of Seneca's contempt for dialectical tricks, see *Epp.* 45. 5; 48. 7–8; 49. 8; 108. 12; 113. 1; 117. 25, 30; in *Ep.* 82. 9 he even condemned Zeno for engaging in such unworthy practices). The answer to the objectors therefore must lie elsewhere in the letter, viz. in the following *meditatio* on immortality. Because of the narrow scope of his article, Leeman missed the significance of the third section of *Ep.* 102 as the proper response to the question of § 3.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of this section in terms of Middle Stoic understanding of glory, see Leeman 1949, 51–8.

<sup>21</sup> Like the Middle Stoics, Seneca maintained the superiority of ethics but used logic and physics to support his moral doctrine.

accompanying virtue *claritas* has no connection with things beyond the control of the man who possesses it; it depends on virtue alone for existence. If outside approval were necessary, silent praise would not suffice. In that case only externally expressed praise would be meaningful, since the deed would otherwise go unnoticed. Since the *sapiens* alone, as the sole possessor of *virtus*, can perform truly virtuous acts, he recognizes and approves his own virtue; since all wise men must approve such deeds, he knows that his virtue will be praised, even if unspoken. Thus virtue elicits approval and praise, but does not depend on this praise to be glorious.

The third principle establishes the mutual benefit conferred by *claritas* on both giver and receiver of praise. A virtuous act moves others to virtue and is therefore a good for them (§ 19): *Est istud laudantium bonum; virtute enim geritur; omnis autem virtutis actio bonum est*. The *exemplum* also explains how *claritas* is a good for the one praised, but in a circuitous way. If the original deed did not exist, the cause of such deeds in others and, as a result, the deeds themselves, would also fail (§ 19): *Hoc contingere illis non potuisset nisi ego talis essem*. The desire for glory, that is the desire to move others to virtue by *exemplum*, inspires the *sapiens* himself to perform these acts and is, consequently, a good for him. Unlike the other two principles, the third shifts emphasis from the glory of virtue to the praise of deeds which manifest virtue. The third section of *Ep.* 102 expands the criticisms of the *cavillatores* into a meditation on the infinite nature of the human soul (*Magna et generosa res est humanus animus; nullos sibi poni nisi communes et cum deo terminos patitur* § 21, ‘The human soul is a great and noble thing; it accepts no limits, except those shared even by god’), leading back to the theme of the introduction. The discussion quickly shifts from the question of immortality itself to the state of the soul after death, the glory which the virtuous soul enjoys (*viz.* the true answer to the question of § 3). The word *claritas* is here abandoned, but the vocabulary keeps the concept continually present and reveals its true nature. Seneca’s speech is full of words connoting brightness and light; the adjective *clarus* predominates.

The same description of the soul’s glory had already surfaced in *Ep.* 21, an attempt to wean Lucilius from the active political life to the leisure of philosophical contemplation by contrasting the different grades of glory conferred by each. The difference is characterized in

terms of light and darkness (§ 2): *Ex hac vita (i.e. politica) ad illam (i.e. philosophicam) ascenditur. Quod interest inter splendorem et lucem, cum haec certam originem habeat ac suam, ille niteat alieno, hoc inter hanc vitam et illam. Haec fulgore extrinsecus veniente percussa est, crassam illi statim umbram faciet quisquis obstiterit; illa suo lumine inlustris est. Studia te tua clarum et nobilem efficient*, 'To go from this way of life to that is a promotion. The difference between these ways of life is the difference between brightness and light: the latter has a secure source, its own, while the former shines with borrowed light. This life is struck by a lustre coming from without, and anyone standing in the way will immediately put it in deep shade; but that life is brilliant with its own light. Your studies will make you resplendent and renowned'. The glory of the philosophical life arises from within the philosopher himself; the political life produces only a secondary, derived glory, since it depends on the crowd, an outside source (*extrinsecus*). Seneca makes his point by a paradox based on word play: *clarus* and *nobilis* are highly charged political terms<sup>22</sup> and also suggest *claritas*. Placement in a rhetorically strong position reinforces the paradox: politics cannot confer even the political glory it promises; since only philosophy can truly give glory, Lucilius must turn to it even if he wants only political glory.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The two terms are socially related and often used together (e.g. Cicero, *leg. agr.* 2. 18–19; *de inv.* 1. 103; *in Verr.* 2. 5. 10; Sallust, *Iug.* 70. 2). *Clarus* was associated with the external signs of power, with fame acquired through activity, whereas *nobilis* was associated with innate conditions of family and heredity; cf. Hellegouarc'h 1972, 227ff. Seneca implied the worthlessness of political fame gained by activity on the state's behalf or by inheritance; for him only the philosophical life (*studia*) brings true fame. For a further discussion of this theme, see D. Vessey, 'The Stoics and Nobility: a Philosophical Theme,' *Latomus* 32 (1973), 332–44.

<sup>23</sup> Seneca illustrated this point by the example of Epicurus and Idomeneus (the example parallels the theme of the letter). Epicurus promised the Persian official greater glory by simply mentioning him in a letter than all the pomp surrounding him at court could give (§ 3): '*Si gloria*' inquit 'tangeris, notiores te epistulae meae facient quam omnia ista quae colis et propter quae coleris.' The politician's glory is fleeting and depends on the success of the moment. Epicurus based his promise on the endurance of the philosopher's glory and virtue. To prod Lucilius, Seneca added (§ 4): *Numquid ergo mentitus est? Quis Idomeneus nosset nisi Epicurus illum litteris suis incidisset?* 'So did he lie? Who would have known about Idomeneus if Epicurus had not inscribed his name in his letters?' Drawing the parallel himself, Seneca later claims the same power over Lucilius (§ 5): *Quod Epicurus amico suo potuit promittere hoc tibi promitto, Lucili: habebō apud posteros gratiam, possum tecum duratura*

*Ep.* 79 also reinforces this description of *claritas* (§ 12): *Tunc animus noster habebit quod gratuletur sibi cum emissus his tenebris in quibus volutatur non tenui visu clara prospexerit, sed totum diem admiserit et redditus caelo suo fuerit, cum receperit locum quem occupavit sorte nascendi. Sursum illum vocant initia sua; erit autem illic etiam antequam hac custodia exsolvatur, cum vitia disiecerit purusque ac levis in cogitationes divinas emicuerit.* ‘Then our soul will have something to congratulate itself on, when it is released from this darkness in which it is immersed, and no longer looks out at bright things with weak vision, but receives the full sunlight and is restored to heaven where it belongs, and regains the place it held at the allotment of birth. Its origins call it upward; but actually it will be there even before it is freed from this prison, when it has cast off vices and flared up, pure and light, into divine thoughts.’ In the immediately preceding passage, Seneca compared those who are content merely being one step better than truly evil men to despisers of daylight—they have no need of eyes (§ 11). In the same way, a man who does not possess virtue cannot appreciate nature’s call to virtue, and so loses his sight in the darkness of this world. Seneca then introduces the above description of the bright state of the soul after death as a contrast to the previous description of earthly darkness. Each human being has been endowed with the spark of divine reason which calls him to virtue and to the glory due to virtue.<sup>24</sup> By maintaining virtue and suppressing vice (*cum vitia disiecerit* § 12), the wise man’s soul, even while living, will shine (*emicuerit*) with the glory reserved for it after death, and will be concerned with divine thoughts, with divine contemplation. The reward of virtue is

*nomina educere.* ‘What Epicurus was able to promise his friend, I promise you, Lucilius: I shall find favour with future generations, I can rescue names to endure with mine.’ Seneca used the example of Epicurus to move from the theoretical promise of virtue’s glory to the practical level—the philosopher will be remembered by future generations, whereas the politician will be forgotten, unless he, in some way, is connected to the philosopher. Lucilius, of course, has no interest in such secondary glory; Seneca tempted him to philosophy by his own power to confer glory, a power which Lucilius will also obtain when he withdraws from the active life. By his *studia*, i.e. by the practice of virtue, the philosopher alone possesses both the glory due to that virtue (*claritas*) and the praise of others as the result of that virtue (*gloria*).

<sup>24</sup> For *logos*, the basic human characteristic, and its relation to *virtus*, see Long 1974, 173–4.

independent of outside recognition; as the result of being born (*sorte nascendi*) the soul must practise virtue. Not to achieve this goal is a perversion of human nature itself, a denial of man's rational nature, making him content with the darkness of the physical world. If a man remains faithful to his 'calling', however, the process begun at birth will have its natural outcome—glory.

Seneca gave this theme its fullest development in the letter under consideration, *Ep.* 102, 28: *Alienus iam hinc altius aliquid sublimius-que meditare: aliquando naturae tibi arcana retegentur, discutietur ista caligo et lux undique clara percutiet. Imaginare tecum quantus ille sit fulgor tot sideribus inter se lumen miscentibus. Nulla serenorum umbra turbabit; aequaliter splendet omne caeli latus: dies et nox aeris infimi vices sunt. Tunc in tenebris vixisse te dices cum totam lucem et totus aspexeris, quam nunc per angustissimas oculorum vias obscure intueris, et tamen admiraris illam iam procul: quid tibi videbitur divina lux cum illam suo loco videris?* 'Estrange yourself from this world even now, and ponder something higher and loftier. Some day nature's secrets will be disclosed to you, your darkness will be dispelled and bright light will strike you from every side. Imagine how strong that radiance must be, with so many heavenly bodies pooling their light. No shadow will disturb the cloudless sky; every quarter of heaven will be equally brilliant; day and night alternate only in the lowest atmosphere. Then you will say you used to live in darkness, when you see the full light with your full perception. Now you look upon it darkly through the very narrow openings of the eyes, and yet you wonder at it even from afar; how will the divine light seem to you when you see it in its own place?' Seneca revealed here what in *Epp.* 21 and 79 had remained beneath the surface. The soul takes its place among the brightness of the stars, the dwelling of the gods. The glory of virtue after death becomes the subject of the *meditatio* thereby moving the *sapiens* to virtue in this life.

A similar description of the afterlife in *ad Marc.* 25, 1–2 (although in a different context), helps complete the picture presented in *Ep.* 102.<sup>25</sup> Once again 'light' terms predominate; as in *Ep.* 102, 28,

<sup>25</sup> Although the *consolatio* genre, with its emphasis on comforting the bereaved, cautions against taking this description as Seneca's literal belief, the passage does follow traditional Stoic lines, even though it adds a purgation period necessary to



the souls of the virtuous (*Coetus sacer, Scipiones Catonesque, interque contemptores vitae et mortis beneficio liberos parens tuus, Marcia* § 2) exist among the stars, the gods' dwelling (*Ille nepotem suum ... adplicat sibi nova luce gaudentem et vicinorum siderum meatus docet* § 2). In this description, however, Seneca also included a step preparatory to the entrance into glory; a soul not entirely free from vice must first be purified before it can enter the realm of the just (§ 1): *Paululum supra nos commoratus, dum expurgatur et inhaerentia vitia situmque omnem mortalis aevi excutit, deinde ad excelsa sublatus inter felices currit animas*, 'after lingering above us briefly, while he was cleansed and shook off the clinging blemishes and stains of human life, he then rose to the heights and soars among the blessed spirits'. This description may, of course, be merely a necessary touch in the *consolatio* to grant Marcia's son, surely not yet a *sapiens*, a place among the Stoic sages and, consequently, with his grandfather. In constructing this intermediate step, however, Seneca clarified the relationship between *virtus* and *claritas*. The entire *post mortem* process is simple cause and effect; no agent detains the soul for purification and then confers glory as a reward. The soul of a man who dies before attaining full virtue must then be rid of all vices and remains of mortality. Having achieved this state, the soul proceeds immediately to the upper regions where it enjoys the light of glory due its newly acquired virtue. The process of purification parallels the description of the wise man's meditation (*Ep.* 79, 12) which frees him from vice and allows him to share in the same future glory. The brightness of glory among the stars, then, follows as a natural consequence of virtue; it is the glory of virtue itself, apart from all outside recognition.

The athlete metaphor of *Ep.* 78, 16 clinches this identification. The athlete undergoes torments and blows for glory; the *sapiens* suffers similar blows from Fortune, but does not expect similar human recognition. His reward, however, is not presented simply as a higher or a different type of glory from that of the athlete; it is nothing other

admit Marcia's son to the company of the *sapientes*. For the question of the immortality of the soul in Stoicism, see Long 1974, 213, n. 2; R. Hoven, *Stoïcisme et Stoïcien face au problème de l'au-delà* (Paris, 1971); A. L. Motto, 'Seneca on Death and Immortality,' *CJ* 50 (1954–55), 187–9.

than virtue itself: *Nos quoque evincamus omnia, quorum praemium non corona nec palma est nec tubicen praedicationi nominis nostri silentium faciens, sed virtus et firmitas animi et pax in ceterum parta*, 'Let us too overcome all challenges: our reward is not a crown or a palm or a trumpeter calling for silence so our names can be proclaimed, but virtue and steadfastness of soul and peace won for all time'. Virtue is the glory of the wise man. When considered in itself, virtue contains its own glory and therefore needs no outside recognition. The wise men who praise virtue do not thereby confer glory. On the contrary, virtue necessarily compels praise from the *sapiens*.

The constant presence of terms designating light in these descriptions of glory after death, and its role in the third part of *Ep.* 102, show that Seneca apparently considered this glory of virtue the proper meaning of *claritas*; his *meditatio* on the nature of the soul after death answered and corrected his opponents by a more elevated means than dialectic. He also described *claritas* in greater detail than his Middle Stoic predecessors had done. How then is this *claritas* a good, that is something which can and should be sought after, when it occurs after death? Since *claritas* is simply an aspect of *virtus*, the soul that enjoys this state of glory after death really possesses the same virtue which was a good during his life. *Claritas* is also a good during one's lifetime. The act of *meditatio* offers a limited share in the glorious vision of the virtuous soul after death, a vision which inspires the desire for glory and stimulates the practice of the virtue which will ensure it (*Ep.* 102, 29): *Haec cogitatio nihil sordidum animo subsidere sinit, nihil humile, nihil crudele*, 'Such thinking permits nothing squalid to settle in the soul, nothing ignoble, nothing cruel'. Through meditating on this glorious reward the *sapiens* is moved to suppress vice and to cultivate virtue, thus becoming a good for him.

*Gloria* proper, the acclaim which follows upon virtue, is really only a different aspect of glory, differing from *claritas* only in the source of praise: the source of the latter is internal, whereas that for the former is external. The end of *Ep.* 102 provides a bridge between these two forms of glory. From his lyrical vision of the soul after death, Seneca turned, almost as an afterthought, to those who do not believe in the immortality of the soul (*Is quoque qui animum tamdiu iudicat manere quamdiu retinetur corporis vinculo, solutum statim spargi, id agit ut*

*etiam post mortem utilis esse possit* § 30, ‘Even the belief that the soul survives only as long as it is kept fettered in the body, but is dispersed once released, means that the soul can still be useful after death’).<sup>26</sup> For a complete answer to his objectors, he must also accommodate those of the opposite opinion and show that, even if the soul does not survive, glory after death is a good. The solution, once again, is virtue, this time not considered in itself, but in relationship to others and expressed in the *exemplum* (§ 30): *Cogita quantum nobis exempla bona prosint: scies magnorum virorum non minus praesentiam esse utilem quam memoriam*, ‘Think how helpful good examples are to us: you will realize that the memory of great men is no less useful than their presence’. The thought that his example will inspire others to virtue serves the same purpose as meditation on *claritas*, viz. it moves the *sapiens* to execute virtuous deeds and is thus a good after death by anticipation. The glory, that is the following of the *exemplum*, comes after his death, but the wise man, by meditation, enjoys that glory while he still lives.

Since it depends on the praise of others, however, *gloria* cannot in itself be a good, and therefore cannot be desired in itself. True glory, however, does not have an independent existence; it always accompanies virtue (*Ep.* 79, 13): *Gloria umbra virtutis est: etiam invitam comitabitur*, ‘Glory is virtue’s shadow: it will accompany her, even against her will.’<sup>27</sup> Unlike *claritas*, *gloria* cannot be equated with virtue; virtue is solid and substantial, whereas *gloria*, like a shadow, is really nothing, owing its entire existence to its subject. Once virtue is removed, *gloria* ceases to exist.

This secondary status of *gloria* also results from its external nature; the danger of degenerating into a desire for self-praise is always

<sup>26</sup> The end of *Ep.* 102 returns to the theme of the introduction where Seneca admitted that the soul’s immortality is worthy of belief but not able to be proved (§ 3): *Praebebam enim me facilem opinionibus magnorum virorum rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium*.

<sup>27</sup> Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* 1. 109) had already employed a similar expression: *Gloria . . . virtutem tamquam umbra sequitur*, ‘glory . . . follows virtue like a shadow’. For the Middle Stoic source of this phrase, see Leeman 1949, 58–60. The opposition in *Ep.* 79 between glory following upon virtue and the transitory nature of popular fame, symbolized by Mt. Etna, through which, as the subject of his poem, Lucilius hoped to gain the acclaim of the masses (§ 10), illustrates the ‘interiorizing’ shift of Seneca’s philosophy, which distinguishes Seneca’s use of this phrase from Cicero’s political meaning.

present. Violating the delicate balance between virtue and glory transforms a potential good into a positive evil, viz. false opinion concerning an *adiaphoron*. Seneca stressed this secondary nature of *gloria* in *Ep.* 79; although *gloria* always accompanies *virtus*, since there will always be men who strive for virtue by imitating the deeds of the *sapiens*, yet contemporary jealousy may cause a delay (§ 13): *Sed quemadmodum aliquando umbra antecedit, aliquando sequitur vel a tergo est, ita gloria aliquando ante nos est visendamque se praebet, aliquando in averso est maiorque quo serior, ubi invidia secessit*, ‘But just as a shadow sometimes precedes, sometimes follows or is on the far side, so glory is sometimes in front of us and plainly visible, sometimes behind—and all the greater for coming later, when jealousy has departed’. Jealousy kept even the greatest wise men, Democritus, Socrates, Cato, Rutilius and especially Epicurus, obscure during their lives. They certainly enjoyed *claritas* since, as wise men, they truly practised virtue and this virtue was glorious in itself. Recognition of this virtue, however, since it is something outside the control of the wise man, may not come so immediately, but it must eventually come, since virtue and glory are inseparable. Such a delay should not frustrate the desire to instruct by a virtuous *exemplum*; on the contrary, the thought of the nearly infinite future generations combined with the promise of eventual recognition should encourage us all the more (§ 17): *Multa annorum milia, multa populorum supervenient: ad illa respice. Etiam si omnibus tecum viventibus silentium livor indixerit, venient qui sine offensa, sine gratia indicent*. The present age has only a finite number of people to praise our virtuous acts; future generations will provide an unlimited supply, and our virtue will thereby receive all the more glory. Even jealousy cannot last forever: when it passes, there will be generations enough to supplant the few jealous persons of the present. Nor should the length of the delay be of concern (§ 17): *Si quod est pretium virtutis ex fama, nec hoc interit*. Since virtue never ceases to exist, its companion, glory, is also indestructible.

Seneca goes on in *Ep.* 79 to show how easily *gloria* can become false glory. If the aspect of social responsibility inherent in true glory is lost and popularity, instead of virtue, becomes the goal of an act, the false copy of virtue results (§ 18): *Nulli non virtus et vivo et mortuo rettulit gratiam, si modo illam bona secutus est fide, si se non exornavit*

*et pinxit, sed idem fuit sive ex denuntiatio videbatur sive inparatus ac subito*, ‘Virtue has never failed to reward anyone both in life and after death, provided that he followed her faithfully, and did not enhance or embellish himself but remained the selfsame person, whether observed with advance notice or suddenly and unprepared’. Thus deprived of its foundation, *gloria* reverts to its status as *adiaphoron*; the desire to obtain such an *adiaphoron*, that is the opinion that it is good and worthy to be sought after, reveals an incorrect attitude toward indifferent things and is, therefore, vice. Because it tends to encourage such false opinions and desires, the *adiaphoron* glory is often called by the uncomplimentary term *fama*. Without the foundation of virtue, only the shadow of the former good remains (§ 18): *Quae decipiunt nihil habent solidi*, ‘That which deceives us has no real substance’.

By combining the Roman ideal of glory, Stoic doctrine, and his own ‘philosophy of the interior’, Seneca produced a new understanding of and approach to the basic human need for praise. He first redefined civic *virtus* in terms of the Stoic *summum bonum*, suppressing its former political connotation. *Gloria* thus became the reward for manifesting a correct interior disposition toward the *adiaphora*. Seneca also provided a new standard for distinguishing true glory from false—social responsibility, expressed by the *exemplum*. The *sapiens* desires to bring his virtue to public notice not for his own sake, but to provide an example to move others to virtue, even in later generations. By redefining *virtus* Seneca also removed the Middle Stoic distinction between *kleos/claritas* and *doxa/gloria*; the two became different aspects of the same glory due Stoic *virtus*. *Claritas*, the glory of virtue considered in itself, received greater importance and more attention than it had from the Middle Stoics; *gloria*, the praise bestowed by those following the virtuous *exemplum*, replaced and interiorized the Middle Stoic political *doxa*. *Fama*, or false glory, resulted when the social aspect of true glory was lost. Seneca thus preserved the ultimate importance of *virtus* and correct opinion without prejudice to the Roman desire for glory. By taking advantage of the ambiguity which resulted from using the same words with changed meanings, Seneca could incorporate glory into his rhetoric of conversion in his effort to win his fellow Romans over the practice of virtue, the true goal of life.

---

## Seneca and Slavery

*K. R. Bradley*

My object in this short essay is to examine two texts from Seneca on the subject of slavery: *Ben.* 3.18–28 and *Ep.* 47. The starting-point of the original discussion published in 1986 was what I thought twenty years ago to be an idealistic interpretation of these texts in V. Sørensen's general study of Seneca (Sørensen 1984), the character of which is conveyed by its subtitle: 'The Humanist at the Court of Nero'. Seneca's remarks on slavery were not only taken there as enlightened and humane (as many times before), but also invoked to support a thesis that Seneca's discovery of the humanity of the individual was important for and relevant to contemporary humanistic thinking (Sørensen 1984, 316–29). This seemed to me to pay insufficient attention to the historical context in which the remarks were made and especially to the nature of Roman slavery itself. The realities of slavery were also underestimated, I thought, even in M. T. Griffin's more cautious discussion of Seneca on slavery in her standard work on the complex relationship of Seneca's writings to his life (Griffin 1976, 256–85). Today the starting-point appears time-bound and there is no need to repeat old objections or to engage in polemic. Balanced views are now available in another general study of Seneca (Veyne 2003, 137–45) and in an important book that examines Greek and Roman responses to slavery across a long interval of time (Garnsey 1996). I still hold, however, to the main

I am very grateful to John Fitch for inviting me contribute to this volume and offer the essay as a token of all I learned from him during our many years as colleagues at the University of Victoria.

(interrelated) points of the original article: first that Seneca cannot in any modern sense be considered liberal in his attitude to slavery, and secondly that on any objective view the apparently generous treatment of slaves advocated was essentially self-serving, no matter what the degree of self-consciousness concerned. I retain here accordingly the core of the original discussion and conclude with a collection of references to other passages in Seneca's works that in my view support it.<sup>1</sup>

Seneca aims in *Ben.* 3.18–28 to prove the contention that the slave has the capacity to confer on his master a *beneficium*, a kindness or favour. The contention is awkward because a *beneficium*, a kindness conferred voluntarily or selflessly (*Ben.* 3.18.1; 19.1; 21.2), seems at first sight incompatible with the condition of slavery, which forces the slave when acting on his master's behalf to do so out of compulsion—because of the obligation imposed by his social inferiority to and powerlessness before his owner. On a standard view the slave cannot perform a *beneficium*, only a *ministerium*, a service or a duty:

ministerium esse servi quem condicio sua eo loco posuit ut nihil eorum quae praestat imputet superiori.

(*Ben.* 3.18.1)<sup>2</sup>

beneficium enim id est quod quis dedit cum illi liceret et non dare. servus autem non habet negandi potestatem; ita non praestat, sed paret, nec id se fecisse iactat quod non facere non potuit.

(*Ben.* 3.19.1)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Garnsey 1996 is now the standard resource for Greek and Roman attitudes towards slavery, but Davis 1966, 62–90, and Milani 1972 can still be consulted; cf. Bradley 1997. For the philosophical background to Seneca's view in particular see Richter 1958, Brunt 1973, and Griffin 1976. Sørensen apart, Richter argued that Seneca was motivated by a genuine social conscience and that he helped create a value-system which has direct links to the eighteenth century and beyond; cf. Vogt 1975, 138–9. Griffin is much more judicious, but (1976, 275) 'Seneca's pronouncements on slavery are justly admired'. For representative examples, see Summers 1910, 210, Westermann 1955, 116, MacL. Currie 1972, 48–9, Grimal 1978, 182. The translations given in what follows are those of J. W. Basore and R. M. Gummere in the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>2</sup> 'a service is contributed by a slave, whose condition has placed him in such a position that nothing that he can bestow gives him a claim upon his superior.'

<sup>3</sup> 'For a benefit is something that some person has given when it was also within his power not to give it. But a slave does not have the right to refuse; thus he does not

Yet Seneca proves his point (to his own satisfaction at least) by a double argument. First he maintains theoretically that the power relationship between slave and master is no greater a barrier to the performance of *beneficia* by the inferior party than in the case of king and subject or general and common soldier. Since the subject and the common soldier can perform *beneficia* for the king and general, so too the slave for the master (*Ben.* 3.18.3). Secondly, more realistically, he presents historical examples of slaves who had performed actions on their masters' behalf which far transcended the limits of the *ministerium* and in which the element of the voluntary and selfless was so great that the actions have to be defined as *beneficia* (*Ben.* 3.23.1–27.4). A slave therefore can perform a *beneficium* and in so doing assumes the status of a human being (*homo*, *Ben.* 3.22.3), distinct that is from the status of a slave:

quidquid est quod servilis officii formulam excedit, quod non ex imperio sed ex voluntate praestatur, beneficium est, si modo tantum est ut hoc vocari potuerit quolibet alio praestante.

(*Ben.* 3.21.2)<sup>4</sup>

The argument is flawed, first because the three power relationships Seneca compares are not truly analogous, and secondly because Seneca exaggerates the slave's capacity to refuse to obey his master and his reluctance to act against the state's interest or for any criminal purpose (*Ben.* 3.20.2–21.2). But as he fashions the argument Seneca makes certain assumptions that suggest on his part a genuine sympathy for the slave. He contends that a *beneficium* is not characterized by the social status of the person conferring it but by the person's intention in so doing. All humans have the potential to demonstrate *virtus* and to confer a benefit is to demonstrate *virtus* (*Ben.* 3.18.2–4). Through this construct a kind of equality of the spirit among humankind is achieved because virtue knows no boundaries but is available to all. Such a doctrine was not new to Seneca but had long

confer but merely obeys, and he takes no credit for what he has done because it was not possible for him to fail to do it.'

<sup>4</sup> 'All that he does in excess of what is prescribed as the duty of a slave, what he supplies, not from obedience to authority, but from his own desire, will be a benefit, provided that its importance, if another person were supplying it, would entitle it to that name.'



been a central Stoic tenet. Nevertheless his statement on the common availability of *virtus*, including its availability to the slave, is remarkable:

nulli praecclusa virtus est; omnibus patet, omnis admittit, omnis invitat, et ingenuos et libertinos et servos et reges et exules; non eligit domum nec censum, nudo homine contenta est.

(*Ben.* 3.18.2)<sup>5</sup>

This notion of equality is then given a physical dimension and an additional moral aspect as Seneca observes that all human beings enter the world in the same way and come from the same stock. Further, everyone is subject to slavery of some sort: the slave-owner may be 'enslaved' by lust or gluttony or by some other unnatural extravagance (*Ben.* 3.28.1; 4–5). It thus becomes possible to see a concern for the worth of the individual as an individual even if the individual is a slave. Slavery is a condition of the body only, whereas the human mind can transcend physical bondage and exercise for good that freedom of the spirit which is beyond subjection (*Ben.* 3.20.1–2, *interior illa pars mancipio dari non potest*).<sup>6</sup> The services of the individual slave therefore should not be despised because of the slave's status. Instead they should be seen to ennoble the slave. It is arrogance (*insolentia*) to think otherwise (*Ben.* 3.28.1–29.1).

In *Ep.* 47 Seneca makes a general argument for the lenient treatment of slaves. At one level the text reads as an indictment of the cruelty and degradation to which slaves in Roman society were customarily subjected: slaves are physically punished for disturbing the silence of the master's dinner, have to clean up his vomit after a heavy meal, and are exposed to sexual abuse (*Ep.* 47.3–7). The details specified could be dismissed as rhetorical exaggeration, except that innumerable items of independent evidence confirm them as realistic. There is no need consequently to doubt the validity of Seneca's advocacy of avoiding cruelty in the way slaves were treated.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 'Virtue closes the door to no man; it is open to all, admits all, invites all, the freeborn and the freedman, the slave and the king, and the exile; neither family nor fortune determines its choice—it is satisfied with the naked human being.'

<sup>6</sup> 'that inner part [that] cannot be delivered into bondage.'

<sup>7</sup> For examples of random abuse of slaves see Hopkins 1978, 118–22; cf. Bradley 1987, 113–37.

Several statements in *Ep.* 47 complement ideas already seen in *Ben.* 3.18–28. Seneca begins (*Ep.* 47.1) by breaking down what he can take as an artificial distinction between slave and free, and he insists again that all human beings share a common origin and a common mortality; it is simply an accident of fate that some are slaves and others free (*Ep.* 47.10). Individual fortunes may change—slavery might replace freedom as happened with the Augustan general Varus—but even the free can often be seen to be slaves of passion or luxury (*Ep.* 47.9–10; 17). A person's true worth should thus be judged not according to the criterion of rank or condition but of moral standing:

non ministeriis illos aestimabo sed moribus: sibi quisque dat mores, ministeria casus adsignat.

(*Ep.* 47.15)<sup>8</sup>

In any case slavery is no impediment to the slave's achievement of freedom of the spirit (*Ep.* 47.17).

The forcefulness of Seneca's views cannot be denied. As Griffin puts it, Seneca 'pleaded a powerful case for the humane treatment of slaves ... For Seneca does not merely condemn cruelty. He asks that slaves be regarded as individuals with different moral capacities, as potential friends ...' (Griffin 1976, 256). The question that must be asked, however, is what dictated or controlled this attitude. What was the source of Senecan *humanitas*? One answer could be found by tracing the philosophical roots of Seneca's views, but my interest lies more in the connection between his remarks and the social reality of slavery in the world in which he lived. I assume in following this connection that Seneca's statements on slavery are genuine expressions of opinion, not conventional platitudes.

The call for fair treatment of slaves might have arisen from a true belief in human equality on Seneca's part, from a concern for the worth of the individual *qua* individual and from recognizing the essential humanity of the slave. But if so it did not lead to what now seems the ultimately logical conclusion: a call for an end to slavery. All that Seneca sought was that slaves should show a respectful, loving attitude towards their owners:

<sup>8</sup> 'I propose to value them according to their character, and not according to their duties. Each man acquires his character for himself, but accident assigns his duties.'

dicet aliquis nunc me vocare ad pileum servos et dominos de fastigio suo deicere, quod dixi, 'colant potius dominum quam timeant'. 'Ita' inquit 'prorsus? colant tamquam clientes, tamquam salutatores?' hoc qui dixerit obliviscetur id dominis parum non esse quod deo sat est. qui colitur, et amatur: non potest amor cum timore misceri.

(*Ep.* 47.18).<sup>9</sup>

At *Tranq.* 8.8–9 Seneca argues that self-reliance is an impossible ideal, so that for a person of his social rank slaves are unavoidably necessary. He recommends that the slave-owner should rely on as small a number of slaves as possible, but it is clear that ending slavery never presented itself to him as a viable possibility. For those who see Seneca as enlightened and liberal, especially if associations are postulated between ancient and modern thought on the abolition of slavery, this failure can seem almost a disappointment. Yet there is no need for disappointment if concern for the plight of the slave *qua* slave, or even as a fellow member of the human race, is not taken as the source of Senecan *humanitas*. This seems the correct view once the 'humanitarian' remarks are properly contextualized.<sup>10</sup>

An obvious but nonetheless important point to make is that Seneca's remarks on slavery were not addressed to an audience of slaves. Seneca was not preaching a gospel of spiritual or social equality to those of inferior standing at Rome. Some slaves of course were well-educated (cf. *Ben.* 3.21.2) and could become involved in the practice and teaching of philosophy. Epictetus is a prime example. But it is unlikely that the vast majority of Roman slaves, whether domestic servants or agricultural labourers, had much opportunity, or perhaps much inclination, to hear and adopt the lofty Stoic ideals of brotherhood Seneca advanced. His own rural labourer Felicio,

<sup>9</sup> 'Some may maintain that I am now offering the liberty-cap to slaves in general and toppling down lords from their high estate, because I bid slaves respect their masters instead of fearing them. They say: "This is what he plainly means: slaves are to pay respect as if they were clients or early-morning callers!" Anyone who holds this opinion forgets that what is enough for a god cannot be too little for a master. Respect means love, and love and fear cannot be mingled.'

<sup>10</sup> On the lack of abolitionist thought see Milani 1972, 221; Griffin 1976, 257 (but I question whether 'deliberately avoided' is the right way to put it). Modern scholarly admiration for Seneca does not always recognise the plain statement from Davis 1966, 62: 'from the ancient world we find no assertion that slavery was an intolerable evil that should be eradicated by any civilized nation.'

a man who had apparently grown old in slavery, does not spring to mind as a representative of Seneca's audience or readership (*Ep.* 12.3). Rather Seneca addressed himself to an audience of social peers, in the first instance to Aebutius Liberalis and Lucilius Iunior, the respective addressees of the two texts concerned, men both of equestrian status, wealth, and education, and in the second instance to others like them. (One view is that through Lucilius Seneca speaks in the *Moral Epistles* at large to an *alter ego*.) It was an upper-class audience Seneca aimed to convince of the slave's ability to confer *beneficia* and to urge towards mild treatment of slaves. But why?<sup>11</sup>

At Rome as in all slave societies the power differential between slave and free created tensions. Seneca clearly understood the differential (*Ben.* 3.18.1) and the fears and insecurities that slave-owning engendered among the ruling elite. At *Clem.* 1.24.1 he reports that the senate once considered a proposal that slaves should wear distinctive dress but dismissed it because the danger to free society it represented was quickly recognized: slaves who were dressed the same way would become threateningly aware of their strength of numbers (cf. *Ep.* 47.5). In stating that a *beneficium* from a slave was rare and unexpected (*Ben.* 3.19.4) Seneca also makes clear his awareness that slaves could not naturally or generically be expected to have their owners' interests at heart. Slavery after all was a hard condition to bear (*Ben.* 3.19.4), and the slave's obedience to the slave-owner could not be merely assumed. His problem therefore was that of any slave-owner: how were tensions between slave and free to be defused, and how was servile compliance to the will of the owner to be achieved? Absent any notion of a radical alteration of the social structure, Seneca resisted the common recourse to violence as a means of rendering slaves submissive in favour of achieving the same result through a token recognition of their humanity.

Seneca's advice to the slave-owner is to treat the slave as the owner would like to be treated by his own superior: 'haec tamen praecepti mei summa est: sic cum inferiore vivas quemadmodum tecum superiorem velis vivere' (*Ep.* 47.11).<sup>12</sup> Further, the power relationship

<sup>11</sup> On Seneca's addressees see Griffin 1976, 91, 94, 455–6. For the *alter ego* see Russell 1974, 75.

<sup>12</sup> 'But this is the kernel of my advice: Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters.'

governed by the slave's fear of cruelty should be replaced by one governed by the slave's gratitude for lenience. The message is practical, and (it must be said) full of self-interest for Seneca and his audience, because the servile compliance and resignation sought were at the level of everyday social relations the keys to making the slavery system from which the socially elite benefited most continue to work. Seneca's writings on slavery therefore cannot be regarded as disinterested statements on the common humanity of all humankind but have to be understood as a plea for the creation of social harmony between slave and free for the sake of maintaining slavery. To concede the worth of an individual slave was not to weaken or erode slavery as an institution. On the contrary, in its practicality it was a strategy comparable to and consistent with the solutions to the problem of controlling slaves outlined by Varro (*Rust.* 1.17; 2.10) and Columella (*Rust.* 1.7–8) in their handbooks on estate management.

Two supporting arguments may be made. First, at *Ben.* 3.23.1–27 Seneca presents a string of anecdotes ranging in time from the Social War to his own day which illustrate servile *beneficia*:

dedit aliquis domino suo vitam, dedit mortem, servavit periturum et, hoc si parum est, pereundo servavit; alius mortem domini adiuvit, alius decepit.

(*Ben.* 3.23.1).<sup>13</sup>

Such heroic acts were exceptional. But to Seneca a slave who was sufficiently faithful to his master to endanger his own life or to assist his master to die is clearly the ideal slave, a type that all owners should aspire to producing in their households (cf. *Ep.* 47.4). The way to do so is for the slave-owner to replace cruelty with lenience and to substitute overbearing pride with a pleasant demeanour: 'colant potius te quam timeant' (*Ep.* 47.17).<sup>14</sup> As such the instruction and its object are based on a conservative desire to preserve the structure of society unchanged and on a reactionary assumption (again) that the slave who is prepared to suffer for the slave-owner is the type of slave who is most desirable. There is little here therefore of the liberal and humane. To the ordinary slave who was compelled

<sup>13</sup> 'One gave to his master life, one gave death, one saved him when he was about to perish, and, if this is not enough, one saved him by perishing himself; another helped his master to die, another baffled his desire.'

<sup>14</sup> 'They ought to respect you rather than fear you.'

to accompany his owner on a journey, to minister to him when sick, or to work his land (*Ben.* 3.19.1), to the slave who had to clean up the vomit or subject himself to his master's lust, it can have been a dubious consolation to know that if he sacrificed his life for his owner he would thereby earn a share of Stoic *virtus*. Secondly, at *Clem.* 1.16.2 Seneca lists a sequence of conventional asymmetrical relationships from his society which all involve superior and inferior partners and which he calls, significantly, *imperia*, both *magna* and *minora*: those between emperor and subjects, father and children, teacher and pupils, officer and common soldiers—structures of authority which Seneca has no cause at all to question. Indeed his point in this passage is that all the relationships are best served if the superior party applies *clementia* to the inferior party, a common element in his thought (Griffin 1976, 168–9, 258–9, 261). The examples recall the comparison at *Ben.* 3.18.3 of the master–slave relationship with the relationships between king and subject and general and soldier. Obviously Seneca supported the traditional structures of authority in Roman society and society's foundation upon them, and (again) believed that the master–slave relationship was in no greater need of substantive change than any of the other forms of power arrangement he saw around him. The only question was how best to preserve it. Slavery as an institution was not evil as Seneca saw it. All that he perceived was an abuse of authority by some slave-owners counterproductive to the maintenance of the system as a whole—and to the moral health of the slave-owners concerned. This is evident from the distinction he draws between the punishment of slaves he regards as acceptable and the punishment of slaves he regards as cruel. The latter was to be avoided, but there was nothing wrong with the former. At *Clem.* 1.18.1–2 he introduces the notorious Vedius Pollio as an illustration of the archetypal cruel slave-owner, a man who (reportedly) punished his slaves by feeding them to his man-eating fish. Seneca condemns viciousness of this sort but finds nothing objectionable in the slave-owner's moderate chastisement of the slave. At *Ira* 3.23.1–3 he recommends that a slave should not be punished when the owner is upset in the heat of the moment, but only when anger has subsided and a proper course of action can be found. There is nothing wrong then in giving a lighter beating than would otherwise have been the case (*flagris levioribus*),

and again the owner's power (*potestas*) over the slave is not questioned (*Ira* 3.32.2). It does not concern him that the difference between a light beating and a not so light beating depends on subjective and arbitrary criteria, any more than what the slave who was flogged might have considered 'evil'. Above all beating itself raised no problems for him.

Seneca's prime concern was indeed with the slave-owner not the slave. He was not a Jeffersonian prototype whose egalitarian ideals and ownership of slaves led to a guilt-stricken conscience. The brotherhood of which he wrote was that of a common origin and common fate, of a possible equality of the spirit, but not of equality in the world of everyday social reality, the hierarchical character of which he sought to advance. The doctrine of brotherhood and equality was designed to prevent slave-owners' excessive cruelty (however understood) in case owners should one day become slaves themselves and be treated comparably, and because the Stoic sage was supposed to avoid all forms of excess for the sake of his own moral well-being. As Brunt puts it, 'On the strict Stoic view ill-treatment of others harmed the agent who suffered in the soul, rather than the victim who only lost those external advantages which in the last analysis were not goods at all; his virtue and therefore his blessedness, were unimpaired, and at worst he could find refuge in death . . . Stoics were concerned rather with the moral evil involved in injustice than with the sufferings of the slaves' (Brunt 1973: 18). Stoicism in this formulation offered a very comfortable and comforting set of teachings to slave-owners.

That Senecan *humanitas* 'served to reinforce the institution [sc. of slavery], not to weaken it' (Finley 1980, 121) seems to me the correct view. Yet it cannot quite be true that Seneca's counsel against brutality 'preached obedience to the slave', nor does it seem accurate to me to impute to him the view that 'the slave should concentrate on his spiritual development, cultivate a willing attitude, and suppress indignation at his lot' (Finley 1980, 121; cf. Griffin 1976, 260). For those who adopted Seneca's advice—it is impossible of course to measure the extent of its influence—and who sought servile submission through the application of self-interested lenience, such an effect may well have been achieved. If questioned Seneca himself may well have said that the slave should 'suppress indignation at his lot'. But my point is that the question did not and could not arise because

Seneca's concern was not to alleviate slaves' hardships for their own sake and did not speak to slaves directly. His position is very different from that of New Testament teaching in which the doctrine of 'Slaves obey your masters with fear and trembling' was an unambiguously direct address to slaves to display obedience and to acquiesce without any challenge to earthly realities. Seneca did not go that far. His readership as I have noted was far more restricted than that of early Christian teachers. Consequently if in the two texts at issue the facade of apparent enlightenment is stripped away, their author emerges as a conventional representative of his peer group, who shared with them a common view of the need for slavery, and from whom under the prevailing conditions of antiquity any interest in the amelioration or eradication of slavery can hardly be expected. Seneca perhaps was more sensitive than some to displays of senseless cruelty, which he could stamp as bestial (*Clem.* 1.25.1), but this did not make him unique.<sup>15</sup>

In summary: first, Seneca's advocacy of fair treatment for slaves was not disinterested but was intended to achieve Stoic moderation among slave-owners so that any benefit that accrued to the slave was purely subsidiary. Secondly, once his paradigm of the ideal slave is duly recognized—the slave who will willingly suffer death or torture for the master's sake—Seneca's views must be seen as statements intended to convert that ideal into reality through the dissemination of the doctrine of moderation among elite slave-owners. Thirdly, given the absence in antiquity of abolitionist ideas and his demonstrable concern with preserving the social status quo, Seneca cannot be regarded as an enlightened or humane forerunner of modern liberal reformers. Fourthly, his views on slavery were in fact essentially manipulative, deeply rooted in the conservatism of the Roman ruling class to which he belonged.

<sup>15</sup> The favour in which Seneca's views on slavery have traditionally been held might be attributable to the assumption on the part of scholars that his ideas were widely heard and acted on in antiquity. But once Seneca's audience is understood not to have included a slave element of any consequence, there is little justification for believing that a doctrine of clemency towards inferiors somehow must represent a progressive historical trend. During his period of political prominence under Nero, Seneca made little or no legislative impact on the lives of Rome's slave population, as Griffin 1976, 278–84, shows.



What I now find striking as I consider the many comments on and allusions to slavery in Seneca's moral writings in general is the lack of challenge the institution presented to him. The slave is an absolute chattel (*Ben.* 7.4.4), an animal-like property to be managed (or ruled) with rewards and punishments (*Ira* 3.37.2; *Ep.* 94.1; *Marc.* 10.6), naturally associated with disposal, obedience, and service (*Const. Sap.* 3.2; cf. *Ben.* 1.2.5), existing above all in a state of subjection to compulsion (*Ep.* 61.3, *partem acerbissimam servitutis*, 'the bitterest part of slavery'), or in a kind of living death from which he will do anything to escape—saving money by going hungry for example (*Ep.* 77.18; 80.4). The edifying story of the Spartan boy who killed himself rather than submit to slavery is valued (*Ep.* 77.14), but it causes him no disquiet that a slave criminal should be burned alive (*Ep.* 86.10). The number of functions domestic slaves can fill in a large, ostentatious household—a *formonsa familia* (*Ep.* 41.7)—of the sort a man of his station normally expected to have (*Tranq.* 1.8; *Helv.* 10.3; 12.2; cf. *Brev.* 12.5–6) and that he had himself (*Ep.* 83.4; 123.1–2, 4: cook, baker, masseurs, bath attendant, personal trainer, major-domo) is limitless: restraining the sick and insane, serving as *cinerarius*, *nomenclator*, *cubicularius*, *ianitor*, *ostiarius*, well-dressed waiter at table, litter-bearer, masseur (*Const. Sap.* 13.3, 14.1–2; *Vit. Beat.* 17.2; *Ep.* 17.3; cf. *Tranq.* 12.6; *Ben.* 1.3.10; *Ep.* 43.4). But the slave is a burden to the owner (*Tranq.* 8.8), to be fed and maintained (*Ep.* 17.3), with a tendency to run away (*Ep.* 107.7), in need of punishment (*Brev.* 3.2). Moderate punishment is laudable as seen above (*Clem.* 1.18.1), but flogging when the slave makes too much noise at dinner (*Ira* 3.35.1–2) or when the master is reviewing his accounts (*Ep.* 122.15) is normative. The slave's inadequacies, even accidents that befall him, provoke the slave-owner to anger (*Ira* 2.25.1; 2.25.3), which in turn can motivate the slave to run away or even commit suicide (*Ira* 3.4.4). The slave has to anticipate the slave-owner's response to his behaviour therefore and adjust accordingly (*Ira* 3.24.2). He might be forced to eat only meagre rations of food (*Ep.* 18.8) or ordered to tiptoe around the house in silence to avoid disturbing an insomniac owner (*Ep.* 56.7), required (again as already noted) even to help a master kill himself (*Ep.* 77.7). It causes no concern that a slave might jump from a roof and kill himself to evade the taunts of a dyspeptic owner or fall on the sword to avoid

recapture after running away (*Ep.* 4.4). The slave is essentially an enemy, always involved in plots to kill his master (*Ep.* 18.14; 4.8; 77.6; 80.9). Columella (*Rust.* 3.3.3) and Lactantius (*Inst.* 5.9.19) both had a high regard for Seneca as a moral commentator. But it is difficult on this evidence to find anything to substantiate a view of him as progressive in his social thinking (to the extent that the concept is relevant to antiquity). The astonishing number of comments and allusions indicates above all the structural embeddedness of slavery in Roman society and culture, on which Seneca is to my mind an intriguing and frustrating source of knowledge: intriguing because he reveals so much, frustrating because despite his social perspicuity (even sensitivity), slavery never emerges in his writings as a problem.

---

## The Dating of Seneca's Tragedies, with Special Reference to *Thyestes*

R. G. M. Nisbet

Seneca's tragedies are notoriously difficult to date.<sup>1</sup> They are sometimes included in special subjects on Neronian literature, but according to the preface of Tarrant's *Agamemnon* (1976, 7), they might equally well be regarded as Claudian, Gaian, or even Tiberian. I have not myself been able to attain a level of scepticism that Tarrant in his *Thyestes* has now abandoned (1985, 10), but one must remain conscious at every turn that there are few certainties in this debate. In the first section of this paper much of the material is tralatitian, but I have tried to identify the more important arguments and to put the emphasis my own way. In the later sections some of the observations on *Thyestes* may be less familiar.

### 1. THE CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

It will be convenient to divide the reign of Claudius into two parts: first, 41–8, when Messalina was empress and Seneca was in his long

This article is based on a paper read to Seminar Boreas on 27 November 1987 in the University of Leeds. I am grateful to all who contributed to the discussion.

<sup>1</sup> See especially Th. Birt *NJA* 27 (1911), 352ff.; Münscher 1922; Herzog 1928 (with bibliography of earlier work); Zwierlein 1983, 233ff. For summaries see Fantham 1982, 9–14 and Tarrant 1985, 10–13.

exile in Corsica, second, 49–54, when Agrippina was empress and Seneca was tutor to her son Nero. The reign of Nero may be divided in the same way: first, 54–62, when Seneca held a dominant though latterly declining position; second, the period from his retirement in 62 till his forced suicide in 65 in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy. The plays in the corpus (excluding the clearly spurious *Octavia*) are *Hercules Furens*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*, *Hercules Oetaeus* (the order in the codex Etruscus). Our aim is to slot these plays into a chronological framework.

The most generally accepted piece of evidence comes from the mock-dirge in the *Apocolocyntosis* that sardonically bewails the death of Claudius: *fundite fletus, edite planctus, | resonet tristi clamore forum ...* (12.3.1f., ‘pour forth tears, give blows of mourning, | let the forum re-echo your dismal cries’). In these two lines alone there are imitations of *Troades* 131 *fundite fletus, satis Hector habet* (‘pour forth tears, for Hector this suffices’) and *Hercules Furens* 1108 *resonet maesto clamore chaos* (‘let Chaos re-echo your sad cries’); and the resemblances do not stop there.<sup>2</sup> Therefore both *Troades* and *Hercules Furens* were composed by 54; for the skit must have been written soon after the death of Claudius. Some confirmation is provided by the reference to the *lusus Troiae* at *Troades* 777ff. *nec stato lustris die | sollemne referens Troici lusus sacrum, | puer citatas nobilis turmas ages* (‘nor on the appointed lustral day, reenacting the traditional rite of the Trojan Game, will you lead the galloping squadrons as their boy-prince’). Nero participated in the *lusus Troiae* when he was nine at the memorable secular games of 47 (*Tacitus Annals* 11.11.2), and Seneca is likely to have made his tactful allusion after he became the boy’s mentor in 49. A few years later Nero would no longer be flattered by references to the accomplishments of his childhood,<sup>3</sup> and that would certainly be true after he became emperor in 54.

I turn now to *Medea*. In her opening monologue the embittered heroine prays for worldwide upheaval, including the joining of the two seas at the Isthmus of Corinth (35f.). A reference has been seen to

<sup>2</sup> Weinreich 112ff.; Münscher 1922, 98ff.

<sup>3</sup> Herzog 93 suggests AD 53 for *Troades*, the date of Nero’s speech *pro Iliensibus*; but by that date the *lusus Troiae* might seem less topical.

Nero's abortive attempt at a canal (Suetonius *Nero* 19.2; thus for instance Calder 1976, 3), but that belonged to the very end of his reign; in fact such an allusion would be tactless, and the project had already been mooted by Julius Caesar and Gaius (Pliny *Natural History* 4.10). Much more significant evidence is provided by the chorus on navigation, which looks forward to the conquest of Ocean (375ff.):

venient annis saecula seris,  
 quibus Oceanus vincula rerum  
 laxet et ingens pateat tellus,  
 Tethysque novos detegat orbes,  
 nec sit terris ultima Thule.

There will come an epoch late in time  
 when Ocean will loosen the bonds of the world  
 and the earth lie open in its vastness,  
 when Tethys will disclose new worlds  
 and Thule not be the farthest of lands.

As has often been pointed out, this looks like a compliment to Claudius' invasion of Britain in AD 43. It need not be an immediately contemporary compliment, but at least one thing may be affirmed with confidence: after the death of Claudius in 54 Seneca would not go out of his way to write an inorganic passage that could only have been taken as a tribute to the dead emperor. I attach particular importance to this kind of argument: we should look not only for allusions to recent happenings but for remarks that would be implausibly tactless after a particular date.

We may next ask: is it more likely that *Medea* was written in Corsica between 43 and 48 or in Rome between 49 and 54? The lines on the conquest of Ocean are at variance with most of the ode (Henry and Walker 1967, 180), which is a conventional denunciation of navigation, and one might be tempted to argue that they are a later addition, tacked on in gratitude after Seneca was restored. But that is quite uncertain: even when in exile Seneca was anxious to please Claudius (as is shown by his obsequious *Consolatio ad Polybium*), and even after his restoration he might have written a conventional ode with a flattering afterthought. Though Corsica gave Seneca ample leisure for composition, the writing of plays was perhaps a

metropolitan activity that needed the stimulus of public applause; it is not natural to argue with Herzog 60 that recitations could have been organised by family and friends. It also makes sense if the plays were written when Seneca was Nero's tutor, and interested in the role of poetry in moral education; after 54 he might be too busy and too distinguished (for drama was a frivolity compared with philosophy). I add for what it is worth that in 51–2<sup>4</sup> Seneca's brother Gallio was proconsul in Corinth, where he showed a wise indifference to the activities of certain troublemakers.<sup>5</sup> That would be quite a good moment for Seneca's Corinthian play.

At this point the sceptic will say: 'Some of the plays seem to have been written before the death of Claudius, but why should they not belong as early as Tiberius?' That leads us to a passage of Quintilian cited by Cichorius:<sup>6</sup> *memini iuvenis admodum inter Pomponium ac Senecam etiam praefationibus esse tractatum an 'gradus eliminat' in tragoedia dici oportuisset* (8.3.31, 'I remember when I was quite a young man that Pomponius and Seneca actually discussed in their prefaces whether the phrase "he out-thresholds his steps" should have been used in tragedy'); these *praefationes* seem to have been part of the preliminaries of a recitation (cf. Pliny *Epistolae* 1.13.2 *an iam recitator intraverit, an dixerit praefationem*, 'Has the reciter entered yet, has he delivered the preface?'). Quintilian heard this debate when he was *iuvenis admodum*; as he was born about 33, this might point to a time about 51–3. Seneca returned from exile in 49, Pomponius from governing Germany in 50–1. The recitations in question were presumably those of new plays; therefore Seneca was writing at least some of his plays in the early 50s. The argument is cumulative: one must be struck by the number of leads that converge on the later years of Claudius.

Here I mention briefly a false clue.<sup>7</sup> Seneca's enemies alleged that he wrote more poetry after Nero developed an enthusiasm, that is to say after his accession: Tacitus *Annals* 14.52.3 *obiciebant etiam*

<sup>4</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> I.757; A. Plassart *REG* 80 (1967), 372ff.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 18, 17 καὶ οὐδὲν τούτων τῷ Γαλλίῳι ἐμελεν, 'and none of these things concerned Gallio.'

<sup>6</sup> C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (Leipzig and Berlin 1922) 426ff.; Zwierlein 1983, 244f.

<sup>7</sup> Birt (n.1) 352f.; Münscher 1922, 101ff.; they are refuted by Herzog 52ff.

*eloquentiae laudem uni sibi adsciscere et carmina crebrius factitare postquam Neroni amor eorum venisset.* We need not believe an allegation of this kind, which might be very imprecise. More important, *carmina* is unlikely to refer to tragedies. There is no evidence that Nero ever wrote in this genre, and a parallel passage clearly refers to lighter forms of verse: Tacitus *Annals* 14.16.1 *ne tamen ludicrae tantum imperatoris artes notescerent, carminum quoque studium adfectavit, contractis quibus aliqua pangendi facultas necdum insignis erat* ('and yet, lest it should be only the emperor's theatrical skills that won publicity, he affected also an enthusiasm for poetry, forming a circle of those who had some talent for composition but no recognition as yet').

I come next to *Phaedra*. Here Hippolytus makes some trenchant remarks, modelled on Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1.144ff.), on the degeneration of family relationships (555ff.):

a fratre frater, dextera gnati parens  
 cecidit, maritus coniugis ferro iacet,  
 perimuntque fetus impiae matres suos;  
 taceo novercas: mitius nil est feris.

Brother fell to brother, father at his son's hand; the husband lies dead by his wife's sword and unnatural mothers destroy their own offspring. I say nothing of stepmothers, creatures no gentler than wild beasts.

Of course some will see snide allusions to the Julio-Claudian court,<sup>8</sup> in particular the murder of Claudius by Agrippina in 54 and of Britannicus by Nero in 55; but as Roman audiences were quick to sense contemporary references, it is inconceivable that Seneca should have risked a frisson in the recitation-hall. Rather one must turn the argument on its head and say that the play ante-dates the deaths of Claudius and Britannicus. Similarly when Seneca says *vitioque potens regnat adulter* (987, 'the adulterer reigns, raised up by vice'), that would surely be impossible in the early years of Nero, when there were rumours about his own relationship with Agrippina (Dio 61.10.3; Herzog 91); the probable falsity of such allegations does not rule out this argument.

<sup>8</sup> This common approach is carried to extremes by J. D. Bishop, *Seneca's Daggered Stylus* (*Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 168, 1985).

That seems to put *Phaedra* back to the reign of Claudius; then the *adulter* might suggest Silius, Messalina's lover, with whom she perished in 48. In the aftermath of her death, when it was now safe to talk, Seneca could have brooded on wicked women who framed innocent men, which is what *Phaedra* did to Hippolytus and Messalina (anyway by his way of it) to Seneca himself. One doubt remains over the reference to the malignity of step-mothers, *taceo novercas* (558, cited above). A commonplace, it is true, and central to the theme of the play, but difficult for a courtier to say at the exact moment when Agrippina was displacing Britannicus with her own son Nero. That might encourage us to put *Phaedra* as early as 49, the year before Claudius adopted Nero; but nothing is certain.

That brings us to *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus*, which share a notable feature: in the choruses Seneca devises new metres by modifying the standard Horatian lines (Tarrant 1976, 372ff.). It is difficult to dissociate these innovations from the theories of Caesius Bassus, who used the words *adiectio* and *detractio* to explain formations of this kind.<sup>9</sup> Bassus dedicated his treatise to Nero,<sup>10</sup> so it is sometimes argued that these two plays should be put after the change of emperor in 54 (Münscher 88). These metrical experiments were surely not Seneca's first attempt at tragic choruses, but we must not aim at too great precision: Bassus' ideas may have been current in the later years of Claudius, or he might have dedicated his treatise to Nero when he was still only a talented boy. I attach much more importance to the subject-matter of *Agamemnon*: the early years of Nero were not the time to write about a forceful wife who killed a triumphant king. Tiberius had executed a poet, perhaps Mamercus Scaurus, because he had reproached *Agamemnon* in a play:<sup>11</sup> that would be a small offence compared with hints of murder by the new Clytemnestra.

Similar considerations apply to *Oedipus*. When rumours began about the incest of Nero and Agrippina (Tacitus *Annals* 14.2), some

<sup>9</sup> Leo 1878, 132f., attributed the theory to Varro. R. Heinze, *Die lyrischen Verse des Horaz* (Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 70.4 [1918] 21ff.), and Münscher 86ff. point to new elaborations by Bassus.

<sup>10</sup> Rufinus *GL* 6.555,22 *Bassus ad Neronem de iambico sic dicit ...*, 'Bassus in his work to Nero says on iambs ...'

<sup>11</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 6.29.3; Suet. *Tib.* 61.3.



time before her death in 59, that was not the best moment for a timeserving poet to write on such a theme. There is also the passage where Jocasta first invites Oedipus to kill her (1032ff.), and then speaks of striking her own womb (1038f. *hunc, dextra, hunc pete / uterum capacem, qui virum et gnatos tulit*, 'strike this, my hand, this capacious womb, which bore husband and children'); comparisons have been drawn with Agrippina's alleged last words to the centurion, *ventrem feri*, 'strike my belly' (Tacitus *Annals* 14.8.5; cf. also *Octavia* 368ff. *caedis moriens illa ministrum / rogat infelix utero dirum / condat ut ensem; / 'hic est hic est fodiendus' ait / 'ferro, monstrum qui tale tulit'*, 'Dying, the ill-starred woman asks / the agent of her murder / to bury that heinous sword in her womb: / "This is what you must stab," she said, / "with the steel: it brought forth such a monster"). One interpreter thinks that the lines in *Oedipus* were written not to rebuke but to amuse Nero, another talks of political codes, a third considers the possibility that the play was kept secret.<sup>12</sup> Of course sinister hints must have been intended if the passage was written in the aftermath of Agrippina's murder, but there is no need for such an assumption; the scene is modelled on Sophocles,<sup>13</sup> and *ventrem feri* is a commonplace of declamation.<sup>14</sup> Once again the more credulous theories should be reversed: not only are the lines not politically motivated, but their appearance is evidence that the play was written before the death of Agrippina in 59.

## 2. INDISCRETIONS IN *THYESTES*?

We come now to *Thyestes*, which presents the most intriguing chronological problems of all. Here the corruption of courts is portrayed as nowhere outside Tacitus, and already in the second speech the Fury predicts the coming horrors (40ff.):

<sup>12</sup> Calder 1976, 5; J. D. Bishop, *CJ* 73 (1977–78), 292; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford 1979), 164f. For a summary see E. Lefèvre, *ANRW* II.32.2, 1250ff.

<sup>13</sup> Zwierlein 1987, 44f., citing Soph. *OT* 1256f.

<sup>14</sup> Pratt 1983, 191, citing Sen. *Contr.* 2.5.7 *caede ventrem ne tyrannicidas pariat*, 'strike her belly, lest she bear tyrannicides.'

fratrem expavescat frater et natum parens  
 natusque patrem, liberi pereant male,  
 peius tamen nascantur; immineat viro  
 infesta coniunx, bella trans pontum vehant . . .

Let brother be afraid of brother, parent of son, son of father; let death come to children vilely, but birth more vilely; let husband be menaced by wife's enmity; let them carry war overseas . . .

These lines are highly relevant to the development of the play, but in the first part of Nero's reign a more contemporary reference would inevitably be suspected. The brother that fears brother would be seen as Britannicus, who was murdered by Nero; the parent who fears the son would be Agrippina; the wife who threatens the husband would be Agrippina again. In the same way when Thyestes says later in the play *venenum in auro bibitur—expertus loquor* (453, 'poison is drunk in gold—I speak from experience'), he would have seemed to refer to Nero's poisoning of Britannicus in 55, so graphically described by Tacitus (*Annals* 13.15.3–16). It is impossible to believe that Seneca wrote such indiscreet passages when he was Nero's first minister.<sup>15</sup>

Even if we put the play back to the reign of Claudius, some difficulties still remain. Atreus is made to say *ut nemo doceat fraudis et sceleris vias, | regnum docebit* (312f., 'though no one teaches them the ways of deceit and crime, kingship will teach it'); if this was intended as a cautionary tale for the boy Nero, it seems a tactless thing to say when Seneca had just been brought back from exile. Perhaps the play should be assigned to the Corsican period, when Seneca could be brooding about *regnum* as he had known it under Tiberius, Gaius, and now Claudius. When the chorus praises the simple life uncorrupted by power (391ff., 446ff.), some have sensed the attitudes of the poet's own exile (Herzog 72ff.); when Thyestes expresses hope and fear on his return (404ff.), the mixture of moods could have something autobiographical about it. Yet if Seneca wrote the play in this early period, it is strange that the Fury should say *ob scelera pulsi cum dabit patriam deus | in scelera redeant* (37f., 'exiled for crimes, when god restores their homeland let them return to crimes'): we know from Cicero how sensitive exiles were about their

<sup>15</sup> The point is taken by Herzog 71; but he sees a criticism of the regime written after or preferably before Seneca's period of power.

experience. Messalina might not have liked the line about wives threatening husbands, and Claudius would certainly not have liked the line about transporting wars across the sea: *bella trans pontum vehant* (43). Though one is reluctant to believe that Seneca's plays were written for secret circulation and private enjoyment, we have not yet found a time when *Thyestes* could have been recited without embarrassment.

### 3. FITCH'S BREAKTHROUGH

At this juncture I turn to the article by John G. Fitch on 'Sense-Pauses and Relative Dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare' in *AJP* 102 (1981) 289ff. He argues on stylistic and metrical grounds that *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* were written later than the other plays. I begin with a point that he makes relatively late in his paper but which seems the most decisive part of it.

It is well-known that in Silver Age poetry the *o* at the end of a word is often shortened;<sup>16</sup> this happens with third-declension nouns like *imago*, pronouns like *nemo*, first-person verbs like *cerno* or *videbo*, particles like *immo*, but not of course with ablatives like *servo*, except curiously with gerunds like *vincendo* (*Troades* 264) and *vigilando* (Juvenal 3.232). For dating purposes I attach less importance to nouns or particles; here the final *o* is normally shortened in Seneca, and in the case of trisyllabic nominatives like *regio* it is always shortened; therefore the statistics will be distorted by the desirability of using particular words. Much more important evidence is provided by short final *o* in the first person singular of verbs, whether present or future. Here Fitch's figures for the licence do seem statistically significant: *Agamemnon* 1, *Oedipus* 1, *Troades* 2, *Phaedra* 4, *Medea* 5, *Hercules Furens* 5, *Thyestes* 18, *Phoenissae* 27. This observation must count as a notable breakthrough (Tarrant *Thyestes* 11),

<sup>16</sup> Some material is collected by R. Hartenberger, *De o finali apud poetas Latinos ab Ennio usque ad Iuvenalem* (Diss. Bonn 1911); but he does not draw enough distinctions about parts of speech and position in the line. See also D. Armstrong, *Philologus* 130 (1986), 113f., 129ff.

especially in view of the difficulty of establishing other metrical variations as a criterion of date (Zwierlein 1983, 233ff.).

Fitch also points out that changes of speaker in the middle of a line, if looked at as a proportion of all changes of speaker, are considerably more frequent in *Thyestes* than in the other plays; but he recognises himself that the picture may be affected by the incidence of antilabe (cross-talk in half-lines), which is partly determined by the dramatic possibilities of the play.<sup>17</sup> He next turns to the incidence of all sense-pauses of a semi-colon or more in the middle of a line; here the figures for internal pauses as a percentage of all pauses are *Agamemnon* 32.4, *Phaedra* 34.4, *Oedipus* 36.8, *Medea* 47.2, *Troades* 47.6, *Hercules Furens* 49, *Thyestes* 54.5, *Phoenissae* 57.2. These variations are less arresting than the discrepancy with final *o*, but they seem to be a sign of increasing flexibility of verse technique; Fitch points to comparable developments in Sophocles and Shakespeare. That tends to confirm one's instinct that the short *o*'s are a sign of lateness rather than earliness; the Latin poets in general were moving towards greater laxity in this respect.

#### 4. THE CORONATION OF THYESTES

It is time to look at another historical allusion that may not have been correctly interpreted. After Atreus has bound the diadem round the head of his brother Thyestes (544 *imposita capiti vincla venerando gere*, 'wear this bond set on your venerable head'), the chorus remarks that even a king who bestows kingdoms on others may himself be uneasy (599ff.):

ille qui donat diadema fronti,  
 quem genu nixae tremuere gentes,  
 cuius ad nutum posuere bella  
 Medus et Phoebi propioris Indus  
 et Dahae Parthis equitem minati,  
 anxius sceptrum tenet et moventes

<sup>17</sup> Fitch himself cites H. D. F. Kitto, *AJP* 60 (1939), 178ff., who points to the limitations of such stylostistics in determining the dates of Sophoclean plays.

cuncta divinat metuitque casus  
mobiles rerum dubiumque tempus.

Even he who bestows a diadem on the brow,  
before whom nations kneel and tremble,  
at whose nod wars are set aside  
by Medes and Indians close to Phoebus  
and Dahae whose horsemen threaten the Parthians—  
*he* grips the sceptre tensely, and tries  
in his fear to divine the changes of chance  
that changes all, and the hazards of time.

The Dahae who have abandoned their wars lived east of the Caspian, on the northern frontier of the Parthian empire; here they are said to have threatened the Parthians with their cavalry, the very weapon in which the Parthians excelled. The *exemplum* is so specific and so irrelevant to anything in the play that it must allude to events in Seneca's own time.

Otto Herzog (77ff.) thought that the king who bestowed kingdoms was Claudius, who in 41 restored Mithridates to the Armenian throne (Tacitus *Annals* 11.8.1 *monente Claudio in regnum remeavit*). Claudius was able to do this because of civil war in Parthia<sup>18</sup> between the king Vardanes and his brother Gotarzes; and Tacitus mentions in the same context that Gotarzes was supported by the very Dahae that we meet in Seneca (*Annals* 11.8.4 *interim Gotarzes Daharum Hyrcanorumque opibus auctus bellum renovat*, 'meanwhile Gotarzes, with reinforcements from the Dahae and Hyrcani, resumed war'). But the historical situation does not in fact fit Seneca: so far from imposing a general peace in the East, Claudius only succeeded in Armenia because of the lack of such a peace in Parthia. When Seneca goes on to say that his king wields the sceptre anxiously, Herzog sees an allusion to the rebellion of Scribonianus against Claudius in 42. But these would be dangerous words for Seneca to utter even in the privacy of a Corsican exile; after all, he wanted to return.

<sup>18</sup> For the confusing Parthian history of the period see Anderson 1934, 747ff.; K.-H. Ziegler, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Rom und dem Partherreich* (Wiesbaden 1964), 64ff.; N.C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (1968), 166ff. For numismatic evidence see W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. Parthia* (London 1903); D. Sellwood, *An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia* (London 1971).

Tarrant ad loc. sees a resemblance to Nero; he compares the opening of Seneca's *De Clementia* (AD 56), where Nero claims to impose peace on the world (1.1.2):

ego vitae necisque gentibus arbiter; qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est; quid cuique mortalium Fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat; ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi volente propitioque me floret; haec tot milia gladiatorum, quae pax mea comprimit, ad nutum meum stringentur; quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi, quos reges mancipia fieri quorumque capiti regum circumdari decus oporteat, quae ruant urbes, quae orientur, mea iuris dictio est.

I am arbiter of life and death for the nations; each person's lot and position rests in my power; what Fortune would bestow on each mortal, she proclaims through my lips; from my response peoples and cities find cause for rejoicing; no area flourishes except with my will and favour; these thousands of swords, restrained by my peace, will be drawn at my nod; which nations should be utterly exterminated, which deported, which granted freedom, which denied it, which kings should become slaves and which should have their heads encircled with a royal crown, which cities are to fall and which to rise, is under my jurisdiction.

But no allusion to Parthian affairs, such as is suggested by *Dahae*, seems to fit this interpretation precisely. In AD 60 Nero put Tigranes on the Armenian throne (Tacitus *Annals* 14.26.1), but Seneca would not wish to denigrate Corbulo's victories that had made this possible; and it was premature to talk of a general conciliation, for Tigranes was expelled in the following year. Nero's later coronation of Tiridates did not take place till 66 (Dio 63. 4–5), the year after Seneca's death, but the scheme was already being mooted in 63, when Tiridates placed his diadem at the foot of Nero's statue (Tacitus *Annals* 15.29.1 *tum placuit Tiridaten ponere apud effigiem Caesaris insigne regium nec nisi manu Neronis resumere*). But the historical facts tell even more strongly against this particular reference: Tiridates was the brother of the Parthian king and imposed by him on Armenia, and the moves for a coronation by Nero were an attempt to save Roman face after the disastrous defeat of Paetus in 62. In such circumstances Seneca could not imply that Nero's success was an illusion: nobody thought that he had succeeded.

Surely any reference to a Roman emperor makes the anachronism too glaring in the context of Thyestes and Atreus. The man who bestows diadems on the brow and receives veneration on the knee must be an eastern King of Kings, such a ruler as there had always been in that part of the world. Once that has been granted, we may look for hints of more contemporary events such as would suggest themselves to people living in Seneca's time. We have seen that the Parthians were in disarray for much of Claudius' reign (above, p. 358), but the situation changed in 51 when Vologaeses became king. He put his brother Tiridates on the throne of Armenia (Tacitus *Annals* 12.50.1) and his brother Pacorus on the throne of Media Atropatene (Josephus *Antiquitates Judaeorum* 20.74); but the Parthians had nothing like the universal success suggested by the lines in *Thyestes*. They had setbacks in Armenia in 53 and again in 55 (Anderson 757ff.). They were harassed by the revolt of the king's son Vardanes (Tacitus *Annals* 13.7.2; Anderson 759f., 879) and by a prolonged rebellion in Hyrcania. Then there were the brilliant campaigns of Corbulo in 58 and 59 when he captured the key cities of Armenia (Anderson 760ff.). This all seems to confirm the view that we had formed on other grounds (p. 355): the earlier years of Nero were not a suitable time for this play.

Another and later date may be put forward. When Atreus crowns his brother Thyestes, Seneca seems to be alluding to the dramatic scene in 61, when the Parthian king Vologaeses, in the presence of an assembly of noblemen, bound the diadem<sup>19</sup> of Armenia round the head of his brother Tiridates (Tacitus *Annals* 15.2.4 *diademate caput Tiridatis evinxit*); the solemn rite had a significance that was not simply formal.<sup>20</sup> The new Parthian assertiveness was explained by the fact that the long Hyrcanian rebellion was now over (Tacitus *ibid. mandavitque (Monaesi) Tigranem Armenia exturbare, dum ipse positus adversus Hyrcanos discordiis vires intimas molemque belli ciet, provinciis Romanis minitans*, 'he entrusted Monaeses with expelling Tigranes from Armenia, while he himself, having laid aside the conflict with Hyrcania, called up his internal forces and the machinery

<sup>19</sup> H.-W. Ritter, *Diadem und Königsherrschaft* (Vestigia 7, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> D. Cannadine and S. Price, *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge 1987).

of war, threatening the Roman provinces'); all this corresponds to the omnipotence of the king in *Thyestes*, and in particular to the pacification of the Dahae, who lived immediately north-east of Hyrcania. But Seneca suggests that in spite of the defeat of Paetus in 62 the Parthian success is insecure; just as the reconciliation between Atrous and Thyestes is not genuine, so the Parthian king will soon resume his traditional national habit of feuding with his brother. In the same way Horace had emphasized that proud Eastern kings are subject to external pressures (*Odes* 1.26.5 *quid Tiridaten terreat*, 'what threats Tiridates faces') and the vicissitudes of fortune (1.35.11f., 3.1.5f.); in particular when Prahates regained the Parthian throne in 26 BC, the poet consoled himself with the reflection that true kingship lies in virtue (2.2.17ff.):

redditum Cyri solio Prahaten  
 dissidens plebi numero beatorum  
 eximit Virtus populumque falsis  
     dedocet uti  
 vocibus, regnum et diadema tutum  
 deferens uni propriamque laurum  
 quisquis ingentis oculo inretorto  
     spectat acervos.

With Prahates restored to the throne of Cyrus  
 the crowd would count him among those blest—  
 but Virtue excludes him. She sets the people  
     straight when they misapply  
 words; she grants secure kingship, the diadem,  
 the enduring laurel, to just one person:  
 one who can gaze on great stacks of gold  
     with no second glance.

Horace only became as philosophical as that when his own side was losing,<sup>21</sup> and Seneca would be no different.

<sup>21</sup> So Cicero pretends to find consolation in philosophy for Piso's escape: *Pis.* 43, *quae est igitur poena, quod supplicium? id mea sententia quod accidere nemini potest nisi nocenti*, 'what then is retribution, what is punishment? Something that in my view can only befall the guilty'; 95, *equidem, ut paulo ante dixi, non eadem supplicia esse in hominibus existimo quae fortasse plerique*, 'for my part, as I said just earlier, I do not agree with the majority, perhaps, about what things constitute punishments for human beings'; 98, *mihī cui semper ita persuasum fuerit non eventis sed factis cuiusque fortunam ponderari*, 'I have always been persuaded that each person's fortune is measured by actions, not by their results.'



## 5. THE MAILED HORSEMEN OF THE DANUBE

There is another historical allusion at *Thyestes* 629f.: *feris Hister fugam/ praebens Alanis*, 'the Danube that offers escape to barbarous Alans'. A confusion has been suspected with the Alani north of the Caucasus (below, Part 6),<sup>22</sup> but, although Seneca's geography can be indifferent to fact, it is inconceivable that in a matter of strategic significance he made a mistake of this kind; one remembers his practical approach to the Parthian problem at the beginning of Nero's reign (Tacitus *Annals* 13.6.3). Tarrant and others are surely right to refer to the kindred Rhoxolani,<sup>23</sup> whose name has been thought to mean 'Red Alans'; these were a nomadic Sarmatian people who under continuing pressure from the east had now reached the north bank of the lower Danube. Tacitus vividly describes their heavy cavalry (*cataphracti*) with their encasing coats of mail (*Histories* 1.79.3); as in other periods in the history of war, such formations were difficult to resist if they could keep moving (*Histories* 1.79.2 *ubi per turmas advenere vix ulla acies obstiterit*). Their novel and distinctive armament and tactics, so different from those of the lightly armed and mobile Scythians, are already described in Valerius Flaccus (6.231ff.): ... *cum saevior ecce iuventus/ Sarmaticae coiere manus fremitusque virorum/ semiferi. riget his molli lorica catena,/ id quoque tegmen equis*, 'when see, a fierce band of Sarmatians came thronging with half-bestial yells; they have tough cuirasses of flexible chainmail, and their horses have the same protection.'<sup>24</sup> Such coats of mail are worn by horsemen on Trajan's column;<sup>25</sup> these have been identified with the Rhoxolani, but the resemblance does not extend to all details of their equipment.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A. B. Bosworth, *HSCP* 81 (1977), 222 n.21.

<sup>23</sup> *RE* Suppl. 7.1195ff.; T. Sulimirski, *The Sarmatians* (London 1970), 134ff.; J. J. Wilkes in *Rome and her Northern Frontiers*, ed. B. Hartley and J. Wachter (London 1983), 255ff.; S.F. Ryle, *Hermathena* 143 (1987), 93ff.

<sup>24</sup> R. Syme, *CQ* 23 (1929), 129ff. For later accounts of these armoured brigades see R.M. Rattenbury, *CR* 56 (1942), 113ff.

<sup>25</sup> L. Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*, revised J. M. C. Toynbee, (London 1971), 125 (with plates 27 and 33); Wilkes (n.23) 272 pl.II and III (see also 257 for a relief from South Russia).

<sup>26</sup> F. B. Florescu, *Das Siegesdenkmal von Adamklissi: Tropaeum Traiani* (Bukarest-Bonn 1965), 660ff. and *Die Trajanssäule* (Bukarest-Bonn 1969), 116f. (with plates 58d and XXVIII).

The Rhoxolani were in diplomatic and perhaps military contact with the eminent Ti. Plautius Silvanus Aelianus,<sup>27</sup> who was legate of Moesia (to the south of the lower Danube), probably from 60 to 67,<sup>28</sup> though some go a few years earlier. Plautius mentions the transaction in a self-assertive inscription<sup>29</sup> by the well-known Mausoleum of the Plautii, which still stands where the via Tiburtina crosses the Anio: *regibus Bastarnarum et Rhoxolanorum filios Dacorum fratres captos aut hostibus ereptos remisit*, 'to the kings of the Bastarnae and Rhoxolani he sent back their sons, and to those of the Dacae their brothers, who had been captured or rescued from the enemy'. At the time of these events he had relinquished a large part of his army for the Armenian campaign: *motum orientem Sarmatar. compressit, quamvis parte magna exercitus ad expeditionem in Armeniam misisset*, 'in the east he suppressed a Sarmatian uprising, despite the fact that he had sent a large part of his army to join the expedition to Armenia'. Tacitus records that to meet the Armenian crisis of 61–2 a legion had been pulled out of Moesia and assigned to Paetus (*Annals* 15.6.3 *addita quinta (legione) quae recens e Moesis excita erat*). Surely the hurried troop-movement implied by *excita* is the very one mentioned in the inscription.<sup>30</sup>

Of course the Rhoxolani could have been causing trouble for some years previously: we do not know when they reached the Danube. According to Strabo or rather his earlier source, they were still east of the Borysthenes (Dnieper) at a time when the Sarmatian Iazyges lived to the west (7.3.17), but by the reign of Tiberius the Iazyges are found in the Hungarian plain.<sup>31</sup> All we can say is that about 62, the date we are considering for *Thyestes*, the Rhoxolani were highly topical:

<sup>27</sup> *PIR* P 363; *RE* 21.35ff.; L. Halkin, *AC* 3 (1934), 121ff.; L. R. Taylor, *MAAR* 24 (1951), 29 n.42.

<sup>28</sup> A. Stein, *Die Legaten von Moesien* (Budapest 1940), 29ff.; his dating is endorsed by R. Syme, *Antichthon* 11 (1977), 85 = *Roman Papers* III (Oxford 1984), 1005; Griffin 1976, 245, 456.

<sup>29</sup> *CIL* 14.3608 = *ILS* 986; M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors . . . A.D. 68–96* (Cambridge 1961), no. 261.

<sup>30</sup> Otherwise M. Hofmann, *RE* 21.37.

<sup>31</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 4.80–1, Tac. *Ann.* 12.29–30; R. Syme, *Cambridge Ancient History* 10 (1934), 305; A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia* (London 1974), 39. For a general view of the Sarmatian migrations see M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford 1922), 115ff.; F. G. B. Millar, *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours* (London 1981), 281ff.; Wilkes (n.23) 255ff.

Plautius settled over 100,000 barbarians to the south of the Danube, perhaps Dacians who had experienced the *motum orientem Sarmatarum* of which the inscription speaks. Plautius' activities at the time were significant and memorable: he intervened against the Scythians as far away as Chersonesus,<sup>32</sup> near Sebastopol in the Crimea, a sign of the new strategic concern about migrations in the area.

## 6. THE GATE THROUGH THE CAUCASUS

There seems to be a neglected historical allusion<sup>33</sup> at *Thyestes* 369ff., where the chorus catalogues kings of the East who lack the true *regnum* of the virtuous man:

reges convenient licet  
 qui sparsos agitant Dahas,  
 qui rubri vada litoris  
 et gemmis mare lucidis  
 late sanguineum tenent,  
 aut qui Caspia fortibus  
 recludunt iuga Sarmatis,  
 certet Danuvii vadum  
 audet qui pedes ingredi  
 et (quocumque loco iacent)  
 Seres vellere nobiles:  
 mens regnum bona possidet.

Let kings forgather—those  
 who rouse the scattered Dahae,  
 who control the waters of the ruby  
 coast, the sea blood-reddened  
 far and wide by gleaming gems,  
 or those who open the Caspian

<sup>32</sup> ILS 986 *Scytharum quoque rege[m] a Cherronensi, quae est ultra Borustenem, opsidione summoto*, 'also the Scythian king was driven by siege from Chersonesus, which is beyond the Borysthenes.'

<sup>33</sup> The reference to the Caspian Gates at *Thy.* 374ff., which I thought had been missed, has now been noticed by R. Syme, *Acta Classica* 30 (1987), 59ff. Some of his other material overlaps with my own (particularly in Part 6), and he is ready to accept Fitch's late date for *Thyestes*.

ridges to the bold Sarmatians;  
 let him compete, who dares  
 to walk on the Danube River,  
 and the Seres famed for silk  
 (in whatever place they lie):  
 wisdom secures the kingship.

The king who walks across the frozen Danube is presumably one of the Sarmatians (whether Rhoxolani or another tribe) that Plautius had to deal with; but more might be made of the preceding clause (374f.) *aut qui Caspia fortibus / recludunt iuga Sarmatis*. The verb *recludunt* suggests a reference to the so-called Caspian Gates,<sup>34</sup> the pass of Darial ('the gate of the Alans'), a hundred miles north of the modern Tiflis, where the Georgian Military Highway runs through the formidable barrier of the central Caucasus.<sup>35</sup> The pass should properly be called the Caucasian Gates, as Pliny complains on two occasions;<sup>36</sup> it must be clearly distinguished from Alexander's Caspian Gates to the south of the Caspian, south-east of Teheran. In one of these passages Pliny states that the gates included a physical obstacle (*Natural History* 6.30):<sup>37</sup>

ab iis sunt Portae Caspiae magno errore multis Caspiae dictae, ingens naturae opus montibus interruptis repente, ubi fores additae ferratis

<sup>34</sup> A. R. Anderson, *TAPA* 55 (1928), 135ff.

<sup>35</sup> For some local colour see Fitzroy Maclean, *To Caucasus, the End of All the Earth* (London 1976), 154 (with illustrations in preceding pages and facing p. 81).

<sup>36</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 6.30 (quoted in text); 6.40 *corrigendus est in hoc loco error multorum, etiam qui in Armenia res proxime cum Corbulone gessere. namque ii Caspiae appellavere portas Hiberiae quas Caucasias diximus vocari, situsque depicti et inde missi hoc nomen inscriptum habent*; 'Here I must correct an error made by many, even those who campaigned nearby in Armenia with Corbulo. They have applied the name "Caspian" to the gates of Iberia which are called Caucasian, as I have noted, and maps of the region sent from the front have this name written on them.' If the misnomer gained particular currency when Corbulo held the Eastern command, that might be a further argument for giving *Thyestes* a Neronian date.

<sup>37</sup> Procopius *Bell.* 1.10.4 attributes the gate to Alexander, who was never in fact there: *δίοδος γὰρ οὐδεμία τὸ λοιπὸν φαίνεται, πλὴν γε δὴ ὅτι ὡσπερ τινὰ χειροποίητον πυλῖδα ἐνταῦθα ἢ φύσιν ἐξέυρεν, ἢ Κασπία ἐκ παλαιοῦ ἐκλήθη . . .* 'for from there on no passage through appears, except that nature has fashioned there what looks like a manmade gate, which has been called Caspian since antiquity . . .'; 9 *ὅπερ ἐπειδὴ ὁ Φιλίππου Ἀλέξανδρος κατενόησε, πύλας τε ἐν χώρῳ ἐτεκτῆνατο τῷ εἰρημένῳ καὶ φυλακτῆριον κατεστήσατο*, 'when Philip's son Alexander observed this, he had gates constructed in the aforesaid place and a stronghold established.'

tribibus, subter medias amne diri odoris fluente citraque in rupe castello quod vocatur Cumania communito ad arcendas transitu gentes innumeras, ibi loci terrarum orbe portis discluso.

After these are the Caucasian Gates, mistakenly called Caspian by many—a huge work of nature where the mountains are suddenly rent asunder. Here gates have been added made of iron-covered beams, with the foul-smelling river flowing right beneath them, and a stronghold called Cumania has been fortified on a crag on this side, to prevent the passage of innumerable tribes; at this spot a division of the world is effected by gates.

A more recent writer has described 'a gorge (8 m long) of singular beauty, shut in by precipitous mountain walls nearly 600 ft high, and so narrow that there is only just room for the carriage-road and the brawling river Terek side by side'.<sup>38</sup>

In AD 35 the Iberians, who lived south of the central Caucasus in the modern Georgia, let the Sarmatians through the pass to attack the Parthians in Armenia: Tacitus *Annals* 6.33.3 *sed Hiberi locorum potentes Caspia via Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundunt*.<sup>39</sup> Josephus says of the same episode Ἀλανοὺς (Ἀλανοὶ codd.) δὲ δίοδον αὐτοῖς διδόντες διὰ τῆς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς θύρας τὰς Κασπίας ἀνοίξαντες ἐπάγουσιν τῷ Ἀρταβάνῳ, 'giving the Alans passage through their land, and having opened the Caspian gates, they set them upon Artabanus' (*Antiquitates Iudaeorum* 18.97); 'having opened the Caspian gates' corresponds closely to Seneca's *recludunt*, though it may be anachronistic to use the expression 'Caspian gates' of events quite so early. These passages should not tempt us to put *Thyestes* back to the last years of Tiberius; Parthia was in poor shape at that time,<sup>40</sup> and it was not the moment to talk of their imposing a general peace (*Thyestes* 601ff., above p. 358). Tacitus makes it clear in the same context that the incursion of 35 was not an isolated intervention: *Annals* 6.33.2 *Pharasmanes* (king of Iberia) ... *accire Sarmatas, quorum sceptuchi utrimque donis acceptis more gentico diversa induere*, 'Pharasmanes ... called up the Sarmatians, whose 'wand-bearers', true to national custom, accepted the gifts of both sides and enlisted in opposite camps'. Even a hundred years later Pharasmanes

<sup>38</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*<sup>11</sup> V (Cambridge 1910), 552.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson 777; A. B. Bosworth *HSCP* 81 (1977), 221ff.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson 747ff.; Debevoise (n.18) 158ff.

II of Iberia let the Alans through the Caspian gates to attack his neighbours the Albani.<sup>41</sup>

In particular the Caucasus had a topical strategic significance towards the end of Nero's reign. In 66, the year after Seneca's death, when Nero went on his last visit to Greece, he was planning an expedition to the Caspian Gates: see especially Tacitus *Histories* 1.6.2 *quos idem Nero electos praemissosque ad claustra Caspiarum et bellum quod in Albanos parabat opprimendis Vindicis coeptis revocaverat*, 'men whom Nero had likewise selected and sent to the Caspian gates to take part in the campaign that he was preparing against the Albani, but had recalled to crush the uprising of Vindex'.<sup>42</sup> Here *in Albanos* is a puzzling anticlimax: the preposition implies hostile action, but the Albani lived not in the modern Georgia south of the Gates but in the modern Azerbaijan, south of the Caucasus on the eastern (Caspian) side. Mommsen plausibly emended to *Alanos*,<sup>43</sup> the barbarians to the north of the range. It has been argued that the consolidation of Hiberia and Albania made more strategic sense,<sup>44</sup> but perhaps this was not a grandiose enough project for an expedition led by the emperor himself with a specially formed 'phalanx Alexandri Magni' (Suetonius *Nero* 19.2). We have seen from the intervention of Plautius in the Crimea (above, p. 363) a new awareness of the menace from the north-east, and there may have been some thoughts of turning the Black Sea into a Roman lake;<sup>45</sup> perhaps

<sup>41</sup> Dio 69.15.1; Bosworth (n.39) 228ff.

<sup>42</sup> So also Pliny *Nat.* 6.40 *et Neronis principis comminatio ad Caspiae portas tendere dicebatur cum peteret illas quae per Hiberiam in Sarmatas tendunt*, 'and the expedition threatened by the emperor Nero was said to be aimed at the Caspian gates, whereas it was directed at the pass that gives passage through Iberia to Sarmatia'; Suet. *Ner.* 19.2 *parabat etiam ad Caspiae portas expeditionem*, 'he was also preparing an expedition to the Caspian gates'; Dio 63.8.1.

<sup>43</sup> See also Anderson 777; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950), II.1418 n.63; Chilver on Tac. *Hist.* 1.6; R.K. Sherck, *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980) 992; Griffin 1984, 228f., 299 n.36.

<sup>44</sup> A. B. Bosworth, *Antichthon* 10 (1976), 74 and *HSCP* 81 (1977), 225f.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson 774. He cites Josephus *BJ* 2.366–7 (Agrippa advises the Jews against revolt by emphasizing the power of the Roman empire): *τί χρῆ λέγειν Ηνιόχους τε καὶ Κόλχους καὶ τὸ τῶν Ταύρων φύλον, Βοσπορανοῦς τε καὶ τὰ περίοικα τοῦ Πόντου καὶ τῆς Μαυώτιδος ἔθνη; παρ' οἷς πρὶν μὲν οὐδ' οἰκείως ἐγγινώσκετο δεσπότης, νῦν δὲ τρισχιλίοις ὀπλίταις ὑποτάσσεται, καὶ τεσσαράκοντα νῆες μακρὰί τὴν πρὶν ἄπλωτον καὶ ἀγρίαν εἰρηνεύουσι θάλασσαν*, 'why mention the Heniochi and Colchians and Taurian people, Bosphorians and tribes living around the Black Sea and Maeotis,

there were now visions of a simultaneous thrust through the Caucasus to strike at the heartland of the Sarmatian tribes.<sup>46</sup> Where Alexander was believed to have gone (because of the confusion about the Caspian Gates) Nero might be eager to follow; as with Julius Caesar's Parthian expedition of 44 BC, the megalomaniac enterprise may have played a part in turning informed opinion against its author.

Mommsen's conjecture derives a little support from Lucan 8.222ff. (Pompey claims to have spared the Parthians in 66–65 BC):

si vos, o Parthi, peterem cum Caspia claustra  
et sequerer duros aeterni Martis Alanos  
passus Achaemeniis late decurrere campis  
in tutam trepidos numquam Babylona coegi.

If, when I marched towards the Caspian gates and pursued the hardy, ever-warlike Alans, I allowed you Parthians to ride freely over the plains of Persia, and never cowed you into taking refuge in Babylon.

Pompey never reached the Gates,<sup>47</sup> and the name Alani is anachronistic for his time; but the lines (perhaps written as late as AD 64) may glance at Nero's projected campaign. Similarly, if Seneca wrote *Thyestes* in 62, his reference to 'Caspian ridges' might have been influenced by recent Sarmatian incursions, the sort of thing that is likely to have happened to provoke Nero's violent reaction.

## 7. CONSEQUENCES

We have now reached a conclusion similar to Tarrant's (*Thyestes* 12f.), though in part by a different route: stylistic and historical arguments converge to date *Thyestes* in the latter part of Nero's reign, in 62 to be precise. *Phoenissae* must go together with *Thyestes*,

among whom previously not even a native master was recognised, but now they are controlled by 3,000 hoplites, and 40 warships keep the peace on a sea that was previously unsailed and wild.' This speech is assigned by Josephus to AD 66, but may more accurately reflect conditions under Vespasian (Anderson *loc.cit.*).

<sup>46</sup> Anderson *loc.cit.*; the emphasis is put on the Crimea by Millar (n.31) 290.

<sup>47</sup> For Pompey's Caucasian campaign see Magie (n.43) 358f., 1225f.; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East 168 BC–AD 1* (London 1984), 195ff.

in view of Fitch's evidence about the high incidence of short final *o*; but for this the order in the codex Etruscus could be chronological (above, p. 349). A late date is acceptable (Münscher 119ff.) for a play that lacks choruses and shows other evidence of incompleteness. The theme of the aged Oedipus would suit an ageing Seneca, just as *Oedipus Coloneus* was thought to suit the venerable Sophocles. The clash of brother against brother might have been a tactless subject when Nero was the rival of Britannicus, or soon after he had disposed of him. It should be noted that Zwierlein<sup>48</sup> followed Leo in putting *Phoenissae* after *Oedipus* because of the likely priority of a parallel. It may seem less satisfactory that Conte<sup>49</sup> saw imitation of *Phoenissae* in Lucan's proem (where one naturally thinks of the younger man as imitator); but even if the resemblances are significant, Lucan may only have begun his poem in 62 or 63 (Ahl 1976, 352f.).

Our chronology has further consequences. Münscher<sup>50</sup> used the metrical simplicity of the choruses of *Thyestes* as an argument for a very early date; but though one may concede that the most complicated metrical systems were not the first to be attempted, that does not mean that all the plays can be neatly arranged in a sequence of increasing complexity. W.M. Calder III<sup>51</sup> put *Thyestes* before *Agamemnon*: the prologues both deal with the crimes and punishments of Tantalus, but the one in *Thyestes* is more closely integrated with the rest of the play.<sup>52</sup> Similarly Zwierlein 1983, 241f. put *Thyestes* before *Medea*; the opening speeches in both plays mention the

<sup>48</sup> Zwierlein 1983, 238f., citing *Phoen.* 173ff. (Oedipus to Antigone) *ades atque inertem dexteram introrsus preme/ magisque merge; timida tunc parvo caput/ libavit haustu vixque cupientes sequi/ eduxit oculos*, 'Stand close and press my feeble hand further in, plunge it deeper! Slight and timid the libation it poured from my head then: it scarcely drew out the eyes that were eager to follow.' This seems an unusually specific reference to *Oed.* 961ff. *genuit et dirum fremens/ manus in ora torsit. at contra truces/ oculi steterunt et suam intenti manum/ ultro insecuntur, vulnere occurrunt suo*, 'He groaned, and with a terrible cry he bent his hands towards his face. For their part his eyes stood out wildly, and intently tracked the hands they knew, meeting their wounds halfway.'

<sup>49</sup> *Maia* 18 (1966), 49f., citing *Phoen.* 298, 300, 414f.; Zwierlein 1983, 246ff. (with bibliography of Lucan's imitations of Seneca).

<sup>50</sup> Münscher 62ff.; he is rebutted by Herzog 95f.

<sup>51</sup> *CPh* 71 (1976), 29f.

<sup>52</sup> For thematic links in *Thyestes* see H. M. Hine, *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 3 (1981), 259ff.



turning back of the sun, but in *Thyestes* the description is more obviously related to the subsequent action. If we are right that *Thyestes* is late, that tends to confirm the difficulty, too often under-estimated, of establishing arguments about priority. Everybody was familiar with the eating of the children and the turning back of the sun, and it was not inevitable that the more integrated treatment should have been written first.

There are also inconvenient consequences for my own view of *Hercules Oetaeus*. It is widely believed that this play is not by Seneca, and there are some abnormalities of metre and diction that in my opinion have been considerably exaggerated.<sup>53</sup> I have argued elsewhere<sup>54</sup> that the work is Senecan and very late; I see a hint of Nero in the concluding prayer *et si qua novo belua voltu | quatiet populos terrore gravi/ tu fulminibus frange trisulcis* (1992ff. 'and if some new and strange-faced monster | shakes the nations with grievous fear, | crush it with the three-forked lightning bolts'). But it must be acknowledged that *Hercules Oetaeus* has at most four instances of verbs with short final *o*.<sup>55</sup>

I add a few footnotes from the Flavian period to show the continuing importance of Seneca's concerns in *Thyestes*. In 69 the trans-Danubian Rhoxolani crossed the river in force, but their armour-plated horsemen were overwhelmed in the mud and slush (Tacitus *Histories* 1.79). In 70 Sarmatians, perhaps Rhoxolani, killed in battle the governor of Moesia, Fonteius Agrippa,<sup>56</sup> but were defeated by his successor. In 72 the trans-Caucasian Alani made a devastating raid on Parthia;<sup>57</sup> the Romans fortified a strong-point near Tiflis, as recorded in an inscription (*ILS* 8795). When Valerius

<sup>53</sup> Jakobi 1988 collects many interesting parallels between Ovid and Seneca. The pattern seems similar in *HO* and the other plays but he persists in finding fault with the author of *HO*; in questions of authenticity it is natural τὸν πεισόντα λακτίσαι πλέον, but in fact decisive criteria are rare.

<sup>54</sup> *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby, P. Hardie, and M. Whitby (Bristol 1987), 249ff.; see also M. Rozelaar, *ANRW* II.32.2 (1985), 1348ff.

<sup>55</sup> *HO* 282 *ibo*, 740 *cerno* (both in elision), 1435 *video*, 1837 *sedabo*. Note also at 1862 the gerund *lugendo* with short final *o*.

<sup>56</sup> Jos. *BJ* 7.90–4, R. Syme, *Antichthon* 9 (1977), 85f. = *Roman Papers* III (Oxford 1984), 1006f.

<sup>57</sup> Jos. *BJ* 7.244–51; E. Täubler, *Klio* 9 (1909), 18ff., Magie (n.43) 575, 1438 n.24, A.B. Bosworth, *Antichthon* 10 (1976), 67ff.

wrote the *Argonautica*, he must have been aware of the strategic topicality of Colchis (south of the Caucasus on the Black Sea side); in a description of a barbarian warrior he suggests operations at the Caspian Gates (5.603f. *iam pervigil illum/ Medus et oppositis exspectat Hiberia claustris*, 'still does the watchful Mede await him, and Iberia with its confronting barriers'). A little later Statius imagines a command for Vitorius Marcellus in the same area (*Silvae* 4.4.63f. *aut Histrum servare datur metuendaque portae/ limina Caspiacae*, 'or it is your task to guard the Danube and the daunting portal of the Caspian gate'); here *metuenda* implies not just rugged topography but a threat from the Alans to the north. But in spite of such references the Flavians, unlike Nero, were aiming at consolidation rather than expansion.

I append a final postscript from the *Dialogus* of Tacitus. In the year 75, shortly before he died, Curiatius Maternus was contemplating a seditious swan-song, a tragedy called *Thyestes*.<sup>58</sup> We should resist any temptation to assign the extant play to Maternus; in spite of the surprising incidence of short final *o*, the style and metrics are too Senecan in other respects, the matter is not dangerous enough for comment by Tacitus, and far from dominating the East, Vologaeses was now asking Vespasian for help (Suetonius *Domitian* 2.2). But the *Dialogus* reminds us of one thing: Seneca was writing in a society where the family feuds of Greek myth seemed potentially relevant to Roman dynastic struggles, at a time when a calculating statesman might hesitate to say too much. In his tragedies Seneca could not help drawing on his experience of the world, and he understood at first hand the temptations of power that ruined Thyestes, but he had not yet utterly despaired of Rome or his own position. When he speaks of the crimes of kings, one cannot answer for his underlying motivation, which may not have been fully apparent even to himself, but at least at the most obvious level he is hinting less at the Julio-Claudians than the Arsacidae.

<sup>58</sup> For the year, v. Syme 1958, 104ff., 670ff.; for Curiatius' death, A. Cameron, *CR* 17 (1967), 258ff.

## Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines

*Elaine Fantham*

The large harvest of editions and monographs devoted to Seneca's *Phaedra* in recent years has done full justice to the influence on Seneca's play of the Greek tragic precedents, even exploiting the Latin play as a quarry for their recovery and restoration:<sup>1</sup> at the level of individual motifs of dialogue, Seneca's debt to the fourth letter of Ovid's *Heroides* has been confirmed and detailed. But concern with the adaptation of the myth, and the obvious verbal resemblances to Ovid, have combined to distract students from the influence of another Latin work—the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The theme of Virgil's book, the quality of Virgil's portrayal of Dido and her passion, with its truly dramatic greatness (of which a distinguished editor has written 'if Virgil had written nothing else . . . it would have established his right to stand beside the greatest of all Greek tragedians'),<sup>2</sup> the acknowledged supremacy of Virgil's reputation as a poet in Seneca's generation, and Seneca's own fondness for quoting the *Aeneid*,<sup>3</sup> are all strong arguments for expecting some reminiscence of Virgil's great queen in Seneca's delineation

<sup>1</sup> In chronological order Paratore 1955, 339 f.; Friedrich 1953, 1104; Giomini 1955*a* and 1955*b*; Zintzen 1960; Grimal 1963 and 1965; Snell 1964 chs. 2 and 3 (by far the least generous to Senecan originality); Barrett 1964, introduction 16–45; Heldmann 1968, 88–117; Herter 1971, 44–77.

<sup>2</sup> Austin 1955, introduction pp. ix–x.

<sup>3</sup> See Maguiness 1956, esp. p. 93. Seneca quotes *Aen.* iv less frequently than other books, but his interests in prose are essentially in the masculine virtues, which are better illustrated by other books of the *Aeneid*. In *Ep. Mor.* there are three quotations from Book iv: 3–4 in *Ep.* cii, 158–9 in *Ep.* lxiv, and 653 in *Ep.* xii.

of Phaedra and her doomed passion for Hippolytus. Before Virgil only Catullus' Ariadne had approached the insight and sympathetic analysis which was achieved in *Dido*. After Virgil the lovesick heroines of Ovid's *Heroides* are rhetorically versatile, but without the moral stature to give value to their sufferings, while their static portraits cannot offer the development of either action or emotion that is essential to drama. Unfortunately, because Ovid, both in *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, borrowed so much detail and imagery from Virgil, his dependence on the greater poet complicates and often frustrates attempts to distinguish the relationship of Seneca's poetry to that of the two predecessors whom he admired.

Dispensing with *a priori* arguments, I would suggest that the similarities of diction, imagery, thought and structure between the first part of Seneca's *Phaedra* (up to 718) and that of *Aeneid* iv show that Seneca has reinterpreted the Greek Phaedra in terms of Virgil's portrait of Dido. The adoption of the Virgilian form is made easier because the opening situation in the Greek dramas, as in the book of Dido, is that of the woman, newly aware of her love. This love is contrary to moral law, or her own moral principles (incest with a stepson; Dido's promise of fidelity to Sychaeus) and it is at this time undeclared, and one-sided. Knowledge and acceptance of her condition comes from dialogue with a confidante (the nurse; Anna) which leads to an intensification of passion and a period of unconcealed torment: for Phaedra this is in conflict with her former surrender to passion, and has led to suggestions of a change of dramatic model by Seneca; for Dido the torment is delayed until after the brief period of happy mutual love, and comes with the news of Aeneas' departure. The crisis of both Virgil's book and Seneca's play comes with the confrontation between the infatuated woman and the man who rejects her: because Aeneas had acknowledged his love for Dido, she first confronts him in person, and only later attempts the futile supplications through Anna (437–49); for Phaedra the situation and the tradition of the myth dictated that the interview of the confidante with the beloved man should precede her own avowal.

One structural aspect of this double confrontation is common to Virgil and Seneca, and absent from other surviving sources for the Phaedra myth: that is the great simile with which each author marks the failure, not of the real confrontation between queen and beloved,

but of the lesser encounter with the confidante (*Aen.* iv. 441–6; *Pha.* 580–2). The simile marks a turning point in Virgil's narrative, after which despair possesses Dido; in Seneca's writing the turning point is yet to come, at 718.

A detailed simile rich with descriptive epithets and poetic context is a feature proper to epic, not drama. It is natural for a poet to ornament narrative at important moments with a vivid and beautiful image; but when a character in dialogue turns aside to comment to chorus (or audience), a developed image retards dramatic movement and strains psychological realism.<sup>4</sup> Seneca's nurse is a character type particularly unsuited to imagery that is poetic, as opposed to realistic, but the comment is hers:

ut dura cautes undique *intractabilis*  
*resistit undis* et lacessentes aquas  
 longe *remittit*, verba sic spernit mea.

(580–2)

As a hard reef unassailable on all sides resists the breakers and sends the challenging waters afar, so he spurns my words.

The image itself has a long history. Zintzen and Grimal recall the words of the nurse to Phaedra in Euripides (*Hipp.* 304–5), urging her

<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps best shown by reference to Euripides' tragedies, the main dramatic influence on Seneca's writing which is known to us. Barlow 1971 writes of Euripides' economy in the use of 'epic similes' to create 'emphasis by artificial spacing' (102) and draws her examples from messenger speeches, choral lyric, and monody, where the function is pathetic and descriptive. On the messenger speeches she writes 'even the similes ... while in many ways resembling those of Homer, are (partly because they are shorter) more disciplined to the main action they describe' (71). The parenthesis is crucial. Turning to *Hippolytus* and *Medea* we find many vivid metaphors, but only six and four similes respectively, of which only one exceeds a line of verse: *Hipp.* 1202 and 1221, *Med.* 1213 mark the moments of crisis in the messenger speeches; *Hipp.* 564 and 828, *Med.* 1279 occur in lyric and monody (both *Hipp.* 828 and *Med.* 1279 mark the pathos of the heroine's downfall). In dialogue *Hipp.* 429 and *Med.* 523–4 illustrate psychological hypotheses, not the dramatic action; *Hipp.* 872–3, excised by Barrett as an interpolation, is in any case trivial. Nearest to the Senecan descriptive simile are the words of the Nurse at *Med.* 28, where the simple simile comparing the still unseen Medea to a rock or a sea as she gives no heed to the advice of friends is essential to convey her stony dehumanization to the audience. By analogy with this passage, the full descriptive content of the Senecan simile argues strongly for the belief that his dramas were written not for stage-presentation but for recitation, in which similes would be needed for the same function as in epic.

to be more shameless than the sea in importuning Hippolytus, and cite other Euripidean passages (*Med.* 28, *Andr.* 532) where the listener unmoved by entreaty is compared to rock or sea—as parallel symbols of resistance to persuasion. For the complete paradigm of rock resisting sea, representing the listener unmoved by pleas, we must go to Virgil, briefly in *Aen.* vi. 470–1, when Dido in the underworld turns away from Aeneas, *nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur / quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes* ('nor is her expression more moved by the speech he is attempting, than if a hard flint or Marpesian reef stood there'); more fully in *Aen.* vii. 586–90, where Latinus at first wisely resists the passionate outcry of his people for war:

ille velut pelagi rupes immota resistit  
 ut pelagi rupes magno veniente fragore,  
 quae sese multis circumlatrantibus undis  
 mole tenet; scopuli nequiquam et spumea circum  
 saxa fremunt laterique inlisa refunditur alga.

He resists like a rock in the sea unmoved, like a rock in the sea when a mighty crash is coming, a rock that holds fast by its sheer mass when many breakers howl around it; without effect the crags and foamy rocks roar all around, and the seaweed is dashed against its flanks and poured back.

Seneca himself applies this image to the philosopher in *De Ira* iii. 25 (*Dial.* 5.25): *sic inritus ingenti scopulo fluctus adsultat; qui non irascitur inconcussus iniuria perstitit* ('Just so the wave leaps in vain on a vast cliff; the man who does not become angry perseveres, unshaken by wrong', cf. *Const. Sap.* 3.5; *Vit. Beat.* 27.3). He sees in the rock an ideal symbol of wisdom and Stoic *apatheia*. At the structural point matching the moment in *Aeneid* iv which Virgil had signalled by the great oak-simile (*Aen.* iv. 441–6), Seneca, requiring a simile, chose one familiar to him from Virgil. This procedure is confirmed by the choice of *intractabilis* (*Pha.* 580), incongruously transferred to the rock from Hippolytus (as at 229, 271) but also echoing the words with which Virgil introduced his oak-simile:

sed nullis ille movetur  
 fletibus, aut voces ullas tractabilis audit;  
 fata obstant placidasque viri deus obstruit aures.

(*Aen.* iv. 438–40)

But he is unmoved by any weeping, nor does he listen, assailable (or manageable, see below), to any utterances. The fates prevent it and a god blocks the hero's kindly ears.

Austin has a valuable note on *tractabilis*: it is a rare word, although Virgil uses it earlier in this book at iv. 53 (*tractabile caelum*) and applies the negative *intractabilis* in *Aeneid* i. 339 to a wild African tribe (*Libyci, genus intractabile bello*, 'the Libyans, a tribe unassailable in war.'). Austin points to its derivation from *tractare*, suggesting 'almost physical handling, as if an animal had to be tamed', an interpretation more fitted to Hippolytus than to Aeneas, and it is remarkable that while Seneca favours *intractabilis* in prose,<sup>5</sup> he does not use it anywhere in tragedy outside the three *Phaedra* references to Hippolytus and the rock that symbolizes him. He has in fact used the Virgilian word in the first specific comment upon Hippolytus in the play (*quis huius animum flectet intractabilem* ('who will sway this man's unmanageable spirit?' [229])) and made it the keynote of his subsequent characterization, echoed by the less conspicuous synonyms *immitis* (231, 273) and *ferus* (240, 272), but repeated in the concentrated word-portrait of the scene-ending:

temptemus animum tristem et *intractabilem*.  
meus iste labor est aggredi iuvenem *ferum*  
mentemque *saevam* flectere *immitis* viri.

(271–3)

Let us make an attempt on his grim and unmanageable spirit. That task is mine, to approach the fierce young man and sway the savage mind of this merciless man.

It would seem that although he uses neither the positive *tractabilis* nor *intractabilis* as part of his normal tragic vocabulary, the scene of repudiation in *Aeneid* iv decided Seneca's adoption of the word to

<sup>5</sup> Compare in particular *De Ira* ii. 15 (*Dial.* 4.15) *omnes istae feritate liberae gentes leonum luporumque ritu, ut servire non possunt, ita nec imperare: non enim humani vim ingeni sed feri et intractabilis habent*. 'All those tribes free because of their savage nature like lions and wolves, just as they cannot be enslaved so they cannot command; for they do not have the force of a human mind, but one savage and unmanageable.' For this sense of *tractare* cf. *De Clem.* ii. 15 *nullum animal morosius est, nullum maiore arte tractandum quam homo* ('no animal is more moody or requires managing with more skill than man') and the whole preceding analogy between the control of men and of animals.

represent his hero's affinity with the wild creatures and his inaccessibility to female temptation.

Moving back to the first appearance of Phaedra in the play, we find that it is again Seneca's imagery which undramatically but vividly recalls Virgil's portrait of Dido. Virgil had opened book iv with the central metaphor of passion as a consuming flame induced by the wound of love:

at regina gravi iamdudum *saucia cura*  
*vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni.*  
 multa viri virtus animo multusque recursat  
 gentis honos: *haerent infixi pectore vultus*  
 verbaque, nec placidam membris dat cura quietem.

(iv.1–5)

But the queen, already long wounded by a grievous passion, nourishes the wound in her veins and is consumed by unseen fire. The hero's great valour and the great honour of his race comes repeatedly to mind: his features and words stay fixed in her heart and passion grants no calm repose to her limbs.

This wound image, with its secondary associations of fire (or inflammation), is renewed in a full epic simile when Virgil returns to express Dido's intensified passion, resulting from the confession to Anna:

*est mollis flamma medullas*  
 interea et *tacitum* vivit sub pectore *vulnus.*  
*uritur* infelix Dido, totaque vagatur  
 urbe *furens*, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta . . .

(iv. 66–9)

Meanwhile the insinuating flame eats her marrow and the wound lives unnoticed in her heart. Unhappy Dido burns, and wanders over the whole city in frenzy, like a doe, pierced by an arrow.

To match this Seneca gives to Phaedra an opening monologue moving from complaints against a foreign land and absent husband to self-description. Like Dido she cannot sleep:

*alitur et crescit malum*  
 et ardet intus qualis Aetnaeo vapor  
 exundat antro.

(101–3)



The sickness is nourished and grows, and there is fire within me like the smoke that pours from the crater of Etna.

One feature of this self-portrait is undoubtedly Ovidian. The Etna-simile, although first used by Catullus (lxviii. 53), is closest to Ovid's Sappho (*Her.* xv. 12 *me calor Aetnaeo non minor igne tenet*, 'a heat no less than Etna's fire possesses me'), while the verb *exundat* recalls the fuller Etna-simile of Ovid's Polyphemus;<sup>6</sup> another element, the pointed *intus*, occurs both in Virgil and Ovid.<sup>7</sup> Particularly in *Metamorphoses* Ovid developed implications of Virgilian imagery into more explicit forms which appealed to Seneca's baroque taste.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless Phaedra's opening words *alitur et crescit malum* point clearly to the image of *Aen.* iv. 2 and 66: the idea that passion grows and is nourished by the sufferer, in keeping with Seneca's own theory of the passions,<sup>9</sup> takes up Virgil's *alitur venis* and *est medullas*, and the language of iv. 66 is repeated in the choral presentation of the destructive power of love.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Met.* xiii. 867 ff.: *uror enim, laesusque exaestuat acrius ignis, | cumque suis videor translata viribus Aetnam | pectore ferre meo*, 'for I am burning and the hurt fire seethes out more fiercely, and I seem to be carrying in my heart Etna transferred with its violence.'

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Aeneid* xii. 526 *fluctuat ira intus* 'anger ebbs and flows within him' and *Met.* ix. 465 *verum tamen aestuat intus*, 'but truly it seethes within her.'

<sup>8</sup> A peculiarly perverse example is the description of Tereus' falling in love, *Met.* vi. 490–93, *at rex Odrysius, quamvis secessit, in illa | aestuat et, repetens faciem motusque manusque, | qualia vult fingit quae nondum vidit, et ignes | ipse suos nutrit, cura removente soporem*. 'but the Thracian king seethes over her, although he has withdrawn, and seeking to recall her face and movement and hands he imagines to his taste what he has not yet seen and so nourishes his own fires, as passion takes away his sleep.' The introduction to this portrait (from the feast and general sleep to the contrasting *at rex*), the adaptation of *vultus verbaque*, of *alitur*, the destruction of sleep by *cura*, are all modelled on the transition from *Aeneid* i to *Aeneid* iv. Other examples are *Met.* iv. 64, *quoque magis tegitur tectus magis aestuat ignis* 'and the more the fire is concealed the more it seethes') of the secret passion of Pyramus and Thisbe, and a possible influence on Sen. *Pha.* 363–5, *Met.* ix. 465 above and 765, and *Met.* xiv. 351–2, *flammaque per totas visa est errare medullas. | ut primo valido mentem collegit ab aestu* ... 'and a flame seemed to wander all over her marrow. As soon as she recovered her mind from the strong tide of passion ...'

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Pha.* 134: *qui blandiendo dulce nutrit malum | sero recusat ferre quod subiit malum*, 'whoever has fed the sweet sickness by pleasing it, refuses too late to endure the sickness that has crept in.'

<sup>10</sup> *Pha.* 282 *vorat tectas penitus medullas*, 'it devours the marrow concealed deep within.'

Virgil's account of Dido's growing passion includes a catalogue of symptoms of love: indecision and restlessness (74–9), sleepless nights (80–2), and neglected duties (86–9): these are partly represented in Seneca by *Pha.* 104–8 (neglect of her weaving and her duties towards the gods), partly postponed to the second stage of Seneca's portrayal, the scene beginning at 362. Here we should also mention the verbal echo of Dido's *agnosco veteris vestigia flammae* (*Aen.* iv. 23 'I recognize the traces of the old flame') in *Pha.* 113 *fatale miserae matris agnosco malum* ('I recognize the fated sickness of my unhappy mother'). Later in the same scene Seneca marks Phaedra's surrender to love with a second formal simile, at 181–3. It is worth noticing how closely in syntax and word sequence he has adhered to Virgil's simile of *Georg.* 1.201–3, even echoing *adverso ... flumine* and *prono ... amni* (201, 203) with *adversa ... unda* (181–2) and *prono vado* (183). Differences of characterization here led him away from Dido, but we will see below how he adapted the Virgilian imagery of her angry vengeance to his other heroines, Clytemnestra and Medea.

In the much criticized second scene, revealing the queen now sick and delirious, it has been recognized that Seneca's used Euripides' second *Hippolytus*,<sup>11</sup> taking details of Phaedra's condition and behaviour from the chorus (*Eur. Hipp.* 101–8) and the dialogue with the nurse (*Eur. Hipp.* 181–207). But in setting a fire image at the head of the scene, Seneca is again following Virgil, and the same motive may underlie his choice of the narrative (epic) presentation of the nurse's report (*Pha.* 352–87) rather than choral comment or dialogue. Passing from the choral hymn to Venus by means of a question to the nurse *saevis ecquis est flammis modus?* ('is there no limit to the savage flames?')<sup>12</sup> he introduces the portrait with these words:

finisque flammis nullus insanis erit.  
torretur aestu tacito, et inclusus quoque,  
quamvis tegatur, proditur vultu furor;  
erumpit oculis ignis.

(362–5)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Zintzen 1960, Snell 1964, Barrett 1964. It is argued that the second scene based on the surviving *Hippolytus* was grafted by Seneca on to his main source, alleged to be the lost *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos*, and the conflict between Phaedra's unresisting surrender in the first scene and the torment of her second appearance is due to this grafting.

<sup>12</sup> For this transition see Giomini 1955a, 51 and Heldmann 1968, 103 n.1

There will be no end to the mad flames. She is scorched with unspoken fever-heat, and although it is concealed, even confined the frenzy is betrayed by her expression; the fire bursts from her eyes.

The flames, the unspoken anguish, the frenzy, all repeat elements of *Aen.* iv. 66–9; in the following section from *nil idem dubiae placet* ('in her uncertainty nothing unchanged is pleasing'), the accounts of restless change (365–8) and sleepless nights (368–9) complete the symptoms of love begun in 104–9, and match the range of *Aen.* iv. 74–89; at the same time the poet adds details of the Euripidean portrayal, and rounds off the account with a simile largely, and perhaps regrettably, of his own creation (381–3).

He returns to the fire-image once more as the introduction to Phaedra's confession before Hippolytus (641–5), expanding on his own treatment in 362–5. Here 642–4<sup>13</sup> (*intimis saevit ferus | visceribus ignis mersus et venis latens*, 'the savage fire rages sunk in my innermost flesh and lurking in my veins') again verbally recalls *alut venis et caeco carpitur igni* of *Aen.* iv. 2: the simile may have been intruded here precisely in order to lead into the *vultus*-theme of *Pha.* 646–60, because Seneca adopted Virgil's continuation of thought from *Aen.* iv. 1–2 to 4–5: *haerent infixi pectore vultus | verbaque*. Again I would suggest this without prejudice to the derivation of thought in 646–60 wholly or in part from Euripides' lost *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos*.<sup>14</sup> If Seneca is adapting Euripides in Phaedra's comparison of Hippolytus' present beauty with her memory of his father when young, he has made use of the fire simile because he found the ideas linked in Virgil. The simile, like those at 101–3, 181–3 and 362–5 (not to mention 381–3) is epic in type, and most unlikely to have been a feature of Euripides' more restrained dialogue technique.

<sup>13</sup> 643, cannot be retained.

<sup>14</sup> See Merkelbach's brief note 'Heliodor 1.19, Euripides und Seneca', *RhM* 100 (1957), 99–100: he argues that the idea of Hippolytus as a second Theseus—focus of what I have called the *vultus*-motif—derives from Euripides' lost play, since it is also found in Heliodorus *Aeth.* i. 10.2, which cannot depend on Seneca. His attitude is that of the Hellenist ('everything significant in this splendid scene is Euripidean'), yet even with his emendation of Heliodorus the resemblance to Seneca is too slight to cast doubt on his independence in developing this passage; there is no evidence for Seneca's intense emphasis on physical beauty in the fragments of Euripides' lost play. See also Snell 1964, 43.

I have argued that Seneca, in distinguishing two progressive phases of Phaedra's surrender to passion, recalled Virgil's double grouping of imagery before and after the scene of confession to Anna, and introduced and adapted the elements of metaphor and description from *Aen.* iv.1–5 and 66–89, so that, whatever the 'original' of Seneca's version of the drama, it was presented in Virgilian clothing. There is reminiscence and imitation of *Aen.* iv. 437–49 in the treatment of *Pha.* 580–2, and further structural imitation in the speeches of Phaedra from 641–60 of the confrontation scene.

Earlier in this scene, one abortive aside, 596–7 *si coepta exequor | forsam iugali crimen abscondam face* ('if I carry through my undertaking perhaps I may hide my offence with a wedding torch'), exemplifies the difficulty of an honest assessment of Seneca's relative indebtedness to Virgil and to Ovid. Phaedra's meaning is that if she should win Hippolytus' love she might hope to cloak the offence by the formal act of marriage; the idea is never developed, so the question does not arise whether in her mind this would actually legitimate or merely disguise her double offence of adultery and incest. Grimal (1965), whose translation assumes the former, recalls Ovid *Her.* iv.137 (*cognato poterit nomine culpa tegi*, 'my guilt can be hidden by the name of kinship') and points to the real difference of thought; on the phrase *iugali ... face* he quotes Horace *Odes* 3.11.33 *face nuptiali*, missing the nearer precedent of Ov. *Her.* iv. 121 *taeda-que iugali* ('a wedding brand') applied by Phaedra to Antiope's marriage. Superficially then, both vocabulary and thought recall the one obvious source, Ovid's Phaedra. But the thought is agreed to differ; we would better compare *Aen.* iv. 172 where Seneca's thought (marriage as concealment for the offence) and Ovid's vocabulary are combined: *coniugium vocat: hoc praetexit nomine culpam*, 'she calls it marriage, and with this name disguises her guilt.' The word *iugalis* itself came to Ovid from Virgil, above all from the context of Dido in *Aeneid* iv, where it occurs three times.<sup>15</sup>

Are we to call this a debt to Ovid or Virgil—or both? Parallelism of situation and earlier deliberate reminiscence justify, I believe, a prior but not exclusive claim for the latter.

<sup>15</sup> *Aen.* iv. 16 *vinclō ... sociare iugali* 'to associate by the wedding bond', 59, *vinclā iugalia*, and 496, *lectumque iugalem*, 'the marriage bed.'

One notable image of *Aeneid* iv which failed to appeal to Ovid<sup>16</sup> was adapted by Seneca, not to Phaedra, but to the embodied anger and revenge of Medea and Clytemnestra. The metaphor of jealous anger which expresses Dido's feelings when Aeneas' departure is known occurs once directly and a second time reported by Mercury to Aeneas:

Ingeminant curae rursusque resurgens  
saevit amor *magnoque irarum fluctuat aestu*.<sup>17</sup>  
(531–2)

Her passions redouble and again love revives and rages, and she is wave-tossed by a mighty tide of anger.

illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore versat  
certa mori, *variosque irarum concitat aestus*.  
(563–4)

She is revolving treachery and dreadful wickedness in her heart, resolved on death, and stirring up conflicting tides of anger.

*Aestus*, no less than *fluctus* and *fluctuare*, is a basic element in Virgil's imagery of mental turmoil, but its associations with both sea-current and seething heat or fever make it more versatile, a virtual bridge between sea and fire imagery.<sup>18</sup> Indeed while Ovid preferred to

<sup>16</sup> The central verb of the image, *fluctuare*, is absent from the Ovid concordance of Barry, Deferrari and Maguire: they quote no comparable imagery based on the noun *fluctus*. Instead Ovid develops the fire-imagery of torment as in the passages quoted above n. 6–8.

<sup>17</sup> Virgil is himself echoing the rhythm and vocabulary of Catullus lxiv. 62 '*magnis curarum fluctuat undis*' ('she is storm-tossed with mighty waves of passion.') The verb is active in form with passive or reflexive meaning in Catullus, Lucretius, Virgil and at times in Senecan prose: there is one definite instance in tragedy, Sen. *HF* 699. The deponent form introduced by Livy is common in Senecan prose, and in tragedy occurs at *Agam.* 109, *Med.* 943 below and *Tro.* 657—all images of emotional turmoil. On *Aen.* iv. 532 Quinn (ad loc.) 146 argues convincingly for Dido, not *amor* as subject of the verb; the parallels cited in the next note (20) mostly favour the person as subject, expressing the passion in the instrumental ablative (but cf. *Aen.* xii. 526 in which *ira* must be subject, representing the anger of both warriors; and the nominative *pudor* in xii. 666 with the parallel verb *aestuatur*).

<sup>18</sup> We can see how Virgil varied his expression of the basic theme when these metaphors recur in later passages of the *Aeneid*, applied to the anxious responsibilities of Aeneas or the turbulent anger of Turnus. *Aen.* viii. 19–21, for example, combines with virtually no change elements of *Aen.* iv. 532 and 285–6; *magno curarum fluctuat aestu | atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc | in*

develop the fire associations of *aestus* and *aestuarē* | *exaestuarē* which are not made explicit by Virgil in, say, *Aen.* ix. 798 or xii. 666–8, Seneca instead developed the sea-imagery common to *aestus* and the other Virgilian language. In his word-portrait of Clytemnestra which begins the *Agamemnon*, her opening *quid fluctuaris*, ‘why are you wave-tossed’ (109), leads to a later series of images focused around the mind as sailor on a heaving sea. There is an initial reminiscence of Dido, *flammae medullas et cor exurunt meum*, ‘the flames consume my marrow and heart’ (132), then an array of her various emotions (*dolor, timor, invidia, cupido*, all opposing *pudor* [133–8]) introduces the simile:

*fluctibus variis agor,*  
ut cum hinc profundum ventus, hinc aestus rapit,  
incerta dubitat unda, cui cedat malo.  
*proinde omisi regimen e manibus meis:*  
quocunque me ira, quo dolor, quo spes feret  
hoc ire pergam, *fluctibus dedimus ratem.*

(138–43)

I am driven by opposing waves, just as when the wind sweeps the deep sea this way and the tide that way; the wave hesitates uncertain which evil to yield to. Just so I have dropped the tiller from my hands. Wherever anger, grief, and hope shall carry me, I shall go forward that way: we have surrendered our craft to the waves.

In the corresponding self-analysis of Medea at her time of decision, there is a straight comparison of mind to sea, without the third element of the boat or boatman:

*partisque rapit varias.* ‘He is tossed with a mighty tide of passion and divides his swift intent now this way and now that, and sweeps it in opposite directions.’ Books ix–xii illustrate further variations in successive allusions to Turnus: cf. ix. 798, ‘*mens aestuat ira*’, ‘his mind seethes with anger’: x. 680 *haec memorans animo nunc huc nunc fluctuat illuc*, ‘saying this he is tossed now this way, now that’, and four times in book xii. 486, ‘*vario nequiquam fluctuat aestu*’, ‘and is tossed in vain with opposing tides’, 525f., ‘*nunc, nunc | fluctuat ira intus*’, ‘now, now anger tosses within me’, 666–68, ‘*aestuat ingens | una in corde pudor mixtoque insania luctu | et furii agitatus amor et conscia virtus*’, ‘together in his heart shame seethes and madness mixed with grieving and love harried by the furies and proud valour’, and 831, ‘*irarum tantos volvis sub pectore fluctus*’, ‘so great the waves of anger you roll within your heart.’ 666–8 is particularly interesting as an embryonic psychomachia, containing in its array of conflicting emotions the nucleus of an elaborate form like *Agam.* 133–8.

ora quid lacrimae rigant  
*variamque nunc huc ira, nunc illuc amor*  
*diducit?* anceps aestus incertam rapit:  
 ut saeva rapidi bella cum venti gerunt  
 utrimque fluctus maria discordes agunt  
 dubiumque fervet pelagus, haud aliter *meum*  
*cor fluctuatur.*

(937–43)

Why do tears wet my face and now anger, now love, distract me turning now this way, now that? A double tide sweeps me in my uncertainty, as when swift winds wage savage warfare and the quarrelling waves drive the sea from both directions, and the confused sea seethes, just so my heart is wave-tossed.

and

*rursus increscit*<sup>19</sup>*dolor*  
 et fervet odium, repetit invitam manum  
 antiqua Erinys—ira, qua ducis sequor.

(951–3)

Again my grief swells up and my hatred seethes, the old Erinys seeks out my unwilling hand; anger, I follow where you lead.

I have cited these passages extensively to show the features which they share with each other that are not derived from Virgil: the *anceps aestus* as subject, the sea itself in doubt, the concept of anger as leading on or carrying away the passive human agent. Though one presents the agent as the oarsman who no longer steers, the other as the sea (itself tossed by passion), both derive from the verb *fluctuare* whose passive usage applies equally to the sea tossed by storm, or the vessel and oarsman tossed by the sea.

Virgil's simple image has become the nucleus of two tumultuous set-pieces which confirm how greatly Virgil's Dido had impressed Seneca as the greatest Latin portrait of a proud woman overwhelmed by a tragic passion.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps an echo of *Aen.* iv. 531f. *rursusque resurgens | saevit amor.*

*Bibliographical note*

This article was published before the completion of Otto Zwierlein's Oxford Classical Text (1986), but passages quoted in it do not differ substantively from Zwierlein's text. There has been far more good scholarship on *Phaedra* since then than I can list here: let me mention only the two English language editions of A. J. Boyle (1987) and Michael Coffey with Roland Mayer (1990), and two monographs: C. P. Segal, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra* and O. Zwierlein, *Senecas Phaedra und ihre Vorbilder*.



## Seneca and Renaissance Drama: Ideology and Meaning

*A. J. Boyle*

So that the right vse of Comedy will (I thinke) by no body be blamed, and much lesse of the high and excellent Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and sheweth forth the Vlcers that are couered with Tissue; that maketh Kinges feare to be Tyrants, and Tyrants manifest their tirannical humors; that, with sturring the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the vncertainty of this world, and vpon how weake foundations guilden roofes are builded; that maketh vs knowe,

*Qui sceptrā saeuus duro imperio regit,  
Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit.*

Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595)<sup>1</sup>

The Senecanism of Renaissance tragedy extended beyond allusion, action, and form. It encompassed thought, idea, and meaning. Central ideas structuring Renaissance playmaking before sixteenth- and seventeenth-century audiences seem derived directly or indirectly from the Roman dramatist. Although most obviously revealed in plays which go overtly to Senecan material (Corneille's *Médée*, Rotrou's *L'Hercule mourant*, La Pinelière's *Hippolyte*, Racine's *Phèdre*)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Smith 1904, Vol. 1, 177. The Latin quotation is *Oedipus* 705f.: 'The savage-sceptred ruler of insensate power | Fears those who fear him; terror rebounds on its author.'

and rewrite that material to reflect contemporary concerns,<sup>2</sup> ideological indebtedness is apparent throughout the whole of Renaissance tragedy. This chapter restricts itself to four areas of such indebtedness.

### MODES OF POWER

Renaissance tragedy is filled with speeches on kingship and power, replaying many of the ideas articulated in Senecan drama. Thus the Countess of Cambrai in Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, re-expressing the Senecan notion of the interdependence of power's stability and its justice (*Tro.* 258f., *Med.* 196, *Thy.* 215ff.):

Will kings make treason lawful? Is society  
 (To keep which only kings were first ordained)  
 Less broke in breaking faith 'twixt friend and friend  
 Than 'twixt the king and subject? Let them fear.  
 Kings' precedents in license lack no danger.  
 Kings are compar'd to gods and should be like them,  
 Full in all right, in naught superfluous,  
 Nor nothing straining past right for their right:  
 Reign justly and reign safely.

(*Rev. Bussy* 4.3.41–9)

Similarly Senecanesque, even Thyestean (*Thy.* 446ff.), discussions of the vanities of power may be found in the mouth of Henry V (*H5* 4.1.226ff.) and Corneille's Auguste (*Cinna* 2.1/371ff.), or statements of power's inversion of moral values in the mouth of Shakespeare's Edward:

But for a kingdom any oath may be broken:  
 I would break a thousand oaths to reign one year.

(*3H6* 1.2.16f.)

Or Jonson's Sejanus:

SEJ. Whom hatred frights,  
 Let him not dream on sov'reignty. TIB. Are rites

<sup>2</sup> Note the focus in *Médée* on *raisons d'état* as motivators of action and a concern with the privileges due to a king.

Of faith, love, piety, to be trod down?  
 Forgotten? And made vain? SEJ. All for a crown.  
 (Sej. 2.174–7)

Or Chapman's Baligny:

Your Highness knows  
 I will be honest, and betray for you  
 Brother and father; for I know, my lord,  
 Treachery for kings is truest loyalty,  
 Nor is to bear the name of treachery,  
 But grave, deep policy.  
 (Rev. Bussy 2.1.29–34)

Or Massinger's Parthenius:

Monarchs that dare not do unlawfull things,  
 Yet bare them out, are Constables, not Kings.  
 (Roman Actor 1.2.86f.)

Other sources for discussions of kingship were available to Renaissance dramatists, most famously Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (completed 1513; published 1532), itself indebted to Seneca for its representation of power.<sup>3</sup> Another source is the great epic of Seneca's nephew, Lucan, whose speech of Pothinus (*BC* 8.484ff.) became a model for the opening of Corneille's *Pompée*. Seneca's influence, however, seems foundational. The so-called 'Machiavellianism' of the passages quoted above is a replay of the positions of Oedipus (*Oed.* 703f.), Eteocles (*Pho.* 653f.), and Atreus (*Thy.* 215ff.). It pervades the Senecan *Gorboduc* (1.2.261ff., 2.1.140ff., 3.1.170ff.), and becomes a commonplace of English tragedy from that point onwards.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed Seneca's tyrant figures, most especially that of Atreus, provide influential models for Renaissance drama's figuring of power, in which, almost ubiquitously, 'Power and wealth move to tyranny, not bounty' (*Rev. Bussy* 4.2.26). The tyrant's resort to

<sup>3</sup> Most notably to Seneca's *De Clementia*: see Skinner and Price 1988, xvff. But cf. *Il Principe*, Ch. 17: 'It is much safer to be feared than loved'; and *Pho.* 659: 'qui uult amari, languida regnat manu' ('who wants to be loved reigns with drooping hand'); *Oed.* 704: 'regna custodit metus' ('fear protects kingdoms').

<sup>4</sup> For echoes (esp.) of the *Thyestes* discussion in English tragedy, see Cunliffe 1893. A close imitation is that of Greene in *Selimus* (Cunliffe, 63ff.).

torture (*Spanish Tragedy* 4.4.183ff.) and predilection for the murder of children have their origins in Atreus, and realise themselves in Mussato's Ezzelino, Cinthio's Sulmone, Speroni's Eolo, Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Barabas, Richard III, Marston's Piero and Antonio, Macbeth, the 'jealous tyrant' Leontes (in part), Corneille's Cléopâtre (who fuses Atreus and Medea), Grimoald, and Phocas. The Herod figure of the medieval mystery plays must not be overlooked in the Renaissance construction of tyranny, but it is clear that even in the dramatisation of Hérode in Tristan l'Hermite's *La Mariane* Senecan paradigms are involved. Atrean insatiability and monomania are readily adopted and adapted—together with the self-consuming will to power that defines Lycus, Eteocles, and in part Atreus, albeit Atreus is not consumed.

Although Atreus was perhaps the single most important model for Renaissance tyranny, influencing even the wit, irony and speech-style of figures such as Shakespeare's Richard III, Seneca's Hercules was also significant and supplies the major paradigm for Shakespeare's Coriolanus and, more conspicuously, for Marlowe's Tamburlaine.<sup>5</sup> Like Hercules before he slays his children, Tamburlaine, as he readies himself to slay his own son Calyphas, impiously pits his power into and against the heavens:

Here, Jove, receive his fainting soul again,  
 A form not meet to give that subject essence  
 Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine,  
 Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves,  
 Made of the mould whereof thyself consists,  
 Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious,  
 Ready to levy power against thy throne,  
 That I might move the turning spheres of heaven!  
 For earth and all this airy region  
 Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine.

(2*Tam* 4.1.111–20)

There is ironic allusion here. Hercules was insane when he made his impious verbal assault on the heavens (*non capit terra Herculem*, 'earth does not contain Hercules', *HF* 960) and then killed his sons. Tamburlaine is fully conscious.<sup>6</sup> Marlowe has taken from Seneca the

<sup>5</sup> See Waith 1962, 60ff., 121ff.

<sup>6</sup> See Braden 1985, 186f.

tyrant's monomaniacal drive to annex the universe and placed it in a fully cognisant brain.

Marlowe's examination of power in *Tamburlaine* borrows other Senecan things. Noticeable, as in *Hercules Furens*, is the preoccupation with 'virtue' in the play, in the sense of the Latin *uirtus*, 'manliness', and its relationship to power.<sup>7</sup> For Tamburlaine, although 'virtue is the fount whence honor springs' (*1Tam.* 4.4.131) and 'solely is the sum of glory' (*1Tam.* 5.1.189), that 'glory' and 'honor' 'consists in shedding blood' (*1Tam.* 5.1.478) until he himself reaches 'The sweet fruition of an earthly crown' (*1Tam.* 2.7.29) and hangs his 'weapons on Alcides' post' (*1Tam.* 5.1.529). Tamburlaine's glorification of kingly power could have come from Eteocles (*Pho.* 664):

A god is not so glorious as a king.  
I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven  
Cannot compare with kingly joys on earth.  
To wear a crown enchas'd with pearl and gold,  
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;  
To ask and have, command and be obeyed.

(*1Tam.* 2.5.57–62)

Like a typically Senecan figure, he is deaf to appeals for mercy or compassion (*1Tam.* 5.1.80ff.). He views his own being in metaphysical terms:

They have refused the offer of their lives,  
And know my customs are as preemptory  
As wrathful planets, death, or destiny.

(*1Tam.* 5.1.126–8)

And like Medea, he sees himself as co-extensive with the cosmos:

No, strike the drums, and, in revenge of this,  
Come, let us charge our spears and pierce his breast  
Whose shoulders bear the axis of the world,  
That if I perish, heaven and earth may fade.

(*2Tam.* 5.3.57–60)

<sup>7</sup> For Tamburlaine as 'an embodiment of Renaissance "virtù"', see the edition of J. D. Jump (Lincoln, Nebraska 1967), xixff.

Unlike Medea his construction of himself in language transpires to be an illusion. His death, though self-dramatizing, does not consume the universe. The trick for Seneca's Colchian princess was that her control of language mirrored her control of the world:

sternam et euertam omnia.  
 ... inuadam deos  
 et cuncta quatiam ...  
 sola est quies,  
 mecum ruina cuncta si uideo obruta:  
 mecum omnia abeant. trahere, cum pereas, libet.  
 (*Med.* 414, 424f., 426–8)

I'll destroy and raze everything.  
 ... I'll attack the gods  
 And shake the universe.  
 The only calm is to see  
 The universe collapse in ruin with me:  
 Let all die with me. To take to the grave is sweet.

Tamburlaine is no magician, nor is he the offspring of the Sun. Medea is both and destroys the Corinthian universe without dying. But neither play offers its audience moral comfort. The world which allows the mass killings and tortures of a Tamburlaine and witnesses his death after his burning of the Koran is as morally perplexing as the one which witnesses the mass-murderess' departure in the chariot of the Sun.

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* plays with and against the Herculean paradigm, preoccupied throughout with 'virtue' and 'valour', but inverting the Herculean slaughter of kin to allow the living wife, child, and mother to turn the tragic hero from his city to 'a world elsewhere' which, rather than cleanse or renew, kills its own 'god' (4.6.91, 5.4.24). Shakespeare's use of Atreus is obviously more widespread, as it is complex. Sometimes, as in *Titus Andronicus* and *Macbeth*, tyrannical characteristics are split between characters to allow for greater complexity of audience response. Aaron's Atrean qualities allow more sympathy to move to Titus,<sup>8</sup> as Macbeth's

<sup>8</sup> For Aaron's 'Atrean qualities', note the ghoulish ironies and jubilation attending his removal of Titus' hand: *Titus* 3.1.201–6. The witticisms continue in Aaron's revelation speeches at *Titus* 5.1.89ff., where they are conjoined with a (similarly Atrean) limitless capacity for evil: *Titus* 5.1.124–44.

'fiend-like Queen' creates space for a more profound and subtle protagonist. Macbeth also brings to his Atrean portrait the properties of a Christian sinner and one with the most extraordinary poetic imagination, whose guilt like that of a Thyestes or a Theseus affects the entire cosmos:

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
 Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd  
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
 That tears shall drown the wind.

(*Mac.* 1.7.21–5)

Filled initially with moral anguish, horror, and all the linguistic registers of remorse, Macbeth becomes incarcerated by his own evil, and ends his life not in Christian repentance but in poetic despair. The articulation of that despair and his self-consciously heroic death problematize not only the play's treatment of heroism but any simple response to its protagonist.

In *Macbeth* too the issue of power and its illusion is also brought home through Shakespeare's use of another Senecan strategy, the destabilizing of male power, hierarchy, and status by the behaviour and language of women. The ambiguous prophecies and discourse of the marginalized witches, even if not directly indebted to Seneca, in a larger sense replay those of Cassandra in *Agamemnon* and Medea in *Medea*, marginalized female figures with supernatural powers, who similarly expose the fictions underlying the narratives of male order.<sup>9</sup> So too the language, body and desire of Phaedra anticipate those of Cleopatra, similarly pitted against the assumptions of male power:

o dure Theseu semper, o numquam tuis  
 tuto reuerse: gnatus et genitor nece  
 reditus tuos luere; peruertis domum  
 amore semper coniugum aut odio nocens.

Hippolyte, tales intuor uultus tuos  
 talesque feci? ...

heu me, quo tuus fugit decor

<sup>9</sup> A similar function in Senecan drama can be given to less powerful female figures, such as Hecuba and Andromache in *Troades*, or Phaedra.

oculique nostrum sidus? exanimis iaces?  
ades parumper, uerbaque exaudi mea.

(*Pha.* 1164–75)

Ever brutal Theseus, never returning  
To kin without harm. Your son's and sire's death  
Paid for your returns. You destroy your house  
Through love of wife or hate, baneful always.

Hippolytus, is this your face I see,  
This what I made it? . . .

O, where has your beauty fled  
And eyes that were my stars? Do you lie dead?  
Come back a little while and hear my words.

Noblest of men, woo't die?  
Hast thou no care of me? Shall I abide  
In this dull world, which in thy absence is  
No better than a sty? O see, my women,  
The crown o'th'earth doth melt. My lord!

(*AC* 4.15.61–5)

My desolation does begin to make  
A better life. 'Tis paltry to be Caesar.

(*AC* 5.2.1f.)

Both queens are acculturations of 'nature', and with the latter they are especially associated (*Pha.* 352, *AC* 1.2.153ff., 2.2.201ff.). It is 'nature' in the form of female desire and physicality that in one case destroys, in the other ideologically undermines, the traditional social order of male tyranny and power. In Seneca the tyrant demands annihilation before his male offspring's dismembered corpse, and casts Phaedra into the earth. Shakespeare's Caesar politicises the woman's dead body, literally incorporating it into the rituals of power; but that body and its desire cannot be so easily refigured.

It is noticeable that after the death of Elizabeth the English stage witnesses an upsurge in female tragic protagonists (Webster's heroines are prime cases), the *locus*, as in Seneca, of male anxieties about control, death, mutability, and power. It is noticeable too that in the tragicomedies of this period Shakespeare's approach to the tyrant figure changes. Either he has the tyrant repent (Leontes in *The*



*Winter's Tale*; cf. Lamano in Cinthio's *Altile*), or sets up anti-tyrant, anti-*furor* figures such as Pericles (in successful opposition to the incestuous tyrant Antiochus) or Prospero. Although Prospero displays tyrannical features throughout much of *The Tempest* (to Caliban he is simply 'the tyrant', 2.2.162, 3.2.40), he overcomes anger and the temptations to *furor* and revenge, and, in clear opposition to such potential tyrant figures as the usurper Antonio and the would-be usurper Sebastian, manifests at the end an anti-Atrean mode of power. But if the Senecan concept of the true king ('He's a king who's banished fear | And the evils of a dreadful heart', *Thy.* 348f.), articulated only to be undermined in *Thyestes*, is hinted at in figures such as Prospero, it is even more substantially realised in the Auguste of Corneille's *Cinna*—a play itself built upon a Senecan text, *De Clementia*. Corneille's *Cinna* is especially interesting because of its reflection of the contemporary political milieu. Its support of absolute monarchy has been seen to accord with the policies of Richelieu, Corneille's ambivalent patron, who was attempting to transform the French feudal system into a centralized monarchy. Like his *Horace*, which received its first performance at Richelieu's home, *Cinna* met with the cardinal's enthusiastic approval. But one should observe that the issue of power's legitimacy (one never explored by Seneca *tragicus*)<sup>10</sup> marks several of Corneille's plays (his *Oedipe* is a case in point) and that in *Cinna* the approval of absolutism is tempered by a more liberal conception of a clement monarchy.

A return to Senecan tyranny is evident in Racine. He lives in the same world as Corneille, but, while he occasionally articulates criteria for the true or wise king, *un roi sage* (*Athalie* 4.2/1278ff., cf. 4.3/1381ff.), and most of his plays explore the whole issue of the legitimacy of rule, his rulers tend to be tyrannical figures (Néron, Thésée, Amurat, Mithridate, *Athalie*), even if complex ones. Criticism of the world of power and of the dangers of tyranny abounds (even in *Athalie*: see Joad's speech when crowning Joas at 4.3/1387ff.), and, as in Seneca, insistence on fate and the imperatives of the past underscore both power's illusion and history's determinism.

<sup>10</sup> Seneca examines, in the Lycus scene of *HF* and the final act of *Ag.*, for example, the issue of usurped power. But the legitimacy of the system of absolute monarchy is not explored.

## THE SENEKAN SELF

What Racine's tragic representations (and not merely those of rulers) have in common with those of Corneille centres around the concept of personal consciousness and force, the sense of self. Seneca's 'aut-archic style of selfhood',<sup>11</sup> one defined by its own will, sufficiency, empowerment, and its drive towards actualization of that power, was an important legacy to French and Renaissance drama. Such selfhood manifests itself in (among other things) the contempt for life and death displayed almost ubiquitously by both Senecan and Renaissance tragic figures. It realises some of its finest dramatic moments in death-scenes architected to show an assertion of the dying figure's identity and will.

CL. Furiosa morere. CA. Veniet et uobis furor.  
(Ag. 1012)

CL. Die raging. CA. To you too will rage come.  
Theridamas and Tamburlaine, I die:  
And fearful vengeance light upon you both.  
(*ITam* 2.7.51f.)

haud frangit animum uanus hic terror meum:  
nam mihi paternus uincere est tauros labor.  
(*Pha.* 1066f.)

This idle terror does not break my spirit;  
For to vanquish bulls is my father's trade.

I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
(*Mac* 5.8.27-9)

o mors amoris una sedamen mali,  
o mors pudoris maximum laesi decus,  
confugimus ad te: pande placatos sinus.  
(*Pha.* 1188-90)

O death, sole remedy of wicked love,  
O death, great ornament of blighted shame,

<sup>11</sup> Miola 1992, 6, describing the thesis of Braden 1985.

We fly to you; spread your merciful arms.

Come violent death,  
Serve for mandragora to make me sleep.

(*Malfi* 4.2.234f.)

Et la mort, à mes yeux déroband la clarté,  
Rend au jour, qu'ils souillaient, toute sa pureté.

(*Phd.* 5.7/1643f.)

And death, robbing my eyes of light, restores  
To the polluted day all its purity.

This autarchic selfhood manifests itself ubiquitously and conspicuously in the ability of characters to construct their identity and their domination of the world in language. Marlowe's Tamburlaine was quoted above. All of Shakespeare's great tragic figures are in some sense Tamburlaine, that is to say, Hercules, Medea, Hippolytus, Theseus, Oedipus, Atreus, Thyestes. They create a linguistic world with their self as its referential centre:

'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to the world. Now could I drink hot blood,  
And do such bitter business as the day  
Would quake to look on.

(*Ham.* 3.2.379–83)

No, you unnatural hags,  
I will have such revenges on you both  
That all the world shall—I will do such things,  
What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be  
The terrors of the earth.

(*Lear* 2.4.276–80)

Come, seeling Night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day,  
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,  
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond  
Which keeps me pale.

(*Mac.* 3.2.46–50)

The self's drive towards dominance and actualization is evident in Renaissance tragedy from Mussato's Ezzelino onwards, who was

primarily modelled on Atreus. From Atreus too, but most especially from Medea, seems derived the existential function of violence in a number of tragedies, its use in the construction and fixing of the self: *Medea nunc sum*, 'Now I am Medea' (*Med.* 910). Obvious examples again are Marlowe's heroes, especially Tamburlaine and Barabas. Medea is perhaps also, even more than Atreus, the Senecan paradigm of the linguistic base of the Renaissance self, its foundation on the ability to construct and fix itself through and in language. It is no accident that Seneca's *Medea* was a prominent subtext throughout the Renaissance and was itself rewritten several times—for example, La Péruse's *La Médée* (1556), Dolce's *Medea* (1558—based admittedly on both Euripides and Seneca), Fulke Greville's *Alaham* (1600). Significantly Corneille's first real attempt at tragedy was his *Médée* (1635).

In the French tradition this selfhood, expressed in set speeches and verbal declamation, shows a marked concern with *honneur*. So Cléopâtre's last words in Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive* (4/1361f.), where Senecan onomastic rhetoric highlights the preoccupation with *honneur*:

L'honneur que je te fais l'honneur dernier sera  
 Qu'à son Antoine mort Cléopâtre fera.  
 The honour I do you will be the last honour  
 Cleopatra will do for her dead Antony.

Or Chimène in Corneille's *Le Cid* (3.3/821):

Je cours sans balancer où mon honneur m'oblige.  
 I rush unwavering where my honour calls.

This *honneur* is, especially in Corneille, often the moral centre of a character's emotional solipsism, not simply a categorical imperative but the linch-pin of identity. It is an ideological development not as distant from the Senecan paradigm as it may appear. Certainly for some Senecan figures 'shame', 'moral integrity', 'honour' are defining aspects of their self. Thus Hercules:

non sic furore cessit extinctus pudor,  
 populos ut omnes impio aspectu fugem.  
 (HF 1240f.)

Madness hasn't so extinguished my honour  
To have the world flee at my unholy sight.

Thus Phaedra:

Hippolyte, nunc me compotem uoti facis:  
sanas furentem. maius hoc uoto meo est,  
saluo ut pudore manibus immoriar tuis.

(*Pha.* 710–12)

Hippolytus, you now fulfil my prayer:  
You heal my passion. This transcends my prayer:  
At your hands to die with my honour safe.

What Phaedra and Hercules also share is *furor*: passion, rage, madness. A defining feature of such major figures as Atreus, Thyestes, Medea, Oedipus, Cassandra, *furor* is a central ingredient of what the Renaissance received as the Senecan tragic self.

*Furor* was well-known to Renaissance poets. Spenser's personification of it as a 'mad man' and 'monster', defeated and bound by the knight Guyon, is justly famous:

With hundred yron chaines he did him bind,  
And hundred knots that did him sore constraîne:  
Yet his great yron teeth he still did grind,  
And grimly gnash, threatning reuenge in vaine;  
His burning eyen, whom bloudie strakes did staine,  
Stared full wide, and threw forth sparkes of fire,  
And more for ranck despight, then for great paine,  
Shakt his long lockes, colourd like copper-wire,  
And bit his tawny beard to shew his raging ire.

(*Faerie Queene* 2.4.15)

*Furor* was especially well-known to Renaissance dramatists, who were sometimes drawn to Seneca precisely because of his ability to dramatise violent emotions or *affetti* (so Cinthio). The presentation of *furor* in *Hercules Furens* and the non-Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus* was particularly influential. Jean de la Taille's *Saül Le Furieux*, Garnier's *Porcie*, Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc*, Tristan l'Hermite's *La Mariane* are among the plays most obviously indebted. *Medea* too looms large in this regard. In Corneille's plays we find the Colchian princess' rage manipulated from Médée herself into Marcelle in *Théodore* and

Cléopâtre in *Rodogune*. In Shakespeare *furor*—rage, passion, lust, ambition, or anger verging on madness—is the central psychological issue in such plays as *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*. In *Othello* even the post-*furor* recognition of guilt that marks Seneca's treatment in *Hercules Furens* and *Phaedra* is re-dramatized; while the sleep that follows Hercules' rage and restores the tragic figure to sanity finds itself replayed in Marston's *Antonio* plays and Greene's *Orlando Furioso*.<sup>12</sup> The motif is used enigmatically at the end of Racine's *Andromaque*, where the post-madness sleep descends on Oreste, but the play ends in uncertainty before he awakes.

Racine makes much of *fureur*, nor only in the case of the madness of Oreste. It is to Racine especially that one should turn for *furor* in the sense of the *amor* or erotic passion which drives men and women (primarily the latter) to tragic action. Brilliantly articulated in Seneca's *Phaedra*, it is rearticulated by Racine not only in his *Phèdre*, where, however, the extraordinary fusion of moral sensibility and debasing *amor-furor*, which defines Seneca's heroine, is reproduced with theatrical force:

Mon époux est vivant, et moi je brûle encore!  
 Pour qui? Quel est le coeur où prétendent mes vœux?  
 Chaque mot sur mon front fait dresser mes cheveux.  
 Mes crimes désormais ont comblé la mesure.  
 Je respire à la fois l'inceste et l'imposture.

(*Phd.* 4.6/1266–70)

My husband is alive and yet I burn!  
 For whom? Whose is the heart which my prayers claim?  
 Each word makes the hair bristle on my brow.  
 My crimes henceforth have filled their measure.  
 I now breathe out both incest and deceit.

In Racine's secular tragedies as a whole love seems the prime motor of the tragic action. It is almost always unreciprocated. Described by both *Phèdre* and *Hippolyte* as *un mal*, both sickness and evil, it seems more akin to hate in the actions it produces. Characters such as Hermione and Oreste in *Andromaque*, Roxane in *Bajazet*, Eriphile in *Iphigénie* oscillate between love and hate, sometimes quite

<sup>12</sup> For these and other examples see Soellner 1958 and Miola 1992, 123f.

self-consciously. It is Eriphile herself who describes the transformation of her passion for Achille into hatred of Iphigénie as the *triste effet* of her own *fureurs* (*Iph.* 2.1/505). *Andromaque's* Oreste comments on the opposite movement, from hate to love (of Hermione):

Je sentis que ma haine allait finir son cours,  
Ou plutôt je sentis que je l'aimais toujours.  
(1.1/87f.)

I felt that my hatred had run its course;  
Or rather I felt that I loved her always.

Oreste, like Phèdre, evidences considerable moral sensibility and turmoil under the onslaught of passion (*And.* 3.1/771–84, 4.3/1173ff., 5.4/1565ff.). But more often *fureur* is accompanied by little moral feeling; generally, the objects of passion are scantily regarded. Racine's debts are in part (and a most important part) Euripidean, but in the background too seems Seneca's Medea, the supreme moral and emotional solipsist, who at the end of Seneca's play divests herself of all human ties.

Opposed to *furor* in Senecan tragedy is *ratio*, reason. In the cases of Thyestes and Phaedra, they struggle for control of the human self:

quid ratio possit? uicit ac regnat furor,  
potensque tota mente dominatur deus.  
(*Pha.* 184f.)

What can reason do? Passion's conquered and reigns,  
And a potent god commands my whole heart.

Compare this confidant scene between Pylade and Oreste in *Andromaque*:

- PY. Modérez donc, Seigneur, cette fureur extrême.  
Je ne vous connais plus: vous n'êtes plus vous-même.  
Souffrez ...
- OR. Non, tes conseils ne sont plus de saison,  
Pylade, je suis las d'écouter la raison.  
(3.1/709–12)
- PY. Restrain then, my lord, this excessive rage.  
I don't know you: you're no longer yourself.  
Allow ...

OR.                No, your advice is out of order,  
 Pylades, I'm tired of listening to reason.

Always in Seneca, generally in Racine, *furor/fureur* proves triumphant. Although *Hercules Furens* may offer some hope for personal recovery after the onset of *furor*, when the latter is faced with a confrontation with reason or knowledge, in Seneca it wins. The prime example is Thyestes, whose Stoic knowledge and rational understanding yield to what his brother terms *uetus regni furor*, his 'inveterate passion for power' (*Thy.* 302). Similarly, in Marston's *Antonio* plays, Stoicism gives way to Atrean passion in both Antonio and Pandulpho, while in Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* Clermont, the 'Senecal man',<sup>13</sup> voices standard Stoic positions from Seneca's prose works and from Epictetus, but displays naivety in his handling of the world. Informed of the plot against him and aware of the suspicious behaviour of Maillard, Clermont still yields to the latter (*Rev. Bus.* 3.2). The Messenger's comment on the vanity of 'men's foreknowledges of things' (*Rev. Bus.* 3.2.243) could have come from a Senecan tragic text. Of course Thyestes is not the Stoic hero that Clermont is. There are no Stoic heroes in Senecan tragedy. Neither Clermont nor Shakespeare's Brutus have any real counterpart in the Senecan plays, in which such allegedly Stoic heroes as Thyestes or Hippolytus are either self-deceived pathological idealists or have their intellectual credo immediately inverted by their own burgeoning passion. The Stoicism of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, if Senecan, is from the proseworks or from the tragedies, eclectically construed. And against *furor*'s triumphant presentation in tragedy should be set its treatment in Shakespeare's tragicomedies. *Pericles* shows the eventual victory of an anti-*furor* protagonist; while *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* construct an essentially unSenecan, even anti-Senecan world, in which *furor* or anger is the mainspring of the action but dissolves by the action's end, where what is celebrated is not the triumph of evil in the human soul but forgiveness, even redemption, and social community. The fact that these were among the last plays which Shakespeare wrote argues for a final distance from Seneca's presentation of the self.

<sup>13</sup> Braden 1985, 75: 'perhaps the most self-conscious Stoic on the Renaissance stage.'



## REVENGE

Impatients désirs d'une illustre vengeance  
 Dont la mort de mon père a formé la naissance,  
 Enfants impétueux de mon ressentiment,  
 Que ma douleur séduite embrasse aveuglément,  
 Vous prenez sur mon âme un trop puissant empire.

(*Cinna* 1.1/1–5)

Impatient desires for illustrious revenge,  
 To which my father's death has given birth,  
 Impetuous children of my resentment,  
 Which my sorrow, seduced, blindly grasps,  
 You hold too great a sway over my soul.

So Émilie opens Corneille's *Cinna*. Though the play is a study of monarchic clemency, revenge drives the action. Similarly in *Le Cid* and elsewhere in Corneille's tragedies the imperatives of vengeance are emphatic. Not accidentally his *Médée* inaugurated his tragic career. From Seneca's *Medea*, in rewriting which, according to one critic,<sup>14</sup> Corneille 'a découvert . . . la nature de son propre tragique', the French dramatist derived the centrality of vengeance to tragic action. He was not alone. Revenge dominates Renaissance tragedy from its inception: Corraro's *Progne*, Cinthio's *Orbecche*, Grotto's *Dalida*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*, Tourneur/Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Racine's *Andromaque* and *Iphigénie* . . . the list could go on—almost endlessly. In Racine's case not only characters like Eriphile and Hermione are driven by vengeance, but even in such a religious play as *Athalie* both unbeliever (*Athalie*) and believer (*Joad*) are motivated by vengeance, and the Hebrew God is proclaimed 'le Dieu jaloux . . . le Dieu des vengeances' (4.6/1470f., 1488f.). Often there is a plurality of revengers: in *Titus Andronicus* there are three revengers, as in *The Spanish Tragedy*; in *Hamlet* and Marston's *The Malcontent* there are two, and in the latter of very different kind: Mendoza, who becomes a tyrant, and Malevole, who foregoes his vengeance and turns to mercy. Even Seneca's own treatment of revenge is multiplied by

<sup>14</sup> Stegmann 1964, 125.

mistranslations,<sup>15</sup> or by additional final speeches, as in Heywood's *Thyestes* and Studley's *Agamemnon*, heralding the vengeance to come. Almost always the revenger is a complex figure, none more so than Webster's Bosola, spy and assassin, who becomes a 'heroic' multiple avenger in *The Duchess of Malfi's* final act. Sometimes Revenge or Vengeance becomes (unlike in Seneca) a *dramatis persona* appearing onstage: so *Orbecche* and *The Spanish Tragedy*; or is addressed (also unlike in Seneca) by the play's characters: so Vindice in *Rev. Trag.* 1.1.39ff., Tamyra in *Rev. Bus.* 1.2.1ff. Sometimes Revenge is impersonated:

I am Revenge, sent from th'infernal kingdom  
 To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind  
 By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.  
 Come down and welcome me to this world's light,  
 Confer with me of murder and of death.  
 There's not a hollow cave or lurking place,  
 No vast obscurity or misty vale  
 Where bloody murder or detested rape  
 Can couch for fear, but I will find them out,  
 And in their ears tell them my dreadful name,  
 Revenge, which makes the foul offender quake.

(*Titus* 5.2.30–40)

Thus Tamora to Titus, whose 'lunacy' she mistakes and to whose vengeance she succumbs. Nor is it only in tragedy that the preoccupation with vengeance is apparent. In Shakespeare's tragicomedies, for example, the impulse to vengeance is almost as emphatic as in his tragedies, but in the tragicomedies it is dissolved by the opposite imperatives of repentance and forgiveness. *The Tempest* has even been called a 'revenge comedy',<sup>16</sup> a play which sets up the possibility for revenge and then substitutes forgiveness:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,  
 Yet with my noble reason 'gainst my fury  
 Do I take part: the rarer action is  
 In virtue than in vengeance.

(5.1.25–8)

<sup>15</sup> See Boyle 1997, 155.

<sup>16</sup> So Miola 1992, 211, building on the work of Black (1986).

At the end of Seneca's *Medea* the Colchian's magic implements the most savage vengeance and she herself departs the world in apotheotic flight. In *The Tempest's* concluding display of its protagonist's 'tender affections', Prospero the magician inverts Seneca's ending: abjuring his magic, he replaces vengeance with virtue and compassion, and returns to the social world from which he had been expelled. In emphasizing his forgiveness of the brother who had wronged him ('I do forgive thee, | Unnatural though thou art', *Tem.* 5.1.78f.; 'I do forgive | Thy rankest fault', *Tem.* 5.1.131f.), Prospero inverts the ending of *Thyestes* too.<sup>17</sup> Self-conscious avoidance of either Senecan conclusion underscores the absent paradigm.

There are cultural reasons for this preoccupation with revenge in English and European Renaissance drama. In England, France and Europe at large the aristocracy was in a situation of crisis arising from the loss of its traditional powers before an increasingly centralized monarchy. Revenge, Bacon's 'wild justice', was the aristocracy's traditional manner and right of settling 'injustices', but one which the central organs of government were endeavouring to control. Despite its stigmatization by the law, however, revenge exerted both social and moral claims, and not only because of its relationship to aristocratic concepts of status and honour. There was also the problem of justice within an entrenched social hierarchy. Access to justice was often a function of patronage and of rhetorical skill. For social inferiors revenge was often the only means of 'righting' a wrong perpetrated by superiors; but, in order to do so, the revenger had to shatter central rules of social and moral behaviour. The dramatization of revenge thus afforded the Renaissance playwright an opportunity to examine issues of morality, justice, power, and social status specific to his world and to expose, even negotiate, their intrinsic contradictions.

Hence the popularity of Seneca, to whom Renaissance playwrights seem substantially indebted for the literary construction of vengeance. The Revenger's 'hesitation', for example—Hamlet, Hieronimo (*Spanish Tragedy* 3.2.37ff., etc.), Antonio (*Ant. Rev.* 3.3.88ff.), Clermont (*Rev. Bus.* 3.2.107ff.)—seems a transformation of the *dubitatio* of Senecan figures, especially Clytemnestra, Aegisthus,

<sup>17</sup> It is true that Prospero leaves open the possibility of one day revealing Antonio and Sebastian's plot ('at this time | I will tell no tales', 5.1.128f.); but this is not dwelt upon and hardly qualifies the focus on forgiveness.

and Medea. Hamlet (see below) and Hieronimo even have to work themselves up to the task with Senecan-like soliloquies. So Hieronimo, recalling Medea's use of past wrongs to motivate her final vengeance (*Med.* 895ff.):

Bethink thyself, Hieronimo,  
 Recall thy wits, recompt thy former wrongs  
 Thou has receiv'd by murder of thy son,  
 And lastly, not least, how Isabel,  
 Once his mother and thy dearest wife,  
 All woe-begone for him, hath slain herself.  
 Behoves thee then, Hieronimo, to be reveng'd:  
 The plot is laid of dire revenge:  
 On then, Hieronimo, pursue revenge,  
 For nothing wants but acting of revenge.

(*Spanish Tragedy* 4.3.21–30)

Similarly Senecan is the revenger's insistence on the victim's full consciousness of the revenge while it is being enacted. Racine's Hermione in apparently Atrean mode (*Thy.* 1066ff.):

Ma vengeance est perdue  
 S'il ignore en mourant que c'est moi qui le tue.  
 (*Andromaque* 4.4/1269f.)

My vengeance is lost  
 Unless he knows, dying, it's I who kill him.

Senecan too is the fusion of revenge and passion:

What would he do  
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,  
 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  
 Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
 The very faculties of eyes and ears.  
 Yet I,  
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
 And can say nothing . . .

(*Ham.* 2.2.554–64)

So Shakespeare's most famous revenger, reformulating Atreus' opening speech (*Thy.* 176ff.);<sup>18</sup> so too Cinthio's Sulmone, Marston's Piero, Marlowe's Barabas. For some Renaissance revengers the passion becomes an obsession verging on madness:

And art thou come, Horatio, from the depth,  
To ask for justice in this upper earth?

(*Spanish Tragedy* 3.13.133f.)

The words are those of Hieronimo, 'mistaking' an old man for his dead son. For others the insatiability of the passion is an issue: e.g., Aaron (*Titus* 5.1.141ff.), Clifford (*3H6* 1.3.25ff.), Othello (*Oth.* 3.3.449f., 5.2.75f.). But, although it is an issue derived from Seneca,<sup>19</sup> the suggestion of revenge's intrinsic inability to satisfy is far from the Roman dramatist's vision. Part of the discomfort generated by *Medea* and *Thyestes* is that at the end of their respective plays *Medea* and *Atreus* are triumphant and satisfied, and proclaim both states in speeches of remarkable theatrical power (*Med.* 982ff., 1018ff.; *Thy.* 1096ff.). The issue of insatiability is raised to be contradicted by the revenger's satisfaction.

Vindice's proclaimed satisfaction at the end of *The Revenger's Tragedy* is thus entirely Senecan:

We have enough—  
I' faith we're well—our mother turned, our sister true,  
We die after a nest of dukes! Adieu.

(5.3.124–6)

What is not Senecan about this ending (other than the tone) is that Vindice is punished for his vengeance. In Seneca's *Medea* and *Thyestes* the revenger is unpunished (and known to remain so in the myth), even though the revenge is out of all proportion to the offence. In Renaissance drama the Christian morality play tradition and the requirements of both monarchic pressure and the legal code often assert themselves at the end: the revenger is punished or killed. Andrea is consigned to hell; Orbecche, Hieronimo, Clermont, Marcelle, and Hermione suicide; Sulmone, (Grotto's) Berenice, Barabas,

<sup>18</sup> On Hamlet's 'passion', see Miola 1992, 55f.

<sup>19</sup> See esp. *Med.* 897ff., 1009ff., *Thy.* 890ff., 1052ff.

Hamlet, and Bosola are slain; Vindice is taken away to be executed; Oreste is driven mad. In Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* the revengers Antonio and Pandulpho are not punished as such, but vow to become 'most constant votaries' (*Ant. Rev.* 5.3.153); in Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* the revenger Charlemont survives and triumphs by not being a revenger at all. The Christian ideology of *Orbecche* is proclaimed from the start:

Come'l mal non è senza la pena,  
Così non è senza mercede il bene.

(1.1)

As evil is not without punishment,  
So good is not without reward.

That of *The Atheist's Tragedy* is articulated at the end:

Only to Heav'n I attribute the work,  
Whose gracious motives made me still forbear  
To be mine own revenger. Now I see  
That *patience is the honest man's revenge.*

(5.2.275–8)

Not all plays are so overt. But it is noticeable that even with Seneca's own *oeuvre* (see Studley's *Medea* and Heywood's *Thyestes*) translators felt a need to change the ending. This move towards moral order and social reintegration in revenge tragedy indicates a concern (sometimes as in *The Revenger's Tragedy* almost self-parodic) to return the audience to the more comforting world of conventional morality and law. It is essentially unSenecan. *Hercules Furens* is no exception to this, because the acts for which the protagonist has to atone in that play are not those of a revenger and are committed after the onset of madness. The kind of new beginning that Shakespeare provides at the end of *Titus Andronicus*, as all the revengers lie dead or in chains, signals something other than the permanent dislocation which closes all but two of the extant Senecan tragedies:

You sad-faced men, people and sons of Rome,  
By uproars severed, as a flight of fowl  
Scattered by winds and high tempestuous gusts,

O let me teach you how to knit again  
 This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf,  
 These broken limbs again into one body.

(5.3.66–71)

The very last lines of *Titus Andronicus* (5.3.190–9) replay Theseus' final speech in *Phaedra* (*Pha.* 1273–80) only to point up the difference from Seneca's dismembered world.

But though Renaissance drama does not allow the revenger to be unpunished or untransformed, it problematizes the act itself. Not all revengers are of the Cornwall type in *King Lear*, where the revenge on Gloucester is of the Atrean manner, including appropriately shocking witticisms: 'Out, vile jelly! | Where is thy lustre now?' (*Lear* 3.7.81f.). Many revengers have at least in part the audience's sympathy, however complex and ambiguous the audience's overall response: so for example, Hieronimo, Titus, Vindice, Hamlet, Phèdre, and Orbecche. Orbecche is an interesting case because her revenge, like Hamlet's, is unpremeditated and approved by those who witness it, and yet she dies anyway. As Sulmone displays the bodies of Orbecche's children before her, she takes the knives from their bodies and kills Sulmone himself. The chorus are stunned but approve because she has slain an evil tyrant. Her act, like Hamlet's, can be seen as 'public revenge':

Public revenges are for the most part fortunate: as that for the death of Caesar, for the death of Pertinax, for the Death of Henry the Third of France, and many more. But in private revenges this is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they infortunate.

(Francis Bacon, 'Of Revenge')

How representative Bacon's views are is debatable. And even Bacon regards private revenge as 'tolerable' if the wrong to which it responds cannot be set right by law (although the revenge itself should not then breach the law).<sup>20</sup> The whole area is clearly problematized in Renaissance drama, which, contrary to what is sometimes argued,<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Bates' introduction to the Arden edition (1995) of *Titus Andronicus*, 26, where the Bacon essay is discussed.

<sup>21</sup> As by Bowers 1940.

only superficially condemns the revenger. The latter's conduct and the wrong that conduct seeks to 'right' frequently display the inadequacy not only of the law but of the world.

O Sol, che solo il mondo orni et illustri,  
 Perchè nonti fuggisti allor dal Cielo,  
 Che quest fier Tiran, ch' or per me giace,  
 Commise così sozzo e orribil atto?

(*Orbecche* 5.3)

O Sun, who alone adorns and lights the world,  
 Why did you not flee from the heavens then,  
 When this fierce tyrant, who lies here because of me,  
 Committed so foul and dreadful an act?

Here *Orbecche* alludes to Thyestes' cry of outrage (*Thy.* 1035ff.) in order to complain of cosmic indifference. She has revenged herself on the revenger, but the world is wanting. Even in a play such as *Titus Andronicus*, whose ending signals a re-membered Rome (5.3.71), the moral vacuum of the drama has been such that Justice has abandoned the earth (*Terras Astraea reliquit*, 4.3.4), employed apparently in heaven, leaving as the only possibility for redressive action 'Revenge from hell' (4.3.39f.). There was nowhere for Titus to go but where he did. His death complicates rather than resolves the audience's disquiet.

There is also another matter. Both Renaissance Europe and Neroian Rome were societies which prominently institutionalized violence. The violence of the Roman arena was matched in spectacle, if not in numbers, by the Renaissance theatre of public execution: the beheadings, hangings, disembowellings, drawings, quarterings which constituted society's vengeance on those it sought to punish. The ritualizing of the revenger's violence in Renaissance drama is not simply the indulgence of decadent contemporary taste, but a self-conscious reflection of and on the ritualized, legally sanctioned violence of the culture, exposing that violence as itself a theatre of power. A signal ingredient of this reflection on violence is its focus on the subjectivity of the victim. Those Senecan-derived cries of pain from the mouths of *Orbecche*, *Lear*, *Thésée*, and others have more than rhetorical function. Like Hieronimo's address to the Viceroy of Portingale in the final scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, they attempt to



generate a new evaluation of violence by looking at both the commonality and the irreducibility of the pain it inflicts:

There merciless they butcher'd up my boy,  
 In black dark night, to pale dim cruel death . . .  
 And griev'd I, think you, at this spectacle?  
 Speak, Portuguese, whose loss resembles mine:  
 If thou canst weep upon thy Balthazar,  
 'Tis like I wailed for my Horatio.  
 And you, my lord, whose reconciled son  
 Marched in a net, and thought himself unseen . . .  
 How can you brook our play's catastrophe?

(4.4.106ff.)

### THE TRAGIC FRAME

The problematization of vengeance extends to the moral structure of the world in which it takes place. The moral universe of Renaissance tragedy is anything other than consistently Christian. It shows more affinity to Seneca's tragic world than to any Christian theistic construct, generally projecting itself as hostile, morally perplexing if not amoral or perverse, sometimes, as in *Orbecche*, *Canace*, *Dalida*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Andromaque*, and *Phèdre*, even irretrievably flawed. Plays such as Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, in which a beneficent deity observes and punishes wrongdoing (there is even appropriate thunder and lightning after Montferrers' murder: 2.4.140), are the exception, not the rule. More typical in its implications is Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*, whose hero's proclaimed Herculean demise follows a movement from poverty to royal court and knowledge to corruption reminiscent of Seneca's Thyestes,<sup>22</sup> and whose first line proclaims an anti-providential, anti-Christian (and anti-Stoic) stance:

Fortune, not Reason, rules the state of things.  
 (*Bussy* 1.1.1)

<sup>22</sup> On Bussy as 'Herculean hero overcome by fate' see Waith 1962, 88–111, who ignores the additional paradigm of Thyestes. It is of some importance too that Bussy's Herculean valedictory is delivered by a corrupt cleric.

Or, rather more subtly, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, in which the notion of divine intervention and justice is parodied and the universe at best seems morally obscure.<sup>23</sup> At its extreme, this Renaissance universe replays the existential blackness of Seneca's *Phaedra*, where life and sin were for Phaedra inseparable (*Pha.* 879f.), hell was where she was.

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd  
 In one self place, but where we are is hell,  
 And where hell is, there must we ever be.

(*Faustus* 5.122–5)

Thus Mephistophilis in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, at the end of which Senecan language and motifs cluster (19.135ff.) to focus the indifference of the natural universe to Faustus' suffering. Even in a play like Dolce's *Marianna*, where the tyrant ends in remorse, the moral repugnance of what has transpired in the play, underscored by the failure of the chorus' repeated appeals for divine intervention, is hardly lessened by the concluding choric wisdom that 'ira è cagione | D'incomparabil mali'. Whether one agrees that an 'inimical universe' was 'from a philosophical point of view at least . . . Seneca's most important contribution' to Renaissance tragedy, it was certainly a signal one.<sup>24</sup>

At the heart of Renaissance and Senecan pessimism is the impotence of reason. The pointed irrelevance of the extensive moral debate between Pyrrhus and Agamemnon in Seneca's *Troades*, between the Nurse and Hippolytus in *Phaedra*, between Thyestes and his son in *Thyestes*, is mirrored time and again in Renaissance drama: the arguments of Malecche to Sulmone (*Orbecche* 3.2), the prolonged discussion of Gorboduc's counsellors (*Gorb.* 1.2), the unsuccessful speeches of Antony in Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War*, of York in *Richard II* (2.1.186ff.), of Hippolyte in Racine's *Phèdre* (esp. 4.2/1087ff.) have no effect on the dramatic action. But they have an effect on the audience. Product of Renaissance rhetorical training

<sup>23</sup> Dollimore 1984, 139–43, sees the play's 'parody of the providential viewpoint' as pervasive.

<sup>24</sup> The quotations, cited by Miola 1992, 31, are from Smith 1988, 244, whose claim is restricted to Elizabethan tragedy.

and its celebrated skill in arguing ‘on either side’ (*in utramque partem*), such failed speeches reflect too the dramatists’ concern to complicate the moral and human dimension of their plays through engaging the audience, as Seneca did, in a variety of involving perspectives.<sup>25</sup> Often in such debates—again as in Seneca—central ideas of the plays are focussed upon in a manner which reveals their ambiguity or polyvalence (compare the disputatious use of ‘nature’ in *Gorboduc* or *King Lear* with that of *natura* in *Phaedra*),<sup>26</sup> and the uncertainties attending their employment in human discourse and human life. What results is not simply an airing of moral or political issues, but an increasing complexity in the audience’s dramatic experience and a correspondingly complex and problematic tragic frame.

It should be observed, however, that Seneca’s universe on the whole is determined in a way that of Renaissance drama is often not. In Cinthio, for example, the focus is on fortune rather than fate, both *Orbecche* and *Didone* concluding with short choric statements on the transience of human happiness or fortune’s instability. A similar choric commonplace on life’s uncertainty closes Grotto’s *Dalida*. Speroni’s *Canace* does draw some attention to past causes, citing Venus’ hatred of Eolo, and it concludes with the latter’s curse on the descendants of Aeneas. But the sense of history’s determinism is slight. In English tragedy such Senecanesque plays as *Gorboduc*, *Gismond of Salerne*, and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* project a surface fatalism, sometimes simply appropriating Seneca’s own text. Hughes borrows *Oedipus* 987f. for:

All things are rulde in constant course: No Fate  
But is foreset: The first daie leads the last.

(*Arthur* 2.3.127f.)

Shakespeare’s presentation of fate is more complex. Fate is certainly strong in the history plays: ‘What fates impose, that men must needs abide’ (*3H6* 4.3.58). Here the notion of a hereditary curse affecting a

<sup>25</sup> For this in early English Renaissance tragedy, see Altman 1978, 249ff.

<sup>26</sup> On ‘nature’ in *Lear* see Greer 1986, 92ff.; on *natura* in *Phaedra* see Boyle 1997, 60ff.

dynasty is often conspicuous, and the 'grand machine' of the Senecan universe plays itself out through the repetitive rise and fall of kings, the cycle of murders in the service of power, the iteration of the cries of mothers:

- MA. I had an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
 I had a husband, till a Richard kill'd him;  
 Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
 Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard kill'd him.
- DU. I had a Richard too, and thou didst kill him;  
 I had a Rutland too: thou holp'st to kill him.
- MA. Thou hadst a Clarence too, and Richard kill'd him.

(R3 4.4.40–6)

In the tragedies fate seems less strong. Hamlet's talk of 'a divinity that shapes our end' (5.2.10) and 'providence in the fall of the sparrow' (5.2.215f.) is not sustained by the dramatic action, which seems more appropriately described by the 'accidental judgements, casual slaughters' and 'purposes mistook' of Horatio's concluding commentary (5.3.385ff.). Similarly in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* the 'Senecal' Clermont's proclamation of indifference to 'Fortune' (3.4.159ff.) and subservience to 'Necessity' (4.5.4ff.) prefaces a *dénouement* marked by fortune's incomprehensible triumph (5.5.211ff.). Compare the ending of Jonson's *Sejanus* (5.898ff.). More Senecan are the existential implications of *The Spanish Tragedy* in that, while the determinism of the past is not stressed in the play and there is a marked concern with fortune (see esp. 1.2.1ff., 3.1.1ff.), the sense of human life as pre-scripted is strong, underscored by the drama's preternatural frame and commentary. Notably Webster's implied universe, 'the skull beneath the skin',<sup>27</sup> is one of doomed men and women, living and dying in a world fundamentally evil and unprovidential:

We are merely the stars' tennis balls, struck and banded  
 Which way please them.

(*Malfi* 5.4.54f.)

<sup>27</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality':

Webster was much possessed by death  
 And saw the skull beneath the skin.

O, this gloomy world!  
 In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,  
 Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!

(*Malfi* 5.5.100–2)

As in Seneca, evil flowers where it should wither—in the family; and the cry of ‘Mercy’, the Duchess’ final word (in *Troades* Astyanax’ all but only word: 792)<sup>28</sup> echoed by her brother Cardinal in the final act (4.2.353, 5.5.41), is unanswered.

There is of course strong opposition to the Senecan universe in the more providential world of tragicomedy, especially English tragicomedy, where wickedness is punished, adversities overcome, and plays end in repentance, forgiveness, restoration, reunion, self-knowledge, and apparent felicity, even if qualified, for the virtuous.<sup>29</sup> In the epilogue to *Pericles* the felicity requires no qualification:

In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard  
 Of monstrous lust the due and just reward.  
 In Pericles, his queen and daughter, seen,  
 Although assail’d with fortune fierce and keen,  
 Virtue preserv’d from fell destruction’s blast,  
 Led on by heaven, and crown’d with joy at last.

(Ep. 1–6)

There is also opposition to Senecan nihilism in the tragedies of Corneille, where the action implies on the whole a theistic universe in which justice is affirmed, albeit sometimes artificially. Seneca’s *Medea* ends with Jason questioning the very existence of the gods, but in the final lines of Corneille’s *Médée* Jason asserts the justice of the gods, ‘dont le pouvoir égale la justice’ (5.7/1625), even as he suicides to rejoin Créuse, leaving Médée to divine retribution. Indeed optimistic endings are common in Corneille, who often concludes his plays with providential claims about ‘le juste ciel’ (*Rodogune*

<sup>28</sup> For the ‘mercy’ motif elsewhere in Senecan tragedy, see *Tro.* 694, 703, *Pha.* 623, 636, 671, *HF* 1192, *Med.* 482, 1018. See Boyle 1994, on *Tro.* 694.

<sup>29</sup> At the end of *The Winter’s Tale* Mamillius and Antigonus remain dead, and the renaissance Hermione speaks no word to Leontes; in *The Tempest* Prospero’s intention is to retire to ‘Milan, where | Every third thought shall be my grave’ (*Tem.* 5.1.310f.). Such qualify but do not erase the emphasis on reconciliation and felicity, associated in each case with a promised wedding or weddings, at the end of those plays.

5.4/1832) or 'la main d'Exupère' and 'la céleste puissance' (*Héraclius* 5.6/1832, 5.7/1914). In tragedies such as *Cinna* and *Nicomède* the ending is one of almost total reconciliation at the human level and a revived harmony with the gods. Even in *Oedipe*, where Oedipe is revealed as a victim of unjust fate and of the gods and attains truly tragic stature, the play concludes with the moralising of Thésée ('le ciel fait assez voir | Que le sang de Laius a rempli son devoir', 5.9/2003f.) and the (naïve) theistic confidence of Dircé: 'Et remettons aux Dieux à disposer du reste' (5.9/2010). According to one critic, 'the whole of Corneille's theatre has the same metaphysical background: man faces fate, but in so doing he obeys a higher intelligence which demands a sacrifice the purpose of which he does not understand at first.'<sup>30</sup> Whatever the apparently incomprehensible adversities of life, in Corneille they are all subject to a controlling providence.

A more Senecan universe is that of Racine. His plays observe the social conventions and proprieties but assume a world by no means moral. Good is not normally rewarded or the wicked punished; providence does not watch over the hero or heroine. There are gods, but they seem vicious, arbitrary, cruel. Thus Jocaste in *La Thébaïde*, Racine's first performed play:

Voilà de ces grands Dieux la suprême justice!  
 Jusques au bord du crime ils conduisent nos pas,  
 Ils nous le font commettre, et ne l'excusent pas!  
 (3.2/608–10)

Behold the high justice of the mighty gods.  
 To the edge of crime they conduct our steps,  
 They make us commit it and pardon us not.

Connaissez mieux du ciel la vengeance fatale:  
 Toujours à ma douleur il met quelque intervalle.  
 Mais, hélas! quand sa main semble me secourir,  
 C'est alors qu'il s'apprête à me faire périr.  
 (3.3/675–8)

Recognize well heaven's fateful vengeance:  
 Always it gives my suffering a respite.  
 But, alas!, when its hand seems to help me,  
 It is then that it prepares to make me die.

<sup>30</sup> Stegmann 1965, 183.

Though extreme, her words are not only borne out in this play but provide a paradigm for the tragic worlds to come. Observe Oreste in *Andromaque*:

Je ne sais de tout temps quelle injuste puissance  
Laisse le crime en paix, et poursuit l'innocence.  
De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux,  
Je ne vois que malheurs qui condamnent les Dieux.

(3.1/773–6)

I can never understand what unjust power  
Leaves crime in peace, and persecutes innocence.  
Wherever around me I turn my eyes  
I see only misery condemning the gods.

If the patterned mayhem of the ending of *Andromaque* (see below) provides slight grounds for qualification, the triumph of evil at the end of *Britannicus* provides none. Even in a play such as *Iphigénie*, which Racine has self-consciously moralised to end providentially (the final lines, spoken by Clytemnestre, are even a thanksgiving to heaven: 5.6/1791f.),<sup>31</sup> the gods are still arbitrary in their malice. And the Jansenist play *Athalie* paradoxically presents a victim of divine wrath, who emphatically draws the audience's sympathy, and a Hebrew god unmerciful, obscure, inaccessible, a god of vengeance rather than of justice, whose main instrument of victory, Joad, is an unattractive mixture of self-righteousness, deviousness, ruthlessness and cruelty. *Athalie's* outburst on the god who drove her to destruction hits home:

Impitoyable Dieu, toi seul as tout conduit!

(5.6/1774)

Pitiless God, your hand alone guided all!

Though ostensibly providential *Athalie's* world seems little different from that of Racine's last secular play and his finest tragedy, *Phèdre*, in which the gods drive the action, motivated by their own obscure

<sup>31</sup> For Racine's self-conscious moralization of the ending, see his remarks in his *Préface*: 'Quelle apparence que j'eusse souillé la scène par le meurtre horrible d'une personne aussi vertueuse et aussi aimable qu'il fallait représenter Iphigénie.'

hate to make Hippolyte inspire a passion in the queen's heart because of no fault in her. The condemnation of the gods in *Phèdre* and its Senecan model is the same (cf. Sen. *Pha.* 1207, 1242f., Rac. *Phd.* 5.6/1572, 5.7/1612ff.).

In Racine too fate and history's determinism permeate the tragic action. *Andromaque*, for example, like Seneca's *Agamemnon*, dramatises the deaths of the present as a repetition of those of the past: Pyrrhus dies on an altar like Priam at Troy (5.3/1520), Hermione replays Polyxène (5.5/1610ff.), the *ruisseaux de sang* encompassing Oreste (5.5/1628) recall those of Troy's bloody fall (4.5/1337). In other plays the issue of heredity is prominent, derived from the Old Testament as well as from Seneca. Thus Racine's first non-secular play, *Esther*:

Nos pères ont péché, nos pères ne sont plus,  
Et nous portons la peine de leurs crimes.  
(1.5/334f.)

Our fathers sinned, our fathers are no more,  
And we are punished for their crimes.

The idea pervades Racine's work from *La Thébaine* onwards. In *Britannicus* there is great emphasis on the forebears of Néron, just as there is later on those of Phèdre, who speaks painfully, as in Seneca (cf. *Pha.* 113f., 124–8, 698f.), of the cursed history of her family and the gods' role in that history:

Objet infortuné des vengeances célestes,  
Je m'abhorre encor plus que tu ne me détestes.  
Les dieux m'en sont témoins, ces dieux qui dans mon flanc  
Ont allumé le feu fatal à tout mon sang;  
Ces dieux qui se sont fait une gloire cruelle  
De séduire le coeur d'une faible mortelle.

(*Phd.* 2.5/677–83)

A misfortuned victim of heaven's vengeance,  
I loathe myself still more than you detest me.  
The gods are witness, those gods who in my flesh  
Have lit the fire fatal to all of my blood;  
Those gods to whom belongs the cruel glory  
Of seducing a feeble mortal's heart.



In *Athalie* too blood will out. One of the brilliant aspects of Athalie's final speech is precisely her concluding prophecy (5.6/1783ff.) that the blood of Ahab will triumph over that of David in Joas' veins and overthrow all that Joad had worked for. The distance between the Senecan world of *Phèdre* and the Jansenist world of *Athalie* is not substantial. Nor was the distance of Seneca's own world from Racine's.

## Acknowledgements

1. Miriam T. Griffin, 'Imago Vitae Suae', in C. D. N. Costa (ed.), *Seneca* (London and Boston, 1974), 1–38, revised by the author.

2. Marcus Wilson, 'Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius: a Revaluation', *Ramus* 16 (1987), 102–21.

3. Catharine Edwards, 'Self-scrutiny and Self-transformation in Seneca's Letters', *G&R* 44 (1997), 23–38.

4. Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, 'Imagination and Meditation in Seneca: the Example of *Praemeditatio*', English translation of 'Imagination et méditation chez Sénèque. L'exemple de la *praemeditatio*', *REL* 64 (1986), 185–95, with supplementary bibliography by the author.

5. Brad Inwood, 'The Will in Seneca the Younger', *CP* 95 (2000), 44–60.

6. Charles Segal, 'Boundary Violation and the Landscape of the Self in Senecan Tragedy', *A&A* 29 (1983), 172–87.

7. John G. Fitch and Siobhan McElduff, 'Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama', *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002), 18–40, revised by the authors.

8. Patrick Kragelund, 'Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?', *C&M* 50 (1999), 235–47, revised by the author.

9. Wilfried Stroh, 'Staging Seneca: The Production of *Troas* as a Philological Experiment', English translation of 'Die Aufführung der *Troas* als philologisches Experiment', Part I of 'Inszenierung Senecas' (with Barbara Breitenberger), in Anton Bierl and Peter von Möllendorf (eds.), *Orchestra: Drama-Mythos-Bühne: Festschrift für Hellmut Flashar* (Stuttgart, 1994), 248–63, with a new appendix by the author.

10. Donald J. Mastrorarde, 'Seneca's *Oedipus*: the Drama in the Word', *TAPA* 101 (1970), 291–315, revised by the author.

11. Cedric Littlewood, 'Seneca's *Thyestes*: the Tragedy with no Women?', *MD* 38 (1997) 57–86, revised by the author.

12. Eleanor Winsor Leach, 'The Implied Reader and the Political Argument in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*', *Arethusa* 22 (1989), 197–230, revised by the author.

13. Roland G. Mayer, 'Roman Historical Exempla in Seneca', in Pierre Grimal (ed.), *Sénèque et la prose latine*, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 36 (1991), 141–69, revised by the author.

14. Robert J. Newman, 'In umbra virtutis. Gloria in the Thought of Seneca the Philosopher', *Eranos* 86 (1988), 145–59.

15. K. R. Bradley, 'Seneca and Slavery', *C&M* 37 (1986), 161–72, revised by the author.

16. R. G. M. Nisbet, 'The Dating of Seneca's Tragedies, with Special Reference to *Thyestes*', *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 6 (1990), 95–114.

17. Elaine Fantham, 'Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines', *G&R* 22 (1975), 1–10, with bibliographical note added by the author.

18. A. J. Boyle, 'Seneca and Renaissance Drama: Ideology and Meaning', in *Tragic Seneca: an Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London & New York, 1997), 167–92.

## References

- ABEL, K. (1981), 'Das Problem der Faktizität der senecanischen Korrespondenz', *Hermes* 109, 472–99.
- (1985), 'Seneca, Leben und Leistung', *ANRW* II.32.2, 653–775.
- (1991), 'Die "beweisende" Struktur des senecanischen Dialogs', in Grimal 1991, 49–97.
- AHL, F. M. (1976), *Lucan: an Introduction*, Ithaca & London.
- (1984a), 'The Rider and the Horse; Politics and Power in Roman Poetry from Horace to Statius', *ANRW* II 32.1, 40–124.
- (1984b), 'The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome', *AJP* 105, 174–208.
- (1986), *Seneca: Three Tragedies*, Ithaca & London.
- ALBERTI, A. (1999), 'Il volontario e la scelta in Aspasio', in *Aspasio: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Alberti and R.W. Sharples, *Peripatoi* Band 17, Berlin & New York, 107–41.
- ALBERTINI, E. (1923), *La Composition dans les ouvrages philosophiques de Sénèque*, Paris.
- VON ALBRECHT, M. (1994), *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, Stuttgart; translated as *A History of Roman Literature*, 2 vols., Leiden 1997.
- (1999), 'Seneca über sich selbst', *AAntHung* 39, 9–20.
- ALEXANDER, W. H. (1943), 'Seneca's *Ad Polybium De Consolatione*, a reappraisal', *Trans. Royal Soc. Canada* ser. 3, 37, 33–55.
- (1952), 'The Enquete on Seneca's Treason', *CP* 47, 1–16.
- ANDERSON, J. G. C. (1934), 'The Eastern Frontier from Tiberius to Nero', *Cambridge Ancient History* 10, 743–80.
- ANDERSON, W. S. (1970), 'Recent Work in Roman Satire (1962–1968)', *CW* 63, 190–1.
- (1982), 'Recent Work in Roman Satire (1968–1978)', *CW* 75, 288–90.
- ANDRÉ, J.-M. (1969), 'Seneca et l'épicurisme: ultime position', *Actes du VIII<sup>e</sup> congrès de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, Paris, 469–80.
- ANLIKER, K. (1960), *Prologe und Akteinteilung in Senecas Tragödien*, *Noctes Romanae* 9, Bern.
- ANSCOMBE, G. E. M. (1969), *Intention*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Ithaca NY.
- ARMISEN, M. (1979), 'La notion d'imagination chez les Anciens. I. Les philosophes', *Pallas* 26, 37 ff.
- ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, M. (1985), 'Sapientiae facies. Étude sur les images de Sénèque', Thesis Univ. of Lyon III.

- ARMISEN-MARCHETTI, M. (1986), 'Imagination et méditation chez Sénèque. L'exemple de la *praemeditatio*', *REL* 64, 185–95.
- AUSTIN, R. G. (1955) (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus*, Oxford.
- BALDWIN, B. (1964), 'Executions under Claudius: Seneca's *Ludus de Morte Claudii*', *Phoenix* 18, 39–48.
- BALLAIRA, G. (1974) (ed.), *Ottavia, con note*, Torino.
- BALSDON, J. P. V. D. (1965), *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome*, New York.
- BARLOW, S. A. (1971), *The Imagery of Euripides*, London.
- BARRETT, W. S. (1964) (ed.), *Euripides: Hippolytus*, Oxford.
- BARTON, C. (1993), *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster*, Princeton.
- BATTLES, F. L. and HUGO, A. M. (1969) (eds.), *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, Renaissance Text Series III, Leiden.
- BEACHAM, R. C. (1991), *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, London.
- BEARD, M. (2002), 'Ciceronian Correspondence: Making a Book out of Letters', in T. P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome*, Oxford, 103–44.
- BEARE, W. (1964), *The Roman Stage*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., London.
- BETTINI, M. (1983), 'L'arcobaleno, l'incesto e l'enigma: a proposito dell'Oedipus di Seneca', *Dioniso* 54, 137–53.
- BIERL, A. and von MÖLLENDORF, P. (1994) (eds.), *Orchestra: Drama-Mythos-Bühne: Festschrift für Hellmut Flashar*, Stuttgart.
- BILLERBECK, M. and SCHMIDT, E. A. (2004) (eds.), *Sénèque le tragique* (Fondation Hardt, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, 50), Geneva.
- BIONDI, G. G. (1989) (ed.), *L.A. Seneca, Medea; Fedra*, Milan.
- BOATWRIGHT, M. T., 'The Style of the *Laudes Neronis* in Seneca's *Apocolyntosis*', unpubl.
- BOBZIEN, S. (1998), 'The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem', *Phronesis* 43, 133–75.
- BOURGERY, A. (1911), 'Les Lettres à Lucilius sont-elles des vraies lettres?', *RPh* 35, 40–55.
- BOYLE, A. J. (1983) (ed.), *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama*, Victoria, Australia.
- (1994) (ed.), *Seneca's Troades: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, Leeds.
- (1997), 'Seneca and Renaissance Drama: Ideology and Meaning', in *Tragic Seneca: an Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*, London, 167–92.
- BRADEN, G. (1970), 'The Rhetoric and Psychology of Power in the Dramas of Seneca', *Arion* 9, 5–41.
- (1985), *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, New Haven & London.

- BRADLEY, K. R. (1978), *Suetonius' Life of Nero: an Historical Commentary*, Brussels.
- (1986), 'Seneca and Slavery', *C&M* 37, 161–72.
- (1987), *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*, New York.
- (1997), 'The Problem of Slavery in Classical Culture', *CP* 92, 273–82.
- BRATMAN, M. (1987), *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, Cambridge, MA.
- (1999), *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency*, Cambridge, MA.
- BRAUN, L. (1981), 'La Forza del visibile nelle tragedie di Seneca', in *Dioniso* 52, 109–24.
- (1982), 'Sind Senecas Tragödien Bühnenstücke oder Rezitationsdramen?', *Res publica litterarum* 5, 43–52.
- BRAUND, D. C. (1985), *Augustus to Nero. A Sourcebook on Roman History, 31 B.C.–A.D. 68*, London & Sydney.
- BRAUND, S. M. (1998), 'Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny', in M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: the Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, Leiden, 53–76.
- and JONES, P. (1998), 'Quasi homo: Distortion and Contortion in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*', *Arethusa* 31, 285–312.
- BROWN, P. (1967), *Augustine of Hippo*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1967.
- BRUNSCHWIG, J. and NUSSBAUM, M. (1993) (eds.), *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge.
- BRUNT, P. A. (1973), 'Aspects of the Social Thought of Dio Chrysostom and of the Stoics', *PCPhS* 19, 9–34.
- (1975), 'Stoicism and the Principate', *PBSR* 43, 7–35.
- CAGNIART, P. F. (2000), 'The Philosopher and the Gladiator', *CW* 91, 607–18.
- CALDER, W. M. III (1970), 'Originality in Seneca's *Troades*', *CPh* 65, 75–82.
- (1976), 'Seneca: Tragedian of Imperial Rome', *CJ* 72, 1–11.
- (1998), 'The Rediscovery of Seneca Tragicus at the End of the XXth Century', in Kneissl and Losemann 1998, 73–82.
- CAMPBELL, R. (1969), *Seneca, Letters from a Stoic*, Harmondsworth.
- CANCIK, H. (1967), *Untersuchungen su Senecas Epistulae Morales* (Spudasmata 18), Hildesheim.
- CARNEY, T. E. (1960), 'The Changing Picture of Claudius', *AClass* 3, 99–104.
- CAVIGLIA, F. (1981), *L. Anneo Seneca, Le Troiane: Introduzione, testo, traduzione e note*, Rome.
- CHAMPLIN, E. (2003), *Nero*, Cambridge, MA.
- CHAPLIN, J. D. (2000), *Livy's Exemplary History*, Oxford.

- CHAUMARTIN, F.-R. (1999) (ed. and transl.), *Sénèque, Tragédies* vol. 2, Paris.
- CITTI, F. and NERI, C. (2001), *Seneca nel Novecento. Sondaggi sulla fortuna di un 'classico'*, Rome.
- CIZEK, E. (1972), *L'Époque de Néron et ses controverses idéologiques*, Leiden.
- COFFEY, M. (1957), 'Seneca, Tragedies (1922–1955)', *Lustrum* 2, 113–86.
- (1961), 'Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 1922–1958', *Lustrum* 6, 239–71, 309–11.
- (1976), *Roman Satire*, London.
- and MAYER R. (1990) (eds.), *Seneca, Phaedra*, Cambridge.
- COLEMAN, R. (1974), 'The Artful Moralist: A Study of Seneca's Epistolary Style', *CQ* 24, 276–89.
- CONNOR, R. L. (1984), *Thucydides*, Princeton.
- CORBEILL, A. (1997), 'Dining Deviants in Roman Political Invective', in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 99–128.
- COSTA, C. D. N. (1973) (ed.), *Seneca: Medea*, Oxford.
- (1974) (ed.), *Seneca*, London & Boston.
- CROLL, M. W. (1966), *'Attic' and Baroque Prose Style*, Princeton.
- CUNCIK, H. (1967), *Untersuchung zu Senecas Epistulae Morales*, Hildesheim.
- CUNLIFFE, J. W. (1893), *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, London, repr. New York, 1965.
- CURLY, T. (1986), *The Nature of Senecan Drama*, Rome.
- CURRAN, L. C. (1978), 'Rape and Rape Victims in the Metamorphoses', *Arethusa* 11, 213–41.
- CURRIE, H. MACL. (1962), 'The Purpose of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*', *AC* 31, 91–7.
- (1966), 'The Younger Seneca's Style: Some Observations', *BICS* 13, 76–87.
- (1972), 'Seneca as Philosopher', in T. A. Dorey and D. R. Dudley (eds.), *Neronians and Flavians*, London, 24–61.
- DAVID, J.-M. (1998) (ed.), *Valeurs et mémoire à Rome: Valère Maxime ou la vertu recomposée*, Paris.
- DAVIDSON, D. (1980), *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford.
- DAVIS, D. B. (1966), *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Ithaca.
- DAVIS, P. J. (1993), *Shifting Song: The Chorus in Seneca's Tragedies*, Hildesheim.
- (2003), *Seneca: Thyestes*, London.
- DEAN-JONES, L. (1994), *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, Oxford.
- DE LAET, S. J. (1966), 'Claude et la romanization de la Gaule septentrionale', in *Mélanges Piganiol*, Paris, 951–61.
- DIHLE, A. (1982), *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity*, Berkeley & Los Angeles.
- DILL, S. (1904), *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, London.
- DINGEL, J. (1974), *Seneca und die Dichtung*, Heidelberg.

- (1985), 'Senecas Tragödien: Vorbilder und poetische Aspekte', *ANRW* II 32.2, 1052–99.
- DOCHERTY, T. (1983), *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction*, Oxford.
- DONINI, P. (1982), *Le Scuole, l'anima, l'impero*, Turin.
- DÖRING, K. (1979), *Exemplum Socratis*, Wiesbaden.
- DUBOIS, P. (1988), *Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women*, Chicago.
- DYSON, S. L. (1970), 'The Portrait of Seneca in Tacitus', *Arethusa* 3, 71–85.
- (1985), *The Creation of the Roman Frontier*, Princeton.
- EAGLETON, T. (1983), *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Minneapolis.
- EARL, D. (1967), *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome*, Ithaca.
- EDEN, P. T. (1984) (ed.), *Seneca, Apocolocyntosis*, Cambridge.
- EDWARDS, C. (1993), *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge.
- (1994), 'Beware of Imitations: Theatre and the Subversion of Imperial Identity', in Elsner and Masters 1994.
- (1997), 'Self-scrutiny and Self-transformation in Seneca's Letters', *G&R* 44, 23–38.
- (2005), 'Epistolography', in S. Harrison (ed.), *A Companion to Latin Literature*, Oxford, 270–83.
- ELIOT, T. S. (1927*a*), 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation', reprinted in *Essays on Elizabethan Drama*, New York, 1956.
- (1927*b*), 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', in *Selected Essays*, new edn., London 1950, 107–20.
- ELSNER, J. and MASTERS, J. (1994) (eds.), *Reflections of Nero*, Chapel Hill & London.
- ENGBERG-PEDERSON, T. (1990), 'Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of the Person' in C. Gill (ed.), *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Oxford, 109–35.
- FABER, M. D. (1978), 'The Son-Father Slays the Father-Son', *Univ. of Hartford Studies in Literature* 10, 14–30.
- FAIRWEATHER, J. (1981), *Seneca the Elder*, Cambridge.
- FANTHAM, E. (1975), 'Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines', *G&R* 22, 1–10.
- (1982) (ed.), *Seneca's Troades: A Literary Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary*, Princeton.
- (2000), 'Production of Seneca's *Trojan Women*, Ancient? and Modern', in Harrison 2000, 13–26.
- FEARNS, J. R. (1975), 'Nero as the Viceregent of the Gods in Seneca's *De Clementia*', *Hermes* 103, 486–96.
- FINLEY, M.I. (1980), *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, New York.



- FIORE, B. (1986), *The Function of the Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Analecta Biblica 105), Rome.
- FITCH, J. G. (1981), 'Sense-pauses and Relative Dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare', *AJP* 102, 289–307
- (1987), *Seneca's Hercules Furens; A Critical Text with Introduction and Commentary*, Ithaca & London.
- (2000), 'Playing Seneca?', in Harrison 2000, 1–12.
- (2002) (ed. and transl.), *Seneca: Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician Women, Medea, Phaedra* (Loeb Classical Library 62), Cambridge, MA.
- (2004a) (ed. and transl.), *Seneca: Oedipus, Agamemnon, Thyestes; [Seneca]: Hercules on Oeta, Octavia* (Loeb Classical Library 78), Cambridge, MA.
- (2004b), *Annaeana Tragica: Notes on the Text of Seneca's Tragedies*, Leiden.
- and McELDUFF, S. (2002), 'Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama', *Mnemosyne* 55, 18–40.
- FLASHAR, H. (1991), *Inszenierung der Antike: das griechische Drama auf der Bühne der Neuzeit 1585–1990*, Munich.
- FLOWER, H. I. (1996), *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*, Oxford.
- FORBES IRVING, P. M. C. (1990), *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, Oxford.
- FORTEY, S. and GLUCKER, J. (1975), 'Actus Tragicus: Seneca on the Stage', *Latomus*, 34, 699–715.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1986), *The Care of the Self*, trans. R. Hurley, London.
- FRÄNKEL, E. (1968), *Apollonius Rhodius: Argonautica*, Munich.
- FRANK, M. (1999), 'The Rhetorical Uses of Family Terms in Seneca's *Oedipus* and *Phoenissae*', *Phoenix* 49, 121–30.
- FRANKFURT, H. (1969), 'Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility', *JPh* 66, 829–39; reprinted as Ch. 1 of *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge, 1988.
- (1971), 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *JPh* 68, 5–20; reprinted as Ch. 2 of *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge, 1988.
- FREDERICKS, S.C. (1976), 'Lucian's *True History* as SF', *Science-Fiction Studies* 8, 49–60.
- FRIEDRICH, W. H. (1953), *Euripides und Diphilos, Zetemata v*, Wiesbaden.
- FUCHS, H. (1977), 'Textgestaltungen in der Tragödie Octavia', *WS Beiheft* 8, 71–7.
- GARNSEY, P. D. A. (1996), *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*, Cambridge.
- GARTON, C. (1972), 'The Background to the *Personae* of Seneca', in *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre*, Toronto, 189–202.

- GIANCOTTI, F. (1957), *Cronologia dei 'Dialoghi' di Seneca*, Turin.
- GILL, C. C. (1987), 'Two Monologues of Self-Division: Euripides, *Medea* 1021–86 and Seneca, *Medea* 893–977', in P. Hardies, M. Whitby (eds.), *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for J. Bramble*, Bristol, 25–37.
- (1988), 'Personhood and Personality: The Four-*personae* Theory in Cicero *De officiis* 1', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6, 169–99.
- (1994), 'Peace of Mind and Being Yourself: Panaetius to Plutarch', *ANRW* II 36.1, 4599–640
- GIOMINI, R. (1955a), *Saggio sulla 'Phaedra' di Seneca*, Rome.
- (1955b) (ed.), *Seneca: Phaedra*, Rome.
- GOLDBERG, S. M. (2000), 'Going for Baroque. Seneca and the English', in Harrison 2000, 209–31.
- GOWERS, E. (1993), *The Loaded Table*, Oxford.
- GREENBLATT, S. (1980), *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, Chicago.
- GREENE, E. (1998), *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*, Baltimore.
- GRIFFIN, M. T. (1972), 'The Elder Seneca and Spain', *JRS* 62, 1–19.
- (1974), '*Imago Vitae Suae*', in Costa 1974, 1–38.
- (1976), *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, Oxford; paperback edn. 1992 with postscript.
- (1984), *Nero: the End of a Dynasty*, London.
- GRIMAL, P. (1959) (ed.), *L. Annaei Senecae De Brevitate Vitae*, Paris.
- (1960), 'Le Plan du *De Brevitate Vitae*', in A. Rostagni et al. (eds.), *Studi in Onore di Luigi Castiglioni*, Florence, 407–19; reprinted in P. Grimal, *Rome, la Littérature et l'Histoire*, Rome 1986, 491–9.
- (1963), 'L'Originalité de Sénèque dans la tragédie de Phèdre', *REL* 41, 297–314.
- (1965) (ed.), *L. Annaei Senecae Phaedra*, Paris.
- (1970), 'Nature et limites de l'eclecticisme philosophique chez Sénèque', *LEC* 38, 3–17.
- (1978), *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'empire*, Paris.
- (1991) (ed.), *Sénèque et la prose latine*, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 36, Geneva.
- HABINEK, T. (1992), 'An Aristocracy of Virtue: Seneca on the Beginnings of Wisdom', *YCIS* 29, 187–203; revised as Ch. 7 of *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity and Empire in Ancient Rome*, Princeton 1998, 137–50.
- (2000), 'Seneca's Renown: *Gloria, Claritudo*, and the Replication of the Roman Elite', *CIAnt* 19, 264–303.
- HADOT, I. (1969), *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung*, Berlin.

- HADOT, P. (1981), *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*;<sup>2</sup> (1987);<sup>3</sup> (2002).
- (1995), *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. A.I. Davidson, transl. M. Chase, Oxford.
- HALLETT, J. P. and SKINNER, M. B. (1997) (eds.), *Roman Sexualities*, Princeton.
- HALM-TISSERANT, M. (1993), *Cannibalisme et Immortalité*, Paris.
- HARRISON, G. W. M. (2000) (ed.), *Seneca in Performance*, London.
- HELDMANN, K. (1968), 'Senecas Phaedra und ihre griechische Vorbilder', *Hermes* 96, 88–117.
- HELLEGOUARC'H, J. (1972), *Le Vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république*, Paris.
- HELM, R. (1934), 'Die Praetexta Octavia', *SBDA philologisch-historische Klasse* 16, 283–347.
- (1939), 'Valerius Maximus, Seneca und die "Exemplasammlung"', *Hermes* 74, 130–54.
- HENDERSON, J. (2004), *Morals and Villas in Seneca's Letters: Places to Dwell*, Cambridge.
- HENRY, D. and WALKER, B. (1963), 'Seneca and the Agamemnon. Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom', *CP* 58, 1–10.
- (1965), 'The Futility of Action. A Study of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*', *CP* 60, 11–22.
- (1966), 'Phantasmagoria and Idyll. An Element of Seneca's *Phaedra*', *G&R* 13, 223–39.
- (1967), 'Loss of identity: *Medea superest*? A Study of Seneca's *Medea*', *CP* 62, 169–81.
- and HENRY, E. (1985), *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Rome*, Warminster.
- HERINGTON, C. J. (1961), 'Octavia Praetexta: A Survey', *CQ* 11, 18–30.
- (1966), 'Senecan Tragedy', *Arion* 5, 422–71.
- (1982), 'The Younger Seneca', in Kenney and Clausen 1982, 15–36.
- HERRMANN, L. (1924) (ed. and transl.), *Sénèque, Tragédies*, 2 vols., Paris.
- HERTER, H. (1971), 'Phaidra in griechischer und römischer Gestalt', *RhM* 114, 44–77.
- HERZOG, O. (1928), 'Datierung der Tragödien des Seneca', *RhM* 77, 51–104.
- HIJMANS, B.L. (1966), 'Drama in Seneca's Stoicism', *TAPA* 97, 237–51.
- (1976), *Inlaboratus et facilis. Aspects of Structure in some Letters of Seneca*, Leiden.
- HINE, H. M. (2000) (ed.), *Seneca: Medea*, Warminster.
- HOOK, B. S. (2000), 'Nothing Within Which Passeth Show: Character and Color in Senecan Tragedy', in Harrison 2000, 53–71.

- HOPKINS, K. (1978), *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, Vol. 1, Cambridge.
- HUZAR, E. (1984), 'Claudius: The Erudite Emperor', *ANRW* II 32.1, 611–47.
- INWOOD, B. (1985), *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, Oxford.
- (1993), 'Seneca and Psychological Dualism', in Brunschwig and Nussbaum 1993, 150–83; reprinted as Ch. 2 of Inwood 2005.
- (1995a), 'Seneca in his Philosophical Milieu', *HSPH* 97, 63–76.
- (1995b), 'Politics and Paradox in Seneca's *De beneficiis*', in *Justice and Generosity*, ed. A. Laks and M. Schofield, Cambridge; reprinted as Ch. 3 of Inwood 2005.
- (2000), 'The Will in Seneca the Younger', *CP* 95, 44–60.
- (2005), *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome*, Oxford.
- IRWIN, T. (1992), 'Who Discovered the Will?', in *Ethics, Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Atascadero.
- ISER, W. (1978), *Acts of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore.
- JAKOBI, R. (1988), *Der Einfluß Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca*, Berlin.
- JEROME, T. S. (1923), *Aspects of the Study of History*, London.
- JOPLIN, P. K. (1991), 'The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours', in L.A. Higgins and B.R. Silver (eds.), *Rape and Representation*, New York, 35–66.
- KAHN, C. (1988), 'Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine', Ch. 9 of *The Question of Eclecticism*, ed. J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long, Berkeley & Los Angeles.
- KENNETT, J. and SMITH, M. (1996), 'Frog and Toad Lose Control', *Analysis* 56, 63–73.
- KENNEY, E. J. and CLAUSEN, W. (1982) (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: Latin Literature*, Cambridge.
- KENNY, A. (1963), *Action, Emotion, and Will*, London.
- (1975), *Will, Freedom, and Power*, London.
- (1979), *Aristotle's Theory of the Will*, New Haven.
- KEULEN, A. J. (2001) (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca Troades: Introduction, Text and Commentary*, Leiden.
- KIDD, I. D. (1971), 'Stoic Intermediaries and the End for Man', in Long 1971, 150–72.
- KNEISSL, P. and LOSEMANN, V. (1998), *Imperium Romanum: Studien zur Geschichte und Rezeption. Festschrift für Karl Christ zum 75. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart.
- KNOCHE, U. (1934), 'Der römische Ruhmesgedanke', *Philologus* 89, 102–24.
- KRAFT, K. (1966), 'Die politische Hintergrund von Senecas Apocolocyntosis', *Historia* 15, 96–122.
- KRAGELUND, P. (1982), *Prophecy, Populism and Propaganda in the 'Octavia'*, Copenhagen.

- KRAGELUND, P. (1988), 'The Prefect's Dilemma and the Date of the *Octavia*', *CQ* 38, 492–508.
- (1998), 'Galba's *Pietas*, Nero's Victims and the Mausoleum of Augustus', *Historia* 47, 152–73.
- (1999), 'Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?', *C&M* 50, 235–47.
- KRISTEVA, J. (1974), 'La Femme, ce n'est jamais ça', *Tel Quel* 59, 19–25.
- LARMOUR, D. H. J. (1990), 'Tragic *Contaminatio* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Procne and Medea; Philomela and Iphigenia (6.424–674); Scylla and Phaedra (8.19–51)', *ICS* 15, 131–41.
- LARSON, V. T. (1992), 'Seneca and the Schools of Philosophy in Early Imperial Rome', *ICS* 17, 49–56.
- LAUSBERG, M. (1989), 'Senecae operum fragmenta; Überblick und Forschungsbericht', *ANRW* II.36.3, 1879–961.
- LAWALL, G. (1979), 'Seneca's Medea: The Elusive Triumph of Civilization', in *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to B. M. W. Knox*, ed. G. Bowersock, W. Burkert, and M. Putnam, Berlin & New York, 419–26.
- (1982), 'Death and Perspective in Seneca's Troades', *CJ* 77, 244–52.
- LEACH, E. W. (1984), 'Transformations in the *Georgics*: Vergil's Italy and Varro's', *Atti del Convegno scientifico mondiale di studi su Virgilio*, Accademia Nazionale Virgiliana, 2 vols., Milan, I.96–8.
- (1989), 'The Implied Reader and the Political Argument in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*', *Arethusa* 22, 197–230.
- LEEMAN, A. D. (1949), *Gloria*, Diss. Leyden (Dutch with an extensive English summary).
- (1952), 'Seneca and Posidonius: A Philosophical Commentary on Sen. *Ep.* CII, 3–19', *Mnemosyne* iv.5, 57–79.
- LEFÈVRE, E. (1972) (ed.), *Senecas Tragödien*, Wege der Forschung 310, Darmstadt.
- (1978) (ed.), *Der Einfluss Senecas auf das europäische Drama*, Darmstadt.
- (1990), 'Waren philosophische Schriften Seneca zur Rezitation bestimmt?', in Vogt-Spira 1990, 147–59.
- LENZ, A. W. (2001), 'Die Inszenierung einer antiken Tragödie—*Medea* von L. Annaeus Seneca', in Zimmermann 2001, 1–119.
- LEO, F. (1878), *De Senecae tragoediis observationes criticae*, Berlin (repr. 1963).
- (1897), 'Die Composition der Chorlieder Senecas', *RhM* 52, 509–18.
- (1908), *Der Monolog im Drama*, Berlin.
- LIEBERMANN, W.-L. (1974), *Studien zu Senecas Tragödien*, Meisenheim am Glan.

- (2004), 'Senecas Tragödien: Forschungsüberblick and Methodik', in Billerbeck and Schmidt 2004, 1–48 (with discussion pp. 49–61).
- LITTLEWOOD, C. A. J. (1997), 'Seneca's *Thyestes*: The Tragedy with no Women?', *MD* 38, 57–86.
- (2004), *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy*, Oxford.
- LONG, A. A. (1967), 'Carneades and the Stoic Telos', *Phronesis* 12, 59–90.
- (1971) (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism*, London.
- (1974), *Hellenistic Philosophy*, New York.
- (1991), 'Representation and the Self in Stoicism', in S. Everson (ed.), *Companions to Ancient Thought 2: Psychology*, Cambridge, 102–20.
- and SEDLEY, D. (1987), *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge.
- LORAUX, N. (1987), *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, transl. A. Forster, London.
- LUMPE, A. (1966), 'Exemplum', *RE* 6.1229–57.
- MCALINDON, D. (1956), 'Senatorial Opposition to Claudius and Nero', *AJP* 77, 113–32.
- (1957), 'Claudius and the Senators', *AJP* 78, 279–86.
- MCCARTY, W. (1989), 'The Shape of the Mirror: Metaphorical Catoptrics in Classical Literature', *Arethusa* 22, 161–96.
- MCGUSHIN, P. (1977), *C. Sallustius Crispus: Bellum Catilinae, a Commentary*, Leiden.
- MAGUINNESS, W. S. (1956), 'Seneca and the Poets', *Hermathena* 88, 81–98.
- MALASPINA, E. (2001) (ed.), *L. Annaei Senecae De Clementia Libri Duo*, Turin.
- MANNI, E. (1975), 'Dall'avvento di Claudio all'acclamazione di Vespasiano', *ANRW* II.32.2, 131–48.
- MANNING, C. E. (1974), 'The Consolatory Tradition and Seneca's Attitude to the Emotions', *G&R* 21, 71–81.
- MARSHALL, C. W. (2000), 'Location! Location! Location! Choral Absence and Dramatic Space in Seneca's *Troades*', in Harrison 2000, 27–51.
- MASTRONARDE, D. J. (1970), 'Seneca's *Oedipus*: The Drama in the Word', *TAPA* 101, 291–315.
- MATILLA, E. (1971), 'La Esclavitud en Séneca', *Eclás* 15, 115–32.
- MAURACH, G. (1970), *Der Bau von Senecas Epistulae Morales*, Heidelberg 1970.
- (1996), *Seneca, Leben und Werk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Darmstadt.
- MAXWELL-STUART, P. G. (1975), 'The Interpretation of the Name Oedipus', *Maia* 27, 37–43.
- MAYER, R. G. (1991), 'Roman Historical Exempla in Seneca', in Grimal 1991, 141–69.
- MELE, A. (1992), *The Springs of Action*, New York & London.

- MELTZER, G. (1988), 'Dark Wit and Black Humor in Seneca's *Thyestes*', *TAPA* 118, 309–30.
- MILANI, P. (1972), *La Schiavitù nel pensiero politica: dai Greci al basso medio evo*, Milan.
- MILLER, F.J. (1916) (transl.), *Ovid, Metamorphoses* (2 vols.), Cambridge, MA.
- (1917) (transl.), *Seneca, Tragedies* (2 vols.), Cambridge, MA.
- MIOLA, R. S. (1992), *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: the Influence of Seneca*, Oxford.
- MISCH, G. (1950), *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, London.
- MOMIGLIANO, A. (1934), *Claudius: the Emperor and his Achievement*, trans. W.D. Hogarth, Oxford.
- MOREAU, A. (1979), 'A propos d'Oedipe: la liaison entre trois crimes—parricide, inceste et cannibalisme', *Étud. Lett. Arc.* 1, 97–127.
- MORFORD, M. (1991), *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius*, Princeton.
- MOSCA, B. (1937), 'Satira Filosofica e Politica nelle *Menipée* di Varrone', *ASNP* 2, 41–77.
- MOTTO, A. L. (1970), *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, Amsterdam.
- (1975), 'Ingenium Facile et Copiosum: Point and Counterpoint in Senecan Style', *CB* 52, 1–4.
- (1982), 'Art and Ethics in the Drama: Seneca's "Pseudotragedy" Reconsidered', *ICS* 7, 125–40.
- (1988), *Senecan Tragedy*, Amsterdam.
- and CLARK, J. R. (1968), 'Paradoxum Senecae: the Epicurean Stoic', *CW* 62, 37–42.
- MÜLLER, G. (1953), 'Senecas *Oedipus* als Drama', *Hermes* 81, 447–64.
- MÜNSCHER, K. (1922a), 'Senecas Tragödien', *Philologus Suppl.* 16.1, 84–143.
- (1922b), 'Bericht über die Seneca-Literatur aus den Jahren 1915–1921', *Bursians Jahresbericht* 192, 109–214.
- MÜNZER, F. (1920), 'Die geschichtlichen Beispiele in Cicero's *Consolatio*', in *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*, Stuttgart, 376–408; trans. in F. Münzer, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, trans. T. Ridley, Baltimore & London 1999, 365–94.
- MULVEY, L. (1989), 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1976), reprinted in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, London, 14–26.
- NAUTA, R. R. (1987), 'Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* as Saturnalian Literature', *Mnemosyne* 40, 69–96.
- NEWMAN, R. J. (1988), 'In umbra virtutis. Gloria in the Thought of Seneca the Philosopher', *Erano*s 86, 145–59.

- NISBET, R. G. M. (1990), 'The Dating of Seneca's Tragedies, with Special Reference to *Thyestes*', *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 6, 95–114.
- NUTTALL, A. D. (1996), *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?*, Oxford.
- OLDFATHER, W. A., PEASE, A. S., and CANTER, H. V., (1918), *Index verborum quae in Senecae fabulis necnon in Octavia praetexta reperiuntur*, Univ. of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 4, 63–332.
- OWEN, W. H. (1968), 'Commonplace and Dramatic Symbol in Seneca's Tragedies', *TAPA* 99, 291–313.
- (1970), 'Time and Event in Seneca's *Troades*', *WS* 4, 118–37.
- PARATORE, E. (1955), *Studi in Onore di Gino Funaioli*, Rome.
- (1956), 'La Poesia nell'*Oedipus* di Seneca', *GIF* 9, 97–132.
- PEARSON, A. C. (1917), *The Fragments of Sophocles*, Cambridge.
- POE, J. P. (1969), 'An Analysis of Seneca's *Thyestes*', *TAPA* 100, 355–76.
- (1983), 'The Sinful Nature of the Protagonist of Seneca's *Oedipus*', in Boyle 1983, 140–58.
- POHLENZ, M. (1934), *Antikes Führertum*, Leipzig.
- (1959), *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*, Göttingen.
- (1965), 'Philosophie und Erlebnis in Senecas Dialogen', Anhang, 'Ein römischer Zug in Senecas Denken', in *Kleine Schriften*, Vol. 1, Hildesheim, 440–6.
- PRATT, N. T. (1939), *Dramatic Suspense in Seneca and his Greek Precursors*, Princeton.
- (1963), 'Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama', *TAPA* 94, 199–234.
- (1983), *Seneca's Drama*, Chapel Hill.
- PRINCE, G. (1973), 'Introduction to the Study of the Narratee', *Poétique* 14, 177–96, reprinted in J.P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism from Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, Baltimore, 1980.
- PUTNAM, M. C. J. (1992), 'Virgil's Tragic Future: Senecan Drama and the *Aeneid*', in *La Storia, la letteratura e l'arte a Roma*, Mantua, 231–91.
- RABBOU, P. (1954), *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike*, Munich.
- REGENBOGEN, O. (1927–28), 'Schmerz und Tod in den Tragödien Senecas', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 7, 176–218.
- RELIHAN, J. C. (1993), *Ancient Menippean Satire*, Baltimore.
- RICHLIN, A. (1981), 'Approaches to the Sources on Adultery at Rome', in H. Foley (ed.), *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, New York, 379–404.
- (1992), *The Garden of Priapus*, New York.
- RICHTER, W. (1958), 'Seneca und die Sklaven', *Gymnasium* 65, 196–218.
- RIETH, O. (1934), 'Über das Telos der Stoiker', *Hermes* 69, 13–45.



- RIST, J. M. (1969), *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge.  
 — (1994), *Augustine*, Cambridge.
- ROBIN, D. (1993), 'Film Theory and the Gendered Voice in Seneca', in N. Rabinowitz and A. Richlin (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, New York, 102–21.
- ROBINSON, T. J. (2005), 'In the Court of Time: the Reckoning of a Monster in the *Apocolocyntosis* of Seneca', *Arethusa* 36, 223–58.
- ROLLAND, E. (1906), *De l'influence de Sénèque le pere et les rhéteurs sur Sénèque le philosophe*, Ghent.
- ROLLER, M. (2001), *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome*, Princeton.
- RONCALLI, R. (1990) (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca: ΑΠΟΚΟΛΟΚΥΝΤΟΣΙΣ*, Leipzig.
- ROSENMEYER, T. G. (1989), *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology*, Berkeley.
- ROZELAAR, M. (1976), *Seneca: eine Gesamtdarstellung*, Amsterdam.
- RUDICH, V. (1993), *Political Dissidence under Nero*, New York.
- RUSSELL, D.A. (1974), 'Letters to Lucilius', in Costa 1974, 70–94.
- RYBERG, I. (1942), 'Tacitus' Art of Innuendo', *TAPA* 73, 383–404.
- SCHENDEL, H. (1908), *Quibus auctoribus Romanis Lucius Annaeus Seneca in rebus patriis usus sit*, Greifswald thesis.
- SCHETTER, W. (first publ. 1965), 'Zum Aufbau von Senecas Troerinnen', in Lefèvre 1972, 230–71.  
 — (1972), 'Senecas Oedipus-Tragödie', in Lefèvre 1972, 402–49.
- SCHIESARO, A. (1994), 'Seneca's Thyestes and the Morality of Tragic *Furor*', in J. Elsner and J. Masters (eds.), *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History and Representation*, London, 196–210.  
 — (2003), *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*, Cambridge.
- SCHILLING, R. (1993) (ed.), *Ovide: Les fastes*, Vol. 2, Paris.
- SCHMIDT, E. A. (2000), 'Aparte: Das dramatische Verfahren and Senecas Technik', *RhM* 143, 400–29.  
 — (2001), 'Der dramatische Raum der Tragödien Senecas', *WS* 114, 341–60.  
 — (2004), 'Zeit und Raum in Senecas Tragödien', in Billerbeck and Schmidt 2004, 321–68.
- SCHMIDT, P. L. (1985), 'Die Poetisierung und Mythisierung der Geschichte in der Tragödie *Octavia*', *ANRW* II.32.2, 1421–53.
- SCHOENBERGER, H. (1910), *Beispiele aus der Geschichte, ein rhetorisches Kunstmittel in Ciceros Reden*, Erlangen thesis.
- SCHUBERT, W. (2004), 'Seneca in der Musik der Neuzeit', in Billerbeck and Schmidt 2004, 369–425.

- SCHWAIGER, C. (2000), 'Die Idee des Selbstdenkens in der römischen Philosophie—aufgezeigt am Beispiel Senecas', *Gymnasium* 107, 129–42.
- SEGAL, C. (1982), 'Nomen Sacrum: Medea and Other Names in Senecan Tragedy', *Maia* 34, 241–6.
- (1983a), 'Boundary Violation and the Landscape of the Self in Senecan Tragedy', *A&A* 29, 172–87, reprinted in *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text*, Ithaca and London, 1986, 315–36.
- (1983b), 'Dissonant Sympathy: Song, Orpheus, and the Golden Age in Seneca's Tragedies', *Ramus* 12, 229–51.
- (1984), 'Senecan Baroque: the Death of Hippolytus in Seneca, Ovid, Euripides', *TAPA* 114, 311–25.
- (1986), *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, Princeton.
- SEIDENSTICKER, B. (1969), *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas*, Heidelberg.
- SETAIOLI, A. (1981), 'Della Narrazione all'Exemplum. Episodi Erodotei nell'Opera Senecana', in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale 'Letterature Classiche e Narratologia'*, Perugia, 379–96; reprinted in *Seneca e I Greci. Citazioni e Traduzioni nelle Opere Filosofiche*, Bologna 1988, 485–503.
- SEIDENSTICKER, B. (1969), *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas*, Heidelberg.
- SHARROCK, A. (1991), 'Womanufacture', *JRS* 81, 36–49.
- SHELTON, J.-A. (1975), 'Problems of Time in Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and *Thyestes*', *CA* 8, 257–69.
- (1978), *Seneca's Hercules Furens* (Hypomnemata 50), Göttingen.
- (1979), 'Seneca's *Medea* as Mannerist Literature', *Poetica* 11, 38–82.
- (1995), 'Persuasion and Paradigm in Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* 1–6', *C&M* 46, 157–88.
- (2000), 'The Spectacle of Death in Seneca's *Troades*', in Harrison 2000, 87–118.
- SKIDMORE, C. (1996), *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen. The Work of Valerius Maximus*, Exeter.
- SMITH, B. R. (1988), *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500–1700*, Princeton, NJ.
- SMOLENAARS, J. J. L. (1998), 'The Vergilian Background of Seneca's *Thyestes* 641–682', *Vergilius* 44, 51–65.
- SNELL, B. (1964), *Scenes from Greek Drama*, Berkeley.
- SOELLNER, R. (1958), 'The Madness of Hercules and the Elizabethans', *Comparative Literature* 10, 309–24.
- SORABJI, R. (1980), *Necessity, Cause, and Blame*, Ithaca, NY.
- SØRENSEN, V. (1984), *Seneca: the Humanist at the Court of Nero*, Chicago.

- SOURVINOU-INWOOD, C. (1987), 'Erotic Pursuits and Meanings', *JHS* 107, 131–53.
- STÄHLI-PETER, M. M. (1974), *Die Arie des Hippolytus. Kommentar zu Eingangsmonodie in der Phaedra des Seneca*, diss. Zurich.
- STEGMANN, A. (1964), 'La Médée de Corneille', in J. Jacquot (ed.), *Les Tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la renaissance*, Paris, 1964.
- (1965), 'Seneca and Corneille', in T.A. Dorey and D.R. Dudley (eds.), *Roman Drama*, London, 1965.
- STEIDLE, W. (first publ. 1941), 'Zu Senecas Troerinnen' in Lefèvre 1972, 210–29
- (1968), 'Zur Erfindung von Senecas Troades', in *Studien zum antiken Drama*, Munich, 156–62.
- STEVENS, J. A. (2000), 'Seneca and Horace: Allegorical Technique in Two Odes to Bacchus (Hor. *Carm.* 2.19 and Sen. *Oed.* 403–508)', *Phoenix* 53, 281–307.
- STEWART, Z. (1953), 'Sejanus, Gaetulicus, and Seneca', *AJP* 74, 70–85.
- STOESSL, F. (1959), 'Prologos', *RE* 23.2, 2312–400.
- STROH, W. and BREITENBERGER, B. (1994), 'Inszenierung Senecas: I, Die Aufführung der Troas als philologisches Experiment', in Bierl and von Möllendorf 1994, 248–63.
- SULLIVAN, J. P. (1985), *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero*, Ithaca & London.
- SUMMERS, W. C. (1910) (ed.), *Select Letters of Seneca*, London.
- SUTTON, D. F. (1983), *The Dramaturgy of the Octavia*, Königstein.
- (1986), *Seneca on the Stage*, Leiden.
- SYME, R. (1958), *Tacitus*, 2 vols., Oxford.
- (1986), *The Roman Aristocracy*, Oxford.
- TARRANT, R. J. (1976) (ed.), *Seneca: Agamemnon*, Cambridge.
- (1978), 'Senecan Drama and its Antecedents', *HSCP* 82, 213–63.
- (1985) (ed.), *Seneca's Thyestes*, Atlanta.
- TAYLOR, C. (1989), *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, MA.
- TODOROV, T. (1981), *Introduction to Poetics*, Minneapolis.
- TÖCHTERLE, K. (1994) (ed.), *Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Oedipus: Kommentar mit Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung*, Heidelberg.
- TOO, Y. L. (1994), 'Educating Nero: A Reading of Seneca's *Epistles*', in Elsner and Masters 1994, 211–24.
- TRAINA, A. (1974), *Lo Stile 'drammatico' del filosofo Seneca*, Bologna.
- (1979), 'Due note a Seneca tragico', *Maia* 31, 273–6.
- TREVES, P. (1970), 'Il Giorno della morte di Seneca', in *Studia Florentina A. Ronconi Sexagenario Oblata*, Rome, 507–24.
- TRILLITZSCH, W. (1962), *Senecas Beweisführung*, Berlin.

- (1971), *Seneca im literarische Urteil der Antike: Darstellung und Sammlung der Zeugnisse*, 2 vols., Amsterdam.
- VERSNEL, H. S. (1993), 'Two Carnavalesque Princes: Augustus and Claudius and the Ambiguity of Saturnalian Imagery', in S. Dopp (ed.), *Karnavaleske Phänomene in antiken und nachantiken Kulturen und Literaturen*, Trier, 99–122.
- VEYNE, P. (2003), *Seneca, the Life of a Stoic*, trans. D. Sullivan, New York & London.
- VIDAL-NAQUET, P. (1988), 'Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus' Oresteia', in J. P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet (eds.), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, New York, 141–59.
- VIELBERG, M. (1994), 'Necessitas in Senecas Troades', *Philologus* 138, 315–334.
- VOELKE, A.-J. (1973), *L'Idée de volonté dans le Stoïcisme*, Paris.
- VOGT, J. (1975), *Slavery and the Ideal of Man*, London.
- VOGT-SPIRA, G. (1990) (ed.), *Strukturen der Mündlichkeit in der römischen Literatur*, Tübingen.
- VOLK, K. (2000), 'Putting Andromacha on Stage: A Performer's Perspective', in Harrison 2000, 197–208.
- VOTTERO, D. (1998), *Lucio Anneo Seneca: I Frammenti*, Bologna.
- WAITH, E. M. (1962), *The Herculean Hero*, New York & London.
- WALTERS, J. (1997), 'Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought', in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 29–46.
- WALTZ, R. (1934), *Sénèque: L'Apocolocyntose du divin Claud*, Paris.
- WATLING, C. F. (1966) (transl.), *Seneca, Four Tragedies and Octavia*, Harmondsworth.
- WATTS, W. (1972), 'Seneca on Slavery', *DR* 90, 183–95.
- WEGNER, D. M. and PENNEBAKER, J. W. (1993) (eds.), *Handbook of Mental Control*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- WEINREICH, O. (1923), *Senecas Apocolocyntosis: Einführung, Analyse und Untersuchungen, Übersetzung*, Berlin.
- WESTERMANN, W. L. (1955), *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Philadelphia.
- WHITMAN, L. Y. (1978) (ed.), *The Octavia. Introduction, Text and Commentary*, Bern & Stuttgart.
- WIEDEMANN, T. (2000), 'Reflections of Roman Political Thought in Latin Historical Writing', in C. Rowe and M. Scholfield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Cambridge, 517–31.
- WILLIAMS, G. (1992), 'Poet and Audience in Senecan Tragedy: *Phaedra* 358–430', in T. Woodman and J. Powell (eds.), *Author and Audience in Latin Literature*, Cambridge, 138–49.

- WILLIAMS, G. D. (2003) (ed.), *Seneca: De Otio, De Brevitate Vitae*, Cambridge.
- WILLIAMSON, G. (1951), *The Senecan Amble*, London.
- WILSON, M. (1983), 'The Tragic Mode of Seneca's *Troades*', in Boyle 1983, 27–60.
- (1987), 'Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius: A Revaluation', *Ramus* 16, 102–21.
- WISTRAND, M. (1990), 'Violence and Entertainment in Seneca the Younger', *Eranos* 88, 31–46.
- WYKE, M. (1994), 'Taking the Woman's Part: Engendering Roman Love Elegy', *Ramus* 23, 110–28.
- ZEITLIN, F. (1990), 'Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama', in J. J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (eds.), *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, Princeton, 63–96.
- ZELLER, E. (1963), *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, Darmstadt.
- ZIMMERMANN, B. (2001) (ed.), *Rezeption des antiken Dramas auf der Bühne und in der Literatur*, Stuttgart & Weimar.
- ZINTZEN, C. (1960), *Analytisches Hypomnema zu Senecas Phaedra*, Meisenheim am Glan.
- ZWIERLEIN, O. (1966), *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas*, Meisenheim am Glan.
- (1983), *Prolegomena zu einer kritischen Ausgabe der Tragödien Senecas*, Wiesbaden.
- (1986) (ed.), *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae*, Oxford.
- (1987), *Senecas Phaedra und ihre Vorbilder*, Stuttgart.