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RETROSPECTIVE READING IN SENECAN TRAGEDY

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> ante omnia igitur imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit…
>
> (Quintilian *I.O.* 10.2.4)
>
> The first point, therefore, is that imitation alone is not sufficient in itself.

Conclusions matter in Senecan prose and poetry. At the conclusion of his epistles, Seneca often includes an unexpected quote or alters his subject-matter in a surprising manner—a technique that Fowler has helpfully classified as an example of 'Romantic Irony' in the vein of Heine or selected Horatian odes.[1] His dialogues display a similar penchant for such endings, e.g. the post-mortem speech of Cremutius Cordus to his daughter, Marcia, in the finale of the *Consolatio ad Marciam* (*Dial.* 6.26.2-7). Seneca's tragedies likewise conclude in a beguiling fashion, 'Part of the dramatic force of the Senecan ending is its avoidance of any note of easy resolution; it serves rather to sharpen and/or problematize the central issues of the particular play.'[2] As a way to further encourage the reader to question or recognize major themes of the play, Seneca's conclusions feature an intertext that casts these themes in a different light or elicits metapoetic commentary.[3] These intertexts stress ideas and language important to the particular play, especially those found in the prologue, in order to create a type of ring-composition to the tragedy as a whole. This paper investigates these intertexts and indicates not only *how* they operate on an inter/intratextual level, but also *why* Seneca would think of the texts that he does at the conclusion of his tragedies. Seneca looks back to some of his major literary influences at the conclusions of his plays (Ovid, Horace, and Virgil unsurprisingly; Seneca the Elder perhaps more surprisingly), which reveals that these moments are diagnostic of his intertextual method in general. The larger situational or generic context of the sources shade the words uttered

1. Fowler (2000), 273: 'At the end of the work the writer reveals that he is after all just like us, with all our failings, and thus removes the resistance we feel to his preaching without undermining it' (citing *Ep*. 56.14f.). The organization of the *Epistulae* into books is significant and the endings of each book would help the reader understand the intended closure (cf. Cancik [1967], 138-51).

2. Boyle (2011), *ad* 1061.

3. Putnam (1995) has proven that Seneca was sensitive to the ending of the *Aeneid* and that he incorporates notable allusions to it in each of his tragedies. The intertexts I have culled appear within the final 20 lines of their tragedy. *Phoenissae* does not appear to feature one and this may be further indication of its incompleteness.

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by Senecan protagonists, but Seneca stresses the tragic impact of such intertextual echoes again and again; Seneca *tragicus* surely is a pessimistic reader of the Augustan tradition.[4] The reiteration of similar language and imagery throughout the play 'primes' the reader to recognize the intertext at the play's conclusion—thus intratextual repetitions signpost the intertextual reference. Seneca wants these references to be noticed; he promotes a retrospective reading technique in which these intertexts recast language and themes found earlier in the play, now *vis-à-vis* the literary and rhetorical source material. In creating such dense verbal connections, he encourages further contemplation of the major motifs of the tragedies and inherently endorses the position of his plays as 'open' texts that beg for further supplementation by further reading and rereading, again and again.[5]

Stretch Out and Wait

Near the close of the *Oedipus*, after Oedipus has blinded himself and Jocasta has committed suicide on stage, Oedipus addresses himself:

> pauitante gressu sequere fallentes uias;
> suspensa plantis efferens uestigia
> caecam tremente dextera noctem rege.
> ingredere praeceps, lubricos ponens gradus,
> i profuge uade—siste, ne in matrem incidas.
>
> (Sen. *Oed.* 1047-51)

> Follow the deceptive ways with trembling step;
> Leaving behind halting footprints with the soles of your feet
> Be king of the blind darkness with your quaking right hand.
> Go headlong, planting slippery steps,
> Move, flee, advance—stop, don't fall on your mother.

The final phrase has led to some embarrassment as it appears Seneca is being inappropriately clever and that the final injunction hits a bathetic, not tragic,

4. As Mastronarde (1970), 312, points out *à propos* the intratextual connections 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 by individual words in their interplay *may add vague and ominous suggestiveness to a seemingly straightforward passage*' (my emphasis). This study adds intertextual connections into the hopper.

5. See Fowler (2000), 243: 'it seems to do more justice to our intuitions to see the tension between "open" and "closed" as one ever present in the literary work. All works leave things undone as well as done; all great works have that paradox at the core of their greatness.' Fowler later notes the particular complexity of the end of Euripides' *Heracles* including similar intra- and intertextual components, 'the closure of *Heracles* may serve as a paradigm of how many elements may be involved in dramatic closure, and how important they may be for the interpretation of the play' (277). Seneca's *Hercules Furens* reasserts such complexity.

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note.[6] But this line is worth rehabilitating because of its intertextual and intratextual significance. Both Fitch and Boyle rightly comment on the sexual sense of 'falling on' his mother, so here Oedipus is revealing his knowledge that his incestuous relationship with his mother was the 'source of his greatest guilt'.[7] The collocation *incidere in* also appears at the play's opening, when Oedipus reveals his attitude towards kingship and the frightful oracle about him:

> quam bene parentis sceptra Polybi fugeram!
> curis solutus exul, intrepidus uagans
> (caelum deosque testor) in regnum incidi;
> infanda timeo: ne mea genitor manu
> perimatur; hoc me Delphicae laurus monent,
> aliudque nobis maius indicunt scelus.
>
> (Sen. *Oed.* 12-17)

> How right I was to have fled the scepter of my father, Polybus!
> Free from care, an exile fearlessly wandering
> (the heavens and gods as my witness)—I fell into kingship;
> I fear unspeakable things: that my father may fall by my hand;
> The Delphic laurels warned me of this,
> And they pronounced another greater crime for me.

If his earlier flight was done rightly (*bene…fugeram*), and he was free from care (*curis solutus…intrepidus*), now he looks upon exile (*profuge*) as a frightful prospect (*pauitante…tremente*). He has proved his earlier gnomic statement that kingship was a 'deceptive good' (*o fallax bonum*, 6) when he follows 'deceptive ways' (*fallentes uias,* 1047) led only by a cane at the play's end.[8] Kingship, a dubious boon previously, has been substantiated as the very cause of his incestuous troubles in the play.[9] This echo causes the reader to understand how detrimental his kingship has been both to Thebes and to Oedipus himself, and that the marriage that coincided with his 'fall' into kingship has now been tainted by the death of his mother/wife.[10] The intratextual connection shows the transformation of Oedipus from an unknowing king at the play's opening to an

6. See Boyle (2011), *ad loc.,* and Coffey and Mayer (1990), 195, where a line from the *Phaedra* rivals this as 'arguably the worst line in Senecan drama'. Both Cowan and Boyle in this volume remark on the unsettling nature of this line.

7. Boyle (2011), *ad loc*., cf. Fitch (2004), 154, for parallels of the sexual sense of the line. Boyle (2011), *ad* 14, also notes the intratextual repetition and Seneca's penchant for this (*incidere* + *in*) construction.

8. The only other appearance of a word with *fall-* as the root is at 119 (*fallacis…Parthis*).

9. Sampson in the second essay of this volume stresses the novelty inherent in Seneca's emphasis on the problems of kingship at the start of *Oedipus.*

10. Note that his earlier worries (*timeo*, 15) about parricide (*perimatur*, 16) are fulfilled (*timui,* 1044; *peremi,* 1045) at the conclusion of the play, further knotting together these two sections.

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all-too-knowing murderous and incestuous 'king of the blind darkness' at the end of the play.[11]

Intertextually, the passage recalls a moment in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. At the conclusion of the story of Callisto, her son Arcas stumbles upon her in her bear-guise:

> dumque feras sequitur, dum saltus eligit aptos
> nexilibusque plagis siluas Erymanthidas ambit,
> incidit in matrem, quae restitit Arcade uiso
> et cognoscenti similis fuit, ille refugit
> immotosque oculos in se sine fine tenentem
> nescius extimuit propriusque accedere auenti
> uulnifico fuerat fixurus pectora telo…
>
> (Ov. *Met.* 2.498-504)

> While he pursues beasts and chooses suitable passes
> And he surrounds the Erymanthian glades with woven nets,
> He falls upon his mother, who stopped, having seen Arcas,
> And seemed to recognize him. He jumped back and, unaware,
> Feared how she held him in her unmoving gaze without end
> And he was about to pierce her breast with his wound-wielding
> Weapon as she desired to approach closer…

Why does Seneca allude to Ovid's tale at this moment? After all, the connections between the two works are notable for the differences as much as the similarities. Jupiter will ultimately interrupt the matricide with the catasterism of Arcas and Callisto, while the larger themes of the Callisto story may not mesh with Seneca's *Oedipus*. Or do they? In this particular passage of the *Metamorphoses*, one can see the importance of knowledge, sight, and recognition for Arcas and Callisto (*ignara,* 3.496, *immotos oculos,* 3.502, *cognoscenti*, 3.500; *nescius* 3.502), issues that are at the forefront of Seneca's *Oedipus* (cf. esp. *ambigua soli noscere Oedipodae datur* 'it is given to Oedipus alone to know riddles', Sen. *Oed.* 216; 514; *passim*).[12] Callisto's position as an exiled, polluted wanderer of the mountains foreshadows Oedipus' end in Seneca's play.[13] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, hunting is often a metaphor for erotic activity, and it is likely that Seneca picked up on this association in applying imagery from this son's hunt

11. His accidental *regnum* (14) is ironically recalled by *rege* (1049).

12. While the Theban books of the *Metamorphoses* have often been seen as quasi-Oedipal stories, in his *Oedipus* Seneca offers a reading of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole in which characters such as Myrrha and Callisto (in addition to Thebans such as Narcissus and Actaeon) are to be seen through Oedipus—an emphatically *tragic* Oedipus.

13. See O'Bryhim (1990) for more on the pollution of Callisto.

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of his mother to the situation in his *Oedipus*.[14] In addition, recognition of the intertext allows the reader to grasp the severity of the situation in Seneca's play. Ultimately, the Callisto tale has a 'happy' ending, which is certainly not the case in Seneca's tragic world. Arcas may stumble upon his mother, but the sexual innuendo in the chance encounter is latent at best. Seneca makes such innuendo manifest, however, as poor Oedipus worries that incestuous necrophilia may occur. In addition, Seneca's Oedipus goes through with the 'murder' only threatened in Ovid (at least he claims he does) in the lines directly before this moment, where he blames Apollo for an inaccurate prophecy: *bis parricida plusque quam timui nocens / matrem peremi* ('I have committed parricide twice and I am more guilty than I feared, / I killed my mother', Sen. *Oed.* 1044f.). Even Jocasta's last words may recall the specifics of Ovid's narrative, as she wonders whether to pierce her breast or throat with her son's sword (*utrumne pectori infigam meo / telum an patenti conditum iugulo inprimam?*, Sen. *Oed.* 1036f.). While Callisto's story illustrates the apogee of suffering by one character at the hands of the gods in the *Metamorphoses*, Seneca wishes his tragic Oedipus to surpass her suffering. At the conclusion Oedipus can expect no relief from the gods: in fact, he is doubly damned by Bacchus and Apollo.[15] In essence, Seneca's tragedy probes the extreme fluctuations of human identity, as Oedipus becomes first a monster (*magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua*, 'A monster more entangled than his own Sphinx', *Oed.* 641), then a parricide (1002), matricide (1045), and, finally, a scapegoat for the evils that plague Thebes (1054-61).[16] As one of a series of transformations highlighted by references to Ovid's epic in Seneca's play, this intertext reveals how Oedipus becomes the vehicle for the transformative potential of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, embodied in the paradigmatic tragic protagonist.

Cemetery Gates

Seneca's *Phaedra* closes with Theseus grappling with his crime and trying to reassemble the body of his son and potential heir, Hippolytus, who has been ripped apart by his horses and a particularly well-placed tree stump (Sen. *Pha.*

14. See Davis (1983), 11: 'Within the universe of the *Met*. "hunting" (*uenatio*) has a more or less consistent, though extremely complex, set of associations with "loving" (*amor*).' Seneca has recourse to such imagery elsewhere in this play from the Bacchae hunting Pentheus (*Oed.* 432-44) to Actaeon's fate (*Oed.* 751-63).

15. See DeBrohun in this volume with Boyle (2011), lxxxvi-ii: 'only in *Oedipus* does the audience witness a dithyrambic ode to tragedy's god. This play most especially points to itself as verbal, transformed, and transformative construct of theatrical imagination, thought, and passion, and as "rabid" presentation of a theatricalized world.'

16. Cf. Mastronarde (1970), 312, on the Bacchus ode, but pertinent to the play as a whole: '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.'

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1085-1104). In the midst of his lamentation and attempts at bodily repair, Theseus comments:

> quam magna lacrimis pars adhuc nostris abest!
> durate trepidae lugubri officio manus,
> fletusque largos sistite arentes genae,
> dum membra nato genitor adnumerat suo
> corpusque fingit.
>
> (Sen. *Pha.* 1261-65)

> How great a part is still lost for our tears!
> Hands, trembling at this mournful duty, be firm!
> Eyes, put aside your profuse weeping and be dry!
> While the father reckons up the limbs of his own son,
> And shapes his body.

The 'disorganized limbs' of Hippolytus (*disiecta membra,* Sen. *Pha.* 1256)—a probable intertext with Horace's literary verdict on Ennius' poetry at *Sat.* 1.4.62, which gives this passage a metaliterary feel—must be given shape by Theseus before burial.[17] Theseus' own address to his hands and eyes shows a sympathetic fragmentation of his own being when confronted with the result of his curse. His recreation of Hippolytus' body is also an attempt to create poetry out of the various strands of the literary tradition. To 'reckon up the limbs' (*membra…adnumerat,* 1264) riffs on language used to describe poetic rhythm and period length, as Cicero elucidates in his *de Oratore.*[18] The verb *fingere* resonates within the play as the indicator of a pervasive motif of pretending, fabrication, and fiction. In fact, this scene acts as a grim re-staging of Phaedra's own manic self-fashioning earlier in the play: *attolli iubet / iterumque poni corpus et solui comas / rursusque fingi* ('she orders / her body to be lifted and again to be put down / she orders her hair to be loosened and then arranged', Sen. *Pha.* 370-78).[19] If Phaedra's emotional vacillations are embodied by costume and hairstyle changes, the results of her dissembling are graphically displayed in this final scene.

While *fingere* is important to the play as a whole, Seneca incorporates this phrase (*corpusque fingit*) in order to activate an intertext to Virgil's *Aeneid* as

17. Cf. Staley (2010), 116: 'The *Phaedra* makes that sentiment and the metaphor behind it literal when it creates a tragedy out of Hippolytus' *disiecta membra.*' Most (1992) is the *locus classicus* on the hermeneutics of dismemberment in Silver Latin poetry.

18. Cf. Cic. *de Orat.* 3.190: *tamen ipsa membra sunt numeris uincienda* ('although these sections should adhere to rhythmical unity') and Ovid's description of Horace as *numerosus* ('of many metres') at *Tr.* 4.10.49.

19. Of the 11 appearances of forms of *fingere* in Senecan tragedy, seven are in this play (196, 203, 372, 496, 915, 1194, 1265). Cf. Trinacty (2014), 45f., for more on *fingo* in *Phaedra.* Note the use of *pono* in Theseus' directions (1257, 1260, 1268).

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well as Ovid's *Fasti*, two passages relating a common, but foundational, tale: Romulus, Remus, and the she-wolf of Rome. Emblazoned on the shield of Aeneas, the Virgilian ecphrasis presents the she-wolf in her cave nourishing young Romulus and Remus: *mulcere alternos et corpora fingere lingua* ('she caresses them in turn, and shapes their bodies with her tongue', Virg. *Aen.* 8.634). The intertextual connection is further encouraged by the nearby mention of the punishment of Fufetius Mettus, whose body was torn asunder by two chariots in a very Hippolytus-esque manner.[20] In a similar context, and surely looking back to the *Aeneid*, Ovid provides the tale of the she-wolf in his description of the Lupercalia in the *Fasti*. There, the she-wolf abandons her own offspring in order to fawn upon the babies Romulus and Remus: *fingit lingua corpora bina sua* ('she shapes their two bodies with her tongue', Ov. *Fast.* 2.418). The intertexts offer poignant contrast to the tragedy (and savagery) of Theseus, who can now only assemble the meaty remains of his son's body, a body he is responsible for destroying, unlike the 'fierce' (*feram*, Ov. *Fast.* 2.414) she-wolf. The formation of the body of Romulus by the she-wolf is the beginning of Rome itself and the monarchy, whereas the death of Hippolytus ruptures this branch of Theseus' regal line. The fashioning that Theseus attempts to perform is only for burial, in stark contrast to the nourishing and shaping of the infants Romulus and Remus. His final words of the play show his awareness that this task will extend well beyond the dramatic time of the play (*corporis partes uagas / inquirite*, Sen. *Pha.* 1278f.), but also that he does not care about the proper burial for Phaedra and blames her for the catastrophe (1279-80).[21] On a metapoetic level, Theseus resembles a poet who must assemble the fragments of the poetic tradition in a fitting manner.[22] In this particular case, Seneca calls attention to the gaps and the damage done to indicate Theseus' incomplete understanding of the tragedy that he has created, to adumbrate his future suffering, and to indicate that this story may not yet be over.[23]

20. See Gransden (1976), *ad loc.,* for more on his punishment. The mention of Mettus appears at Virg. *Aen.* 8.642-45 and there are linguistic echoes between Sen. *Pha.* 1103 (*acutis asperi uepres rubis*, 'undergrowth rough with sharp thorn-bushes'), and Virg. *Aen.* 8.865 (*sparsi rorabant sanguine uepres*, 'the thorn-bushes were bedewed with spattered blood').

21. If the opening of the play encourages the reader to think of a triumph (*longo…triumpho*, 79f.), so the ending may recall a funeral procession – the triumph and the funeral cortège were two common 'Roman' structuring devices (cf. Fowler [2000], 298).

22. In addition to these echoes, the entire passage looks back to Virbius' narrative in *Metamorphoses* 15, in which Hippolytus is resurrected as an Italian god. The polyvalence of *pars* and *corpus,* which likewise can denote parts of a literary collection, could be activated by Theseus' claim, cf. Ov. *Tr.* 2.535: *nec legitur pars ulla magis de corpore toto* ('Not any part from his whole corpus is read more'). Note how Theseus employs *agnoscere* to indicate his 'reading' of the remains (*laeui lateris agnosco notas*, 1260): see Bartsch (2006), 260-62, and Boyle (1997), 112f., for the metapoetics of this reassembly.

23. Cf. Segal (1986b), 218: 'The father's ultimate inability to fashion or form a complete image of his son's body is also that absence of closure inherent in all tragedy: the residual tension, rifts, and contradictions between the order-imposing coherence of the artistic form and the order-resisting chaos of the experience that such art represents.'

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Back to the Old House

At the conclusion of *Hercules Furens* Theseus proposes that Hercules accompany him to Athens for absolution after the horrific murder of his family. While Hercules wonders how he will cleanse his incarnadined hands and what corner of the underworld befits a sinner of his ilk, Theseus assures him that Athens will receive him:

> nostra te tellus manet.
> illic solutam caede Gradiuus manum
> restituit armis; illa *te*, Alcide, *uocat*,
> facere innocentes terra quae superos solet.
>
> (Sen. *HF* 1341-44)

> Our land awaits you.
> There Mars once again wielded his weapons,
> After his hand was purified from slaughter;
> That land calls you, Alcides, which is accustomed
> To make the gods innocent.

This conclusion hints that Hercules himself will become a god, one of the major concerns of the play, but it also resembles the conclusion of Euripides' *Heracles*. In Euripides' version, Theseus likewise provides a haven in Athens, but with the additional detail that Hercules will die in Athens and receive honors there.[24] The end of Seneca's play has received much comment because of the ambivalence of his representation of Hercules. Is Hercules still prone to violence and rage, or is he to be understood as a universal benefactor now ready to embrace his role as a Stoic icon?[25] The language of Theseus' speech recalls a moment from Horace's *Epode* 13, which helps to clarify the valence of the heroism that Seneca postulates for Heracles:

> nobilis ut grandi cecinit Centaurus alumno:
> 'inuicte, mortalis dea nate puer Thetide,
> te manet Assaraci tellus, quam frigida parui
> fingunt Scamandri flumina lubricus et Simois;
> unde tibi reditum certo subtemine Parcae
> rupere, nec mater domum caerula te reuehet.
> illic omne malum uino cantuque leuato,
> deformis aegrimoniae dulcibus alloquiis.'
>
> (Hor. *Epod.* 13.11-18)

24. Eur. *Her* 1331-39. Euripides' version downplays Heracles' eventual deification and highlights his mortal suffering, friendship with Theseus, and burial concerns (of his children, Megara, and Amphitryon).

25. Cf. Mader (2014b), 127 n.8, for an overview of the scholars who favor these opposing views.

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As the noble centaur sang to his heroic foster son:
'Invincible one, mortal child born to the goddess Thetis,
The land of Assaracus awaits you, which the cold streams
of the light Scamander and slippery Simois split;
From where the Fates have denied your return, by their
sure spindle, nor will your azure mother carry you home.
In that place lighten all your pain with wine and song,
The sweet consolations of foul distress.'

Troy will be the death of Achilles, and Chiron encourages him to dispel his future distress with sympotic activities. This *exemplum* aims to clarify the situation in the poem's frame, but as with the conclusion of the *Hercules Furens*, there has been much scholarly debate how this depiction of Achilles and the hero's future death reflects upon the speaker's intention to cheer up his colleagues.[26] Seneca links Hercules to Achilles with this intertextual echo in order to hint at Hercules' own mortality and his future death at Athens. In doing so, he utilizes the Horatian poem to support the Euripidean ending, and this leads to a much bleaker perspective on Hercules' future. Lowrie has emphasized the pessimism of Horace's poem, 'The choice of Achilles and the emphasis on Thetis' inability to save her son unmasks what the poet knew he could not hide: Achilles will not come home. Everyone must die.'[27] Seneca's reading of Horace is similar. By emphasizing the mortality of Hercules through this intertext, Seneca fulfills Hercules' concluding death-wish: in this same act Hercules addressed the earth, 'Hide me, Earth; I will go / to remain in the final boundary of Tartarus' (*hoc me abde, Tellus; Tartari ad finem ultimum / mansurus ibo.* Sen. *HF* 1225f.). The use of *mansurus* here in conjunction with forms of *manere* elsewhere in the play also help to show how Seneca has led to this pronouncement and the Horatian intertext. Megara warns Lycus of the fate awaiting him as tyrant of Thebes earlier in the play, saying, 'these predecessors await you…the customary fate of our kingship calls you' (*haec te manent exempla…solita regni fata te nostri uocent,* Sen. *HF* 395f.). The intratext with Megara's words reveals that Hercules suffers from a typical 'Theban' fate, and emphasizes that no one may outstrip their fate. In this case it is his fate that will lead him to Athens (*illa te, Alcide, uocat HF* 1343). This focus on fate also fulfills the chorus' warning at *HF* 188: 'The Fates come at a sure time' (*certo ueniunt tempore Parcae*), which likewise derives from this *Epode* (cf. *unde tibi reditum certo subtemine Parcae / rupere,* Hor. *Epod.* 13.15f.).[28] If one recalls these earlier connections

26. Cf. Watson (2003b), 420: 'But is not Achilles, to whom Chiron in the *exemplum* proffers similar advice, an unsettling, even inappropriate, choice of paradigm, given that *his* fate was not susceptible of improvement, doomed as he was to die young in war, a prospect which Horace's companions very possibly face in the immediate future?'

27. Lowrie (1992), 429.

28. Lushkov (2016) finds additional moments in which Hercules' situation evokes Oedipus and Theban history more generally.

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to the Horatian poem and the tragedy as a whole, one can see how Horace's poem becomes an *exemplum* in its own right, a common use of such intertextual echoes.[29] The contrast between the frame and the *exemplum*, much like the different registers of *labor* and divinity explored in this play,[30] is important for the reader who tries to make sense of Hercules' heroism. The *Hercules Furens* contemplates the divide between mortal and divine attitudes towards ethical (and heroic) norms, and this final intertext juxtaposes Hercules and Achilles to encourage the identification of Hercules as ultimately a mortal hero, who will perish and must rely on his fellow humans for encouragement, solace, and friendship. Gunderson recognizes this movement in the final act: 'When Hercules yields to the mortal Amphitryon as if he were yielding to a divine father, then the play can end.'[31] This intertext hearkens back to Horace's poem to evoke the ultimate human concerns that occupy Horace in *Epode* 13, to recognize the human element in Hercules, and to stress the sufferings that he will endure from the deaths of those closest to him, not from his monstrous labors.

How Soon is Now?

The *Agamemnon* has strong thematic and intertextual connections with the *Aeneid*, especially embodied in the character of Cassandra. As a fellow-survivor of the Greek assault on Troy, her perspective acts as a counterweight to the epic tale of that other famous survivor, Aeneas. At the close of the play, Cassandra is elated to be going to her death, where she hopes to act as a messenger for the Trojan shades in Hades—indeed she has acted like a messenger throughout the play and delivered two quasi-messenger speeches. Her (all but) final words recall both the beginning of the play as well as a significant moment of the *Aeneid*:

> perferre prima nuntium Phrygibus meis
> propero: repletum ratibus euersis mare,
> captas Mycenas, mille ductorem ducum,
> ut paria fata Troicis lueret malis,
> perisse dono, feminae stupro, dolo.
> nihil moramur, rapite; quin grates ago.
> iam iam iuuat uixisse post Troiam, iuuat.
>
> (Sen. *Ag.* 1005-11)

29. Seo (2013) explores this tendency in characterization in Roman poetry.
30. See Littlewood in this volume on such tension.
31. Gunderson (2015), 139.

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> I am hurrying to relate the news to my Trojans first:
> The sea bursting with broken ships,
> Mycenae taken, the king of a thousand kings,
> (So that he might suffer a fate equal to Trojan sufferings)
> Died through a gift, through the lust of a woman, a trap.
> We are not delaying, take me away; indeed I give thanks.
> Now, now it is pleasing to have outlived Troy, very pleasing!

Cassandra's language looks back to the prologue of the play, and the revenge that the ghost of Thyestes is licking his lips to enact:

> rex ille regum, ductor Agamemnon ducum,
> cuius secutae mille uexillum rates
> Iliaca uelis maria texerunt suis,
> post decima Phoebi lustra deuicto Ilio
> adest, daturus coniugi iugulum suae.
> iam iam natabit sanguine alterno domus.
>
> (Sen. *Ag.* 39-44)

> The king of kings, Agamemnon, that leader of leaders,
> Whose flag a thousand ships followed
> And filled the Trojan sea with their sails,
> After ten cycles of the sun, with Troy destroyed,
> He is here, about to give his throat to his wife.
> Now, now the house will swim with retributive blood!

The ghost of Thyestes foreshadows what will happen, just as Cassandra sums up what has happened on stage, and the speeches show common elements in typifying Agamemnon as a 'leader of leaders', fixating on his death at the hands of his wife, and focalizing the dramatic action. For Cassandra, a ghost-to-be hurrying to Hades (Thyestes' current abode), there is pleasure in recognizing the reversal that has occurred to Agamemnon,[32] and her own death is ancillary to this pleasure. Her anaphoric *iam iam* and *iuuat iuuat* recall Thyestes' own call that 'Now, now the house will swim with retributive blood'.[33] Thyestes' ghost needs to return to the underworld in order for the action of the play to officially begin, as he claims: *Phoebum moramur: redde iam mundo diem* ('we are delaying Phoebus: now give back the day to the world', Sen. *Ag.* 56; also cf. *mora*, 54). In the words and actions of these two characters we can see, as it were, the dropping and raising of the curtain at the beginning and end of the play,[34] and their commentaries on the tragic action. Thyestes' ghost sees the play to come as the next act of

32. See Tarrant (1976), *ad loc*.
33. See Gunderson in this volume for more on this passage.
34. See Beare (1951), 259-66, and Manuwald (2011), 69-73, on the stage curtain.

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familial *talio*, in which Aegisthus will perform his role and Agamemnon will suffer his just recompense. For Cassandra, the fall of the house of Agamemnon responds perfectly to the fall of the house of Priam (*paria fata*, Sen. *Ag*. 1008), and she gloats over the devastation that reveals the gods' will at work.[35]

While such intratextuality links the beginning and end of the play and offers views of revenge *and* resignation,[36] an intertextual parallel links this passage with Virgil's *Aeneid*. While Virgil uses the *iam iam* anaphora nine times in the *Aeneid*, one moment seems particularly germane for Seneca's recollection at this moment. In the twelfth book of the epic, Turnus sees his city in flames. He turns to his sister and pronounces, essentially, his acceptance of death in language eerily prescient of Seneca's conclusion:

> iam iam fata, soror, superant, absiste morari;
> quo deus et quo dura uocat Fortuna sequamur.
> stat conferre manum Aeneae, stat, quidquid acerbi est,
> morte pati, neque me indecorum, germana, uidebis
> amplius. hunc, oro, sine me furere ante furorem.[37]
>
> (Virg. *Aen.* 12.676-80)

> Now, sister, now the fates have the upper hand, don't delay;
> Let me follow where god and harsh Fortune command.
> It is my intent to come into hand-to-hand battle with Aeneas,
> It is my intent to suffer death in all its bitterness, and you will not see
> Me, sister, act cowardly any longer. But, I beg you, allow me first
> To rage with this madness.

Tarrant notes that, 'this brief speech is T[urnus]'s finest moment in the poem' and that there is a ring of Stoicism to his words, before his final request 'to rage with this madness'.[38] Seneca recognizes the power of Turnus' speech and crafts intertextual echoes in the final scene of his play to point the reader to this moment of Virgil's epic.[39] Seneca, however, will not merely mimic the language, but gives it

35. 'Similar fates' are mirrored in comparatively similar language. Her verbal connections with Thyestes' speech (*ductor ducum, mille, rates*) trump his point of view, and reveal her rhetorical and poetic prowess. Note how *paria fata* also recalls *Aen.* 10.740f. where the dying Orodes tells Mezentius to expect reciprocal vengeance.

36. Cf. the title of Shelton's (1983) piece in *Seneca Tragicus*.

37. In addition to the words underlined, *fata* may recall the *paria fata* of 1008, and *sequamur* may suggest the *sequatur* of 1003. *Sequor* is a very important verb for the *Agamemnon* (40, 81, 144, 391, 453, 742, 747).

38. Tarrant (2012), *ad loc*. He also comments on the doubling of words in the speech as a whole and the fact that the collocation *iam iam* appears more frequently in Book 12, and notes, 'a feeling of urgency is apt as the time to the conclusion grows shorter'.

39. Tarrant (2012), *ad* 680, notes that the *figura etymologica* of *furere…furorem* is unique in Latin and his commentary points out additional features of this speech which might make it stand out in

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an altered *color* in the final line of his play (Sen. *Ag.* 1012), where Clytemnestra interrupts Cassandra with her comment, 'Raging woman, die,' (*furiosa, morere*), only to be capped by Cassandra's dying words 'Rage will come to you as well' (*ueniet et uobis furor*).[40] Seneca has transformed Turnus' final request to rage into the antilabic one-upmanship of Clytemnestra and Cassandra and the prophetic words that an avenging agent (Orestes) will come to destroy Clytemnestra. In doing so, he has made the language emphatically 'dramatic' by featuring two characters who engage with Virgil's language and give their own focalized view of it. Turnus' own hope to rage on the battlefield will be transcended by the rage of Aeneas at the close of the play (*furiis accensus*, Virg. *Aen.* 12.946), a moment likewise marked by a *iam iamque* construction (Virg. *Aen.* 12.940).[41] The reader who recognizes Seneca's intertextual flourish will identify the conflation between the characters of Turnus/Cassandra and Aeneas/Clytemnestra, but it is not a simple mapping of one character on the other. Rather, the prophetic madness of Cassandra, the rage of Clytemnestra and Turnus/Aeneas, and the avenging agent of Orestes/the ghost of Thyestes are all present in the mind of the reader and bind even more tightly the motif of *furor* that underlies the tragic action.[42] As Putnam states, viewing the play through the lens of the *Aeneid*'s conclusion, 'Fury encloses the line as much as it grips the lives, and forespeaks the violent ends, of the protagonists…the persistent presence of *ira, odium, furor* in counterpoint to *pietas*…all stem from Virgil's formative influence.'[43] Whereas Putnam's reading stems from his argument that Seneca continually evokes the finale of the *Aeneid* in his tragedies, it is clear that such intertextual echoes also encourage the reader to recognize that revenge breeds revenge and that the cycle of violence embodied both in the *Agamemnon* and the *Aeneid* has not reached its climax.

These Things Take Time

Seneca's *Medea* concludes in a shocking manner. T.S. Eliot's observation still holds: 'In the verbal *coup de théâtre* no one has ever excelled him. The final cry

Seneca's mind (e.g. the Stoic character of Virg. *Aen.* 12.677 and its echo of Cleanthes—which Seneca translates in *Ep.* 107.11).

40. Schmidt (2014), 535, takes Clytemnestra's *morere* as an implied stage direction: 'Cassandra… receives the deadly stroke from the queen, and dying, utters the last half line of the drama.' If so, the intertextual connection also foreshadows Cassandra's immediate (and staged) death, and makes Cassandra Turnus-like in concluding this work with her death.

41. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is said to have been impelled to sail to Italy by Cassandra who is identified by her divinatory 'fury' (*Italiam petiit…Cassandrae impulsus furiis*, Virg. *Aen.* 10.67f.).

42. See Shelton (1983), 159f.: 'The play therefore does not leave us with the impression that justice has been served, but rather that the desire to redress a wrong produces a chain of sordid violence. In addition, the inclusion in the play of so many examples of revenge and expiation serves to emphasize the point that vengeance produces instability and disorder, although the avenger ironically believes that he is restoring stability.'

43. Putnam (1995), 272.

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of Jason to Medea departing in her car is unique; I can think of no other play which reserves such a shock for the last word.'[44] That last word, *deos,* cleverly recalls the very first word of the play (*di*) and helps to uncover the very divinity incorporated in Medea that has been on display in the course of the tragedy.[45] Seneca's obvious care in word-choice at the *Medea*'s close can also be observed in the previous lines where he introduces an intertext to a work mentioned in his father's collection of declamations; namely, a poem of Cornelius Severus.[46] When Medea taunts Jason and sinisterly raises the dagger over their one surviving child, she says: *perfruere lento scelere, ne propera, dolor: / meus dies est: tempore accepto utimur* ('Savor the crime slowly, my grief, don't hurry: the day is mine; I am using the agreed-upon time', Sen. *Med.* 1016f.). These lines recall a fragment of Severus' *Bellum Siculum* concerning a group of Roman soldiers dining before battle, who 'lying on the grass said, "this day is mine"' (*stratique per herbam / 'hic meus est' dixere 'dies',* Sen. *Suas*. 2.12f.). The implication is that this will be their final day of life, and that tomorrow they will die. The Elder features this poem within his discussion of the primary query of this *Suasoria*: namely, should the 300 Spartans before the battle of Thermopylae stay and fight, or flee?[47] This is a moment of the Elder's work in which he concentrates on the issue of *imitatio*, pointing out how this particular phrase had been a commonplace, but was given novel use by Severus in his poetic composition (Sen. *Suas*. 2.13). Therefore Seneca the Younger now supplements the previous literary pedigree of this phrase, but within the tragic genre, and provides his own poetic expression of the Elder's strictures for *imitatio* and *aemulatio*.

In fact, Seneca has been preparing the reader for this tag throughout the play. *Dies* is a rather common word throughout Seneca's dramatic works, but in the *Medea* it is strongly tied into both the dramatic time of the play (it is the

44. Eliot (1950), 78f.

45. Ahl (2000), 166-69, comments on Seneca's wordplay with the name Medea: 'Jason's final exclamation that Medea's actions and escape are proof that "there exist no gods"…is also a denial of the deity in Medea…' (167). See Fowler (2000), 276 n.147: 'Emphasis on the literally *last* word is rare in stage drama, but there is a famous example in tragedy designed for reading, Sen. *Med.* 1027.' One should also note how Medea's final words (*ego inter auras aliti curru uehar,* 'I shall be transported through the breezes in my winged chariot', 1025) shows the efficacy of her earlier entreaty to the Sun (*da, da per auras curribus patriis uehi*,, 'Grant, grant that I be transported though the breezes in my father's chariot', 32) and adds to the ring-composition of the first and last word of this play.

46. For more on Severus, cf. Hollis (2007), 340-67. Cf. Trinacty (2009) for more on the intertextual relationship between Seneca the Younger and the Elder.

47. Note, for example, how often the verb *fugere* ('flee') occurs in Fuscus' *diuisio* ('subject headings'): *non esse honestum fugere etiamsi tutum esset; deinde: aeque periculosum esse fugere et pugna; renouissime: periculosius esse fugere: pugnantibus hostes timendos, fugientibus et hostes et suos* ('That it is dishonourable to flee even if it is safe to do so; next: that it is equally dangerous to flee as it is to fight.; lastly: that it is more dangerous to flee: for those who are fighting it is the enemy who is to be feared, but for those who are fleeing it is both the enemy their own people', Sen. *Suas.* 2.11). This fight-or-flight question can be seen throughout Seneca's *Medea* as well, with Medea, characteristically, finding a way to do both (*non ibo in hostes?,* 'shall I not go against my enemies?, 27; *sic fugere soleo*, 'thus am I accustomed to flee', 1022).

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wedding day of Jason and Creusa), as well as the revenge-plot itself, because only one day is granted to Medea to prepare for exile (*unus parando dabitur exilio dies*, Sen. *Med.* 295; also 298). Within the dramatic time allotted to her, Medea finds a way to redefine the day so that it becomes emblematic of her dominance over the other characters and the universe of the play.[48] The emphasis on the single day recalls the ideal tragic timeframe according to Aristotle, 'tragedy endeavors to keep as far as possible within a single circuit of the sun' (*Poetics* 1449^{b}13), and such metatheatricality is surely to be felt in Seneca's rebranding of the word *dies*.[49] For instance, the 'festal day' for Creon's family (*uocat precari festus Hymenaeo dies*, Sen. *Med.* 300) is ironically reversed by Medea after the deaths of Creusa and her family: *o placida tandem numina, o festum diem, / o nuptialem!* ('O, at last, the gods are appeased, O festal day, / O wedding day!', Sen. *Med.* 985f.). The formulation *hic dies* appears three times earlier (399, 423, 749), as if Seneca is teasing the reader as he works his way to the final application of this 'nearly proverbial phrase' (*quasi prouerbii loco,* Sen. *Suas*. 2.13). The couplet in question (1016f.) especially recalls an earlier moment in the tragedy when Medea asks herself: *segnis hic ibit dies*, / *tanto petitus ambitu, tanto datus*? ('shall this day pass in inactivity, which was sought and won with such insistence?', Sen. *Med.* 399f.).[50] There is something frightfully sadistic about 'taking one's time' with one's revenge (*perfruere lento scelere, ne propera,* Sen. *Med.* 1016), especially after earlier worrying about having enough time to exercise the proper vengeance. Medea's increasing resolution at that moment includes the chilling words, 'one day has been given for two children' (*liberis unus dies / datus est duobus*, Sen. *Med.* 421f.), which foreshadows the death of the children, and ends with the triumphant expression: *faciet, hic faciet dies / quod nullus umquam taceat* ('this day will achieve what no tomorrow will ever be able to be silent about', Sen. *Med.* 423f.). Throughout the play, Seneca has been indicating that the day of the play's action and the revenge itself are tied together, and this final intertext makes Medea that much more mindfully 'tragic' in carrying out her revenge.[51] If the soldiers in the Elder's *Suasoria* need to seize the day because they will die tomorrow, Medea stymies this expected consequence because she is able to defeat her enemies, flee, and live to fight another day.

48. In some sense, this is her last day of *human* life, as she has removed (*extraham,* Sen. *Med.* 1013) any remnants of her humanity just before her final apotheosis. I owe this observation to one of the anonymous readers of *Ramus.*

49. Note that Medea says of herself that she is using the time that was allowed her (*tempore accepto utimur*, 1017).

50. Seneca points to the development of Medea's character as an avenger as the language of 399 hearkens back to her earlier self-affirmation: 'now end your inactive delays: the house that was won by crime must be left by crime' (*rumpe iam segnes moras: / quae scelere parta est, scelere liquenda est domus*, Sen. *Med.* 54f.).

51. Note also the possible intertext with Euripides' *Medea*, as the chorus contemplates the various evils that have befallen Jason τῆιδ'ἐν ἡμέραι (Eur. *Med.* 1231), cf. Eur. *Med.* 1248 as well.

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Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now

The Elder's analysis continues with an examination of the proverb 'delayer of war' (*belli mora*) found in the declamation of Latro and subsequently in the poetry of Arbonius Silo, as well as Virgil (Seneca the Elder applauds Virgil's expression of the *topos, cf.* Sen. *Suas*. 2.20).[52] Unfortunately, we do not possess much information about Arbonius Silo besides that given by Seneca the Elder,[53] and the two lines from his epic work on the Trojan War:

> ite agite, <o> Danai, magnum paeana canentes,
> ite triumphantes; belli mora concidit Hector.
>
> (Sen. *Suas*. 2.19)

> Go on, o Greeks, singing a great paean.
> Go on in triumph; Hector, the delayer of war, has fallen.

While some form of the phrase *belli mora* appears in three plays of Seneca the Younger, this couplet is especially important in the *Troades*.[54] Early in the play Seneca elaborates on the definition of Hector as a 'delayer of war' by calling him the 'delayer of fate' (*mora fatorum*, 124), and at the conclusion of the play Seneca recalls these lines in an evocative and surprising manner. Directly after the messenger tells of the violent deaths of Astyanax and Polyxena, Hecuba cries:

> ite, ite, Danai, petite iam tuti domos.
> optata uelis maria diffusis secet
> secura classis: concidit uirgo ac puer;
> bellum peractum est. quo meas lacrimas feram?
> ubi hanc anilis expuam leti moram…
>
> (Sen. *Tro.* 1165-69)

> Go, go, Greeks, now safely seek your homes.
> Your fleet will cut the sea with unfurled sails,
> Safe and sound: a maiden and a boy have fallen;
> The war is over. Where will I take my tears?
> Where will I, an old woman, spit out this delay of death…

52. See Fairweather (1981), 312f., for occasional comments on the Elder's admiration for Virgil and the influence of declamation on contemporary poetry. Rolland (1906), 65, details the additional moments of this phrase in Seneca's tragedies. Cf. McGill (2012), 167-77, for further discussion of this passage.

53. See Hollis (2007), 330f., for a discussion of his life and poetry.

54. Cf. *Ag*. 211: *non sola Danais Hector et bello mora* ('not Hector, sole delayer of Danaans and the war'); *Phoen*. 458: *proinde bellum tollite aut belli moram* ('so discard either war or the delay of war'. The phrase also occurs in Ovid (*Met.* 8.21), Lucan, and several prose authors. Cf. Trinacty (2009), 273f., and Berti (2007), 279-82.

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The opening of Hecuba's speech recalls the anaphoric *ite* of Silo's work, but the celebratory spirit and Hellenic bias of Silo's couplet is ironically cut by the explanation that it is not the death of Hector that has ended the war, but the tragic destruction of two innocent Trojan youths.[55] Hecuba's dying breath is the final 'delay' of the tragedy, but delay has been 'one of its most important motifs' appearing twelve times earlier.[56]

The anaphoric collocation *ite, ite* ('go, go!' appears at key moments in the *Troades*.[57] In the second act, Talthybius relates the appearance of the ghost of Achilles to the Greeks and his pronouncement:

> 'ite, ite, inertes, debitos manibus meis
> auferte honores, soluite ingratas rates
> per nostra ituri maria…'
>
> (Sen. *Tro.* 191-93)

> 'Go on, you loafers, steal the honors owed to my ghost,
> launch your ungrateful ships, about to cross my sea.'

Ulysses also utilizes this call at the moment when he redoubles his effort to uncover Andromache's ruse:

> ite, ite celeres, fraude materna abditum
> hostem, Pelasgi nominis pestem ultimam,
> ubicumque latitat, erutam in medium date.
>
> (Sen. *Tro.* 627-29)

> Go on, go quickly, uncover and bring to light
> This enemy, the final scourge of the Pelasgian race,
> Wherever he is hiding, concealed by his mother's trickery.

Talthybius' speech is preceded by the chorus' question, 'what causes the delay for the Greek fleet' (*quae causa ratibus faciat et Danais moram*, Sen. *Tro.* 166) and Ulysses' final words to his men describe Astyanax as a delay (*classis Argolicae moram*, Sen. *Tro.* 813). Achilles goes on to mention the need for Polyxena's sacrifice (195), while Ulysses eventually takes away Astyanax for slaughter, the very events that have been accomplished by the play's end and summed up by Hecuba's sarcastic *concidit uirgo ac puer; / bellum peractum est* ('A virgin

55. None of the commentaries I have consulted mentions this as a parallel for this passage.

56. See Boyle (1994), *ad* 124, for more on delay in *Troades*, and Fitch (2004), 64, who elucidates, 'The obstacle (*mora*) to her death which she will "spew out" is her *spiritus*; cf. *Pho.* 44 *spiritum inimicum exspue, Thy.* 245 *spiritum inimicum exspuat*. In the context the phrase perhaps also suggests her spewing-out of laments about the belatedness of her death…'

57. No other play features the repeated anaphora of *ite, ite*, although it does appear once at *HF* 1131-32, and *Med.* 845.

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and child have died; the war is over', Sen. *Tro.* 1167f.). Each speech thus concerns the Greek delay and the necessity for a child to be slaughtered for the Greeks to sail home. By conflating the deaths of the children with the death of Hector as the ultimate end of the war, Seneca emphasizes the tragic point of view encapsulated by the action of the play itself. It is not the great warriors who determine when a war is over, but the almost aleatory deaths of innocents, such as Polyxena and Astyanax.

Seneca employs the repeated *ite, ite* to connect the characters of Achilles, Ulysses, and Hecuba. The reader will note the roles of Achilles and Ulysses as persecutors of the Trojans even after Troy's destruction, and the position of Hecuba as the emblematic Trojan survivor. Seneca ends the *Troades* by glancing back to the start of the play where Hecuba focuses on herself as a representative of all the sufferings of Troy, and by offering a final word on the commonplace that Hector is the 'check of war'. Silo's poem expressed the joy of the Greeks at the death of Hector (note how *triumphantes* would suggest the Roman triumph and was earlier posited as a potential fate for Priam, *Tro.* 150: *Argolici praeda triumphi*), but in the *Troades* any joy is ironized given the troubles in store for the Greeks on their return journey. For the women and children who survived Troy's fall, in a work of tragedy, not martial epic, the war only ends with death, whether the sacrifices of Astyanax and Polyxena, or the final breath (*moram*) of Hecuba.

Meat is Murder

The final scene of the *Thyestes* problematizes the very act of closure. After the ghastly revelation of the leftovers ('Do you recognize your children?' *natos ecquid agnoscis tuos?* Sen. *Thy.* 1005), one may think the play will come to a quick conclusion,[58] but Thyestes and Atreus bicker, boast, and blame one another for over a hundred lines. Their final exchange of *sententiae,* however, features a linguistic formulation that evokes Seneca the Elder's seventh *Controuersia*, places the scene in dialogue with the play's opening, and raises questions about Roman rhetoric and familial relationships. The concluding verbal riposte of Atreus turns Thyestes' words against him and exerts his control, once again, on the drama that has unfolded:

> Th. aderunt dei;
> his puniendum uota te tradunt mea.
> At. te puniendum liberis trado tuis.
>
> (Sen. *Thy*. 1110-12)

58. Ovid's tale of Procne, Philomela and Tereus wraps up fifteen lines after Philomela throws the head of Itys at Tereus (*Met.* 6.659), and Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus only survives four lines after revealing the Chiron-and-Demetrius pie.

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Th. The gods of vengeance will come;
My vows hand you over to them to be punished.
At. I hand over you to be punished by your children.

The hope that Thyestes expresses in the gods of vengeance is at odds with the world of the play, where Atreus presides as the only functioning god and where 'the passions that have driven the protagonists have left the order of things radically and permanently disjointed'.[59] The reader, however, notes that Thyestes' appeal to the Furies (customarily associated with vengeance) would recall the opening of the play when *Furia* initiated the action leading to Thyestes' suffering, destitution, and indigestion.[60] At the play's start, the Fury was also interested in punishment, musing on the need for more and more severe forms of crime to atone for familial wrongs:

nec uacet cuiquam uetus
odisse crimen: semper oriatur nouum,
nec unum in uno, dumque punitur scelus,
crescat.

(Sen. *Thy*. 29-32)

Let nobody have the freedom to despise
An old crime: let new crimes always arise,
Many in one, and while crime is being punished,
Let it grow.

This is the only other appearance of *punio* in the play (three of the five times Seneca uses this verb appear in the *Thyestes*, although forms of *poena*, etymologically cognate to the verb, are quite frequent),[61] and points to the diverse ways in which punishment has been understood by Thyestes and Atreus: Thyestes puts his trust in the gods, Atreus finds the most painful route is to be desired.[62]

59. Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

60. For *uindex* applied to the Furies, cf. Cic. *N.D.* 3.46: *Furiae deae sunt, speculatrices credo et uindices facinorum* ('the Furies are goddesses, and as I believe watchers foro and avengers of criminal acts'); Stat. *Theb*. 1.80: *tu…debita uindex* [i.e. Tisiphone] *huc ades* ('you…my owed avenger [Tisiphone], be present to us here'. Dodson-Robinson (2012), 60, points out how Atreus' crime can be seen, in part, as '*determined* by the infecting *contagio* of Tantalus' ghost…it is Tantalus, the primal transgressor, who has defined Atreus' identity, and Thyestes rightly recognizes a family resemblance.' In addition, Schiesaro (2003), 104, examines how Atreus manifests the power of the Fury: 'the *furor* that inspired [Atreus'] actions thus far is now also explicitly presented as a viable source of rational understanding'.

61. See lines 9, 15, 74, 82, 86, 87, 92, 151, 246, 279. The discussions Atreus and Thyestes have near the play's conclusion about the nature of *scelus* (1051-53, 1095-98, 1103f.) recall the Fury's earlier claims about *scelus*.

62. See Schiesaro (2003), 152: 'Thyestes and the chorus display a firm belief (at least, a firm discursive belief) in their [the gods'] existence and importance, while Atreus effectively disposes of them, and replaces them with himself.'

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Atreus' restatement of *puniendum* and a form of *trado*, however, recalls the subject of *Controuersia* 7, 'The man who was released by his son, the pirate chief' (*Ab Archipirata Filio Dimissus*):

> mortua quidam uxore, ex qua duos filios habebat, duxit aliam. alterum ex adulescentibus domi parricidi damnauit; tradidit fratri puniendum: ille exarmato nauigio imposuit. delatus adulescens ad piratas archipirata factus est. postea pater peregre profectus captus est ab eo et remissus in patriam. abdicat filium.
>
> (Sen. *Contr.* 7)

> A man who lost his wife and who had two sons by her, remarried. He privately convicted one of the sons of parricide; he handed him over to his brother to be punished: that one put him on a boat with the tackle removed. That son fell into the hands of pirates and became a pirate chief. Afterwards his father embarked on a trip abroad was captured by his son, and then set free in his fatherland. He disinherits his other son.

This scenario leads to the typical series of *sententiae*, *colores*, and *diuisiones*, at least one of which restates the line under consideration, when Musa states: *hoc uitium a te traxisse uideor: an non putatis misericordem qui quem damnauit puniendum fratri dedit?* ('I must have inherited this "fault" [compassion] from you—or do you not think he is compassionate, who handed over someone he had convicted to his brother to be punished?' Sen. *Contr.* 7.1.14). Seneca's recollection of the 'controversial' situation adds a legalistic flair to the exchange of *sententiae*, while also suggesting them as possible retorts for the Elder's *Controuersia*. Of course, the difference in outcome is notable inasmuch as Thyestes' *brother*, Atreus, punishes him, and inasmuch as the situational dissimilarity (salvation in the *Controuersia*, abuse in the *Thyestes*) points to the horrifying results of the tragedy and the very negation of the compassion shown by the brother in the *Controuersia*.[63]

There is a symbiotic relationship between the story of Atreus and Thyestes and several of the themes of the *Controuersiae*.[64] Gunderson underscores the familial (esp. father/son) element of Seneca the Elder's work and how the subject-matter of the *Controuersiae* often explore the limits of *patria potestas* and the psychological ramifications for familial disputes.[65] By pointing to this common theme between the two genres (declamation and tragedy), Seneca bridges the divide

63. Note Thyestes' earlier cry: 'if I, the father, desire to bury my sons and give them over to the funeral fire, I must be cremated' (*si natos pater / humare et igni tradere extremo uolo, / ego sum cremandus,* Sen. *Thy.* 1090-92). In addition, the ghost of Tantalus at the play's opening hopes to prevent the crime (*arcebo scelus*, 95) and does not want to persecute his grandchildren (89f.).

64. See Berti (2007), 322-25, and *Contr.* 1.1.21 (*Thyesteo more*). Van Mal-Maeder (2004), 191-94, points out the influence of Seneca's *Thyestes* in pseudo-Quintilian's major declamations.

65. Gunderson (2003), *passim.*

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between the subject matter of this Greek tragedy and Roman declamation. Such a recollection at the close of the *Thyestes* stresses the way that intertexts to Roman works can act to 'Romanize' the mythological subject matter of Seneca's tragedies. The ability to use one's rhetorical ability when confronted by a tyrant figure must have been an everyday necessity for those in the higher echelons of the Neronian court. Here we understand that Seneca is offering a rhetorical response to the horrors of Atreus' culinary payback that recalls the training he received in his father's work. It is the mark of his tragic mindset, however, that Atreus has the last laugh and his final *sententia* trumps that of Thyestes.

This echo of the Elder adds to the conclusions made by Sander Goldberg on Seneca's rejuvenation of tragedy through his use of rhetoric.[66] The recollection from the Elder's *Controuersia* not only brings to the fore the broadly parallel subject-matter, but also the possible point of the construction of this final scene:

> …it was *rhetorical* power that granted [Atreus'] true wish, which was to watch Thyestes become wretched in consequence of that act. This formidable contrivance insures that the horror will lie not in the deed but in its revelation. The resulting intellectual tension springs directly from Seneca's effort to understand the forces he observed at work in the world in the terms that his education had provided.[67]

The various *sententiae*, antilabic exchanges, and cries of bravado that conclude *Thyestes* indicate how Atreus' words have shaped the play and triumphed over Thyestes' rival claims. Thyestes' hope that the gods of vengeance will ultimately punish Atreus is shown to be false within the world of the play, where *Furia* contaminates the language, thought, and actions of the protagonists, and hopes for the future are shown to be futile.[68]

Shoplifters of the World Unite

In the preceding examples, I have shown that Seneca's final intertextual engagements with Latin literature and his father's work on declamation offer snapshots of his intertextual methodology in general, but with specific implications. Because of their presence near or at the conclusion of their plays, they offer a final word on themes present from early in the text, often the prologues themselves. *A* final word, not *the* final word. It is my contention that such intertexts encourage the reader to turn back and begin again, Moebius-strip-like, in an attempt to re-contextualize the original formulation(s). Intratextual connections encourage rereading and further supplementation of the imagery and language

66. Goldberg (1996), 277.
67. Goldberg (1996), 283 (my emphasis).
68. Hammond (2009), 112-20, focuses on the way that linguistic boundaries are troubled in the play.

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that has appeared throughout the tragedies. Seneca's intense intertextual engagement with the Augustan poetic tradition and the Elder's declamatory compendium blur the divide between the literary and the rhetorical, and indicate how both influences are interwoven in his tragic world. Eliot disparagingly remarked that 'in the plays of Seneca, the drama is all in the word, and the word has no further reality behind it,'[69] but Seneca's poetics celebrates the power of language and the various influences behind those words. He questions whether the 'reality' is truer than the literary and descriptive power of language, and offers a glimpse of the creation of novel and, often, disturbing word definitions by his tragic characters. Seneca's reality is composed of the poetry of Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, and the rhetorical tradition in which he was raised; these formative influences create the characters of Seneca's tragedies in much the same way they formed Seneca's own various *personae*.[70]

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69. Eliot (1950), 54.

70. Cf. *Ep*. 80.7: 'this mime show of human life, which assigns parts for us to play badly' (*hic humanae uitae mimus, qui nobis partes quas male agamus adsignat*) and the discussion of those who repeatedly change 'masks' at *Ep*. 120.22. Cf. Ker (2009), 115-19, and Edwards (2007), 144-60.

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