The Cambridge Classical Journal (2017) 63, 53–68 doi:10.1017/S1750270517000033
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LATE THOUGHTS ON THE TEXT OF SENECA'S TRAGEDIES

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This article elucidates some of the author's editorial decisions in his revised Loeb edition of Seneca's tragedies. It explains his new thinking about the text and interpretation at *Phoen* 176–7, *Med* 891–2, *Oed* 403–4, *Ag* 481, *Thy* 1032, *HO* 1016; offers further defence of the author's interpretation at *Phoen* 23, *Oed* 178, 370, 942, *Thy* 46–8, *Oct* 47–8, 761; and re-evaluates fourteen further passages in the light of recent scholarship.

More than a decade has passed since the publication of my first Loeb edition of Seneca's tragedies, with its accompanying textual commentary *Annaeana Tragica*.[1] It therefore seems timely, *dum sinit aetas*, to revise that edition, including its Latin text. The purpose of these notes, as of those contained in *Annaeana*, is to explain my decisions, in order not to leave readers puzzled by my choices. My own second thoughts have led me to change my mind in six places (*Phoen* 176–7, *Med* 891–2, *Oed* 403–4, *Ag* 481, *Thy* 1032, *HO* 1016); in another seven places I shall attempt here to defend or strengthen my earlier choices (*Phoen* 23, *Oed* 178, 370, 942, *Thy* 46–8, *Oct* 47–8, 761). It has been stimulating to engage with the collection of textual notes published by Thomas Gärtner in 2010 in *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* and readily accessible online.[2] The most impressive of Gärtner's suggestions are discussed here: I have adopted five of his proposals in full (*Herc* 1235, *Tro* 305, *HO* 929, *HO* 1459, *Oct* 501) and another three in part (*Phoen* 483, *Ag* 195–6, *HO* 244–5); in another three cases I initially found his conjectures attractive, but eventually decided against adoption (*Med* 449–50, *Pha* 688, *Thy* 272). Finally I discuss two points (*Pha* 840, *Oed* 178) arising from Boyle's commentaries on individual plays (though Boyle's influence will be more evident in my translation than in my text), and a conjecture by Kovacs (*Thy* 926). Where appropriate, and unless otherwise indicated, the notes below begin from my first Loeb edition and translation.

Hercules 1235–6

> dent arma poenas. vos quoque infaustas meis
> cremabo telis, o novercales manus.

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1 Fitch (2002), (2004a), (2004b).

2 www.ut.ee/klassik/sht/2010/gaertner5.pdf (accessed 28/1/17).

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In 1229–34 Hercules plans to break and burn his weapons, which have killed his children; in the present lines he plans to burn his hands also. In my commentary on this play I took *meis … telis* as dative: Hercules' hands 'brought such ill-luck to [his] weapons', by directing them against his children (Fitch (1987a) 434). But Gärtner (2010, 6) reasonably objects that in this context ill-fortune should pertain to the children, not the weapons. Consequently I would now accept Gärtner's conjecture *magis* for *meis*, with *telis* as ablative of comparison: Hercules' hands were 'more accursed than' his weapons because they controlled them, acting as agents of Juno's will (*o novercales manus*, 1236), whereas the weapons were passive instruments. The conjecture creates a convincing example of Senecan *Steigerung* at the conclusion of the speech; see under *Steigerung* in the index of Billerbeck (1999) for plentiful examples.

Troades 305

> solusne totiens spolia de nobis feres?

The rhetorical force of *totiens* is blunted by the transmitted reading *solus*(*ne*). Pyrrhus' complaint is not that Agamemnon alone *so often* takes spoils from 'us' (Achilles and Pyrrhus), as if others took spoils from them but less often; it is rather that he so often takes spoils *from us specifically*. Hence Gärtner (2010, 11–12) corrects *solusne* to *solisne*. His proposal can be supported by reference to the *Iliad*, since the present quarrel reuses many motifs from the famous quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in Homer. Although Agamemnon proposes to take a slave-girl from Achilles or Ajax or Odysseus, Achilles regards himself as singled out (*Iliad* 1.161), and complains that he is always deprived of the lion's share of spoils, though he does the lion's share of fighting (163–8).

Phoenissae 23–5

> Inoa rupes, qua scelus fugiens suum
> novumque faciens mater insiluit freto
> mersura natum seque
> 23 suum EA: novum *Peiper*

> Ino's crag … where a mother, fleeing from her own crime and committing a new one, leapt into the strait to drown her child and herself.

In *Annaeana* I defended the transmitted reading *scelus fugiens suum* as a reference to Ino's plot against the life of Phrixus, detection of which led to her flight and leap into the sea (Fitch (2004b) 65). Gärtner (2010, 17), in a useful discussion, objects that this is an obscure version of the myth, in comparison with that at Ov. *Met.* 4.512ff. according to which she fled after her husband Athamas' killing of their son. But Seneca's versions of

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the myths are not by any means restricted to those found in the *Metamorphoses*, as Mayer (1990) showed.

Gärtner also objects that 'the antithesis *scelus fugiens suum/ Novumque faciens* would be imprecise, since the new crime is also hers'. This is perhaps overly logical: later Gärtner himself says 'the antithesis is not between two attributes, but between the participles *fugiens* and *faciens*'.[3] More important, the transmitted text yields the Senecan-sounding paradox that in fleeing from her own crime, Ino perpetrated a new one of her own. For a similar paradox about two crimes committed by the same person, cf. *Ag* 149 *piget prioris et novum crimen struis?*, 'You detest your former crime *and* plan a new one?'

Phoenissae 176–8

haeret etiamnunc mihi
ille animus, haesit, cum recusantem manum
pressere vultus.
177 haesit *Fitch (olim)*: haeret EA

I previously translated 'My spirit is still hesitating, as it hesitated when my eyes thrust themselves upon my reluctant hand.' However, I now believe that *haeret* in 176 means not 'hesitates' but almost the opposite, 'persists' (*OLD* s.v. 7). Consequently I must renounce my conjecture *haesit* for *haeret* in 177. There is a contrast in lines 173–80 between Oedipus' consistent resolve (here *animus*) to punish himself, and the reluctance of his hand to inflict that punishment. Lines 176b–178a should therefore mean, 'Even now that resolve persists <that I had> when my eyes thrust themselves upon my reluctant hand.' But the ellipse is difficult; Hirschberg (1989) ad loc. calls the *cum*-clause explicative, citing Kühner–Stegmann II.328, but the passages cited there do not give convincing support. Perhaps one might say that *ille ... cum* functions rather like *talis ... qualis cum*, but it would be reassuring to have parallels. In view of these difficulties, and the insipid repetition of *haeret*, I wonder if the *haeret* of 177 has intruded from the previous line and displaced some clarifying word or words.

One of *CCJ*'s anonymous referees tentatively suggests *quo* for *cum*. The referee's own doubts are based on the fact that '*quo* would attribute the *animus* to Oedipus' eyes, when Oedipus has just attributed it to himself'. I do not think this a grievous objection: the eyes are Oedipus' own, after all, and such interchange between the self and its attributes is not uncommon in Seneca; in the same context cf. *Oed* 960–1 *violentus audax vultus, iratus ferox | iamiam eruentis*, 'Full of audacious violence was his gaze, of ferocious anger, as he prepared to root it out.'

3 '... wäre die Antithese *scelus fugiens suum/ Novumque faciens* unpräzise, da ja auch das neue Verbrechen das ihrige ist.' '... die Antithese besteht nicht zwischen zwei Attributen, sondern zwischen den Partizipien *fugiens* und *faciens*.' Gärtner (2010) 17, 18. His own proposal is to replace *suum* with *simul*.

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Phoenissae 483

> tu pone ferrum causa qui ferri es prior.

Gärtner (2010, 20) argues persuasively for taking *prior* predicatively with *tu pone ferrum*. However, Hirschberg (1989) ad loc. had earlier defended the traditional view, which takes *prior* with *causa*, on the valid grounds that Polynices was also responsible, albeit secondarily, for the war. I therefore think *prior* must be taken *apo koinou* with both clauses: 'You, who first occasioned the sword, must lay the sword aside first.'

Medea 447–51

> fugimus, Iason, fugimus. hoc non est novum,
> mutare sedes; causa fugiendi nova est:
> pro te solebam fugere. discedo, exeo,
> penatibus profugere quam cogis tuis.
> ad quos remittis?

> I have fled before, Jason, I am fleeing now. There is nothing new in changing my dwelling place, but the reason for my flight is new: I used to flee for your sake. I depart, I leave, since you force me to forsake your hearth and home. But to whom [see, however, below] are you returning me?

Gärtner (2010, 21) makes a strong case for transposition of 449b and 450b, with emendation of *quam* to *iam*, and he punctuates thus:

> fugimus, Iason, fugimus – hoc non est novum,
> mutare sedes; causa fugiendi nova est:
> pro te solebam fugere – iam cogis tuis
> penatibus profugere: discedo, exeo –
> ad quos remittis?

These changes make explicit the change in the cause of Medea's departures: she used to flee for his sake, now she is fleeing through his coercion. Although this version is attractive, one should acknowledge that Senecan rhetorical points often work by implication; *pro te solebam fugere* in 449 would be sufficient to imply that the opposite is now the case.

My chief reason for retaining the paradosis, however, is that *ad quos* in 451 must mean (as I now think) not 'to which people', which would be puzzling, but 'to what home', with *penates* supplied from *penatibus* in 450. The function of 450 *penatibus profugere quam cogis tuis*, then, is to prepare for the rhetorical question *ad quos remittis*, rather than to complete the contrast about her reasons for flight. The similar phrase at 272, *profugere cogis?*, likewise has the function of

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preparing for the rhetorical point *redde fugienti ratem | vel redde comitem*, 'You force me to flee? For my flight give me back my ship, or give back my companion.'

Medea 891–2

> effer citatum sede Pelopea gradum,
> Medea, praeceps quaslibet terras pete.
>
> Make your escape swiftly from the land of Pelops, Medea, race to reach some other country, no matter where.

In E there is no speaker-change before 891, so it is the Messenger who urges Medea to flee, as in Euripides (*Med.* 1121–3). In Seneca this attribution has been thought improbable, since the Messenger's words *periere cuncta* (879) could suggest sympathy with the Corinthians (so Leo (1878) 1.83). However, Euripides' Messenger is more definitely characterised as hostile to Medea (Eur. *Med.* 1118–21) and nevertheless urges her flight.

The A redactor attributes lines 891–2 to the Nurse, no doubt for similar reasons to Leo's; he is followed by Leo himself and by subsequent editors. I first followed suit, but now realise the weakness of Leo's argument. It would be awkward to bring the Nurse on stage solely for the sake of these two lines; she would then have to exit after 892 (unconvincingly abandoning Medea), since it would be unthinkable to have her present and silent while Medea moves towards killing the children.

Medea has perhaps been on stage since the beginning of the Act, in which case the Messenger catches sight of her at 891. Such belated catching-sight is a feature of this play: cf. 186, 445, 995. On the use of the Chorus as an interlocutor, and what it implies about the presence or absence of other dramatis personae, see Fitch (1987a) 385 n. 134.

Phaedra 688–9

> o maius ausa matre monstrifera malum,
> genetrice peior!
>
> Oh, … you have dared a mightier evil than your monster-bearing mother, you are worse than your parent!

Starting with Bothe, who deleted 688, critics have been troubled by the redundancy of *maius … matre … | genetrice peior*. Zwierlein (1986a, 201) rightly defends it as a case of synonym-variation, cf. *Herc* 72–3 *collo … cervix*, *Med* 483–5 *opibus … gazas*, *Pha* 1204 *ponti … maris*. Gärtner (2010, 24) conjectures *gente* for *matre* in 688 to remove the redundancy. But since it was specifically Pasiphae who 'bore a monster' (*monstrifera*), viz. the Minotaur, and since *maius ausa … malum* also points to a comparison specifically with Pasiphae (who else?), I do not think the conjecture can stand.

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Phaedra 838–41

> iam quarta Eleusin dona Triptolemi secat
> paremque totiens Libra composuit diem,
> ambiguus ut me sortis ignotae labor
> detinuit inter mortis et vitae mala.

Now for the fourth time Eleusis is reaping Triptolemus' bounty, and Libra has balanced day and night four times, while the unresolved torment of an unknown lot kept me between the evils of death and life.

Boyle (1987) ad loc. usefully questions the meaning of *ignotae* ('unknown') in 840. I take it to mean 'unheard-of': the lot of being confined to Hades while alive was unique to Theseus (and presumably Pirithous). For this meaning of the word cf. *Tro* 294 *terrae . . . ignotae*, *Phoen* 264–5 *facinus ignotum . . . inusitatum*, *Med* 45 *effera ignota horrida*.

Oedipus 95–8

> cumque e superna rupe iam praedae imminens
> aptaret alas, verbera et caudae movens
> saevi leonis more conciperet minas,
> carmen poposci.

And as from her high crag, already poised over her prey, she flexed her wings and developed her menace, lashing her tail like a savage lion, I asked for her riddle.

In *Annaeana* I proposed that *conciperet minas* means that the Sphinx 'developed her menace', and since Seneca compares her at this moment to a lion, I adduced Lucan's lion-simile at 1.205–12 (Fitch (2004b) 137–8). For a lion working itself up to attack cf. also *Herc* 946 *morsus parat*; similarly a bull at *Pha* 1059–61, and a rhinoceros at Mart. *Lib. Spec.* 26 [22] 2 *seque diu magnae colligit ira ferae*.

Oedipus 178–9

> nocte silenti Amphionios
> ululasse canes.

The text given above is that of EA, and would mean 'in the silent night, Amphion's dogs howled'. However, because of the hiatus, and for reasons of sense (discussed below), Leo (1878, II.382) rightly postulated a lacuna between *silenti* and *Amphionios*. Boyle (2011) disbelieves in the lacuna, and simply moves the hiatus to line-end, printing *nocte silenti | Amphionios ululasse canes*. But his comment ad loc., 'Seneca's anapaests do not observe synaphea (metrical continuity between lines)', is too sweeping. Within sense-units

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covering three metra, synaphea is generally observed: I found only five exceptions, four of them in *Agamemnon*, and none involving hiatus (Fitch (1987b) 20). The metrical problem here coincides with the problems of sense raised by Leo, Zwierlein (1986a) and Töchterle (1994) – which are not addressed by Boyle – namely that *Amphionios* should refer to the walls of Thebes, and that the dogs of 179 are not local pooches but Hecate's hounds. I therefore continue to accept Leo's thesis of a lacuna after *silenti*.

Oedipus 369–70

> non molli ambitu
> omenta pingues visceri obtendunt sinus.
> visceri EA: viscerum *recc.*

no caul extends its fatty folds in a soft coating over the guts.

If *viscerum* is read in place of *visceri*, as in some later manuscripts, we have 'no caul covers the fatty folds of the guts with its soft coating'. But *pingues* is more appositely used in the transmitted text, because the caul that covers the intestines of cattle is a very fatty membrane, often called 'caul fat': Catull. 90.6 *omentum in flamma pingue liquefaciens* ('melting the fatty caul in the flame'), Plin. *Nat.* 11.204 *ventriculus atque intestina pingui et tenui omento integuntur* ('the stomach and intestines are covered by a thin fatty caul'). The adjective would be less well used of the *viscera* covered by the caul, i.e. the stomach and intestines. True, *pinguis* is used of the *exta* at Verg. *G.* 2.396, but the *exta* are the edible parts of the *viscera*, the 'upper internal organs … esp. the heart, lungs and liver' (*OLD*).

Billerbeck (1988, 66), followed by Töchterle (1994) and Boyle (2011), prefers the reading *viscerum* on the grounds that the dative singular *visceri* is rare, found only once elsewhere (in Celsus). But this distribution may simply reflect the relative infrequency of dative forms. As usual, I am reluctant to discard a form that is securely transmitted and makes sense.

Oedipus 403–4

> effusam redimite comam nutante corymbo,
> mollia Nysaeis armatus bracchia thyrsis
> armatus *RThE*: armati A: armatae *vel* armate *recc.*

In *Annaeana* I followed the conventional view that these two lines describe Bacchus, and in the first Loeb I translated 'You whose flowing hair is wreathed with nodding ivy, and who bear the thyrsus of Nysa as a weapon in your soft hands.' However, I expressed misgivings, based on the difficulty of reading the nominative *armatus* in 404 after the vocative *redimite* in 403 (Fitch (2004b) 143–4). Now I see two further difficulties with the conventional view. First, *thyrsis* as a poetic plural is suspect in address to a single god, when *thyrso* would

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more naturally have been written. Second, line 403 if addressed to Bacchus awkwardly anticipates lines 412ff., where the god's hairstyles seem to be introduced as a new theme.

Consequently I now believe that the couplet is addressed by the Chorus-members to themselves, with *redimite* as imperative.[4] Just such an initial self-address is found at *Ag* 310 *canite o pubes inclita Phoebum!*, 'Sing, illustrious folk, of Phoebus!' (see Tarrant (1976) 232). In this case A's reading *armati* in 404 is closer to the truth than *armatus*. However, the details of flowing hair and soft hands in 403–4 probably mean that the Chorus is characterised (at least for the purposes of this ode) as female worshippers of Bacchus: in that case, the correct reading in 404 is *armatae*, found already in some *recentiores*.[5] As Bacchants, they let their hair flow freely, like the god (see Fitch (1987a) on *Herc* 472–3); for wreathing their hair with ivy, cf. Euripides *Ba.* 81.

Oedipus 942–5

> solvendo non es! illa quae leges ratas
> Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda, novos
> commenta partus, supplicis eadem meis
> novetur
> 942 solvendo non es *Grotius*: solvenda non est *EA*

> You cannot pay! That Nature which altered her fixed laws in regard to Oedipus alone, by inventing novel births, must once more innovate for my punishment.[6]

A case where a superb conjecture is set against a credible paradosis. With the transmitted text, the meaning will be: 'Nature must not be annulled [said sarcastically] – that Nature which altered her fixed laws in regard to Oedipus alone, by inventing novel births; she must once more innovate for my punishment.' Since Töchterle and Boyle both print the transmitted text, and since critical discussions of the passage are scattered, I review the main issues here, avowedly as a supporter of the conjecture.[7]

1. The conjecture sustains the metaphor of 'paying debts' which runs through the passage from 936–7 *tam magnis breves | poenas sceleribus solves* to 947 *supplicia pendas*. Without the conjecture, that metaphor disappears for several lines. In addition, the paradosis requires us to believe that, in the midst of this extended metaphor, where he has used

4 Töchterle (1994) ad loc. associates Delrius in particular with this view.

5 Alternatively, as the editor suggests to me, they could be characterised as male worshippers who emulate the androgynous style of their god: then the A reading *armati* would be retained.

6 Here I have modified my original Loeb translation.

7 Discussions include, in favour of the conjecture, Müller (1953) 457, Zwierlein (1966) 194; in favour of the paradosis, Carlsson (1929) 66–7, Sluiter (1941) 120–1, Töchterle (1994) and Boyle (2011) ad loc. My arguments in *Annaeana* against the paradosis (Fitch (2004b) 153) are rightly dismissed by Boyle, and may be ignored: I had somehow managed to miss the possibility of both sarcasm and paradox.

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solvere in the sense 'to pay' (937), Seneca then uses the verb in a quite different sense: this is no great tribute to his skills as a writer.

2. The conceit found here of needing to be reborn (*renasci*), in order to repay several debts with several lives (945–7), has an antecedent in Licinius Nepos as quoted by Seneca's father, and there we find exactly the phrase *solvendo esse: ut solvendo sis, in poenas quotiens tibi renascendum est?* ('So as to be able to pay, how often must you be reborn for punishment?', *Contr.* 10.4.22). Seneca *fils* himself uses the phrase metaphorically at *Ep.* 118.1 *rationes conferamus: solvendo non eris*, 'Let's compare accounts: you won't be able to pay'; it appears also at [Quint.] *Decl.* 9.9 *solvendo non erimus*.

3. Although a transmitted reading deserves respect when making sense, it is worth noting how easily an original *solvendo non es illa quae* could have become *solvenda non est illa quae* in a text without punctuation. Final *-a* and *-o* are easily assimilated to nearby words, e.g. *Ag* 264 *alia privato* (*privata* E) *in toro; Ag* 503 *haec lacera et omni decore populato* (*populata* A); *Thy* 104 *domus et nefando* (*nefanda* E^{ac}) *tota contactu horruit*. In the present case assimilation could have been aided by scribal unfamiliarity with the idiomatic phrase *solvendo esse*.

4. If we accept the paradosis, where does the main sense-pause occur between 942 and 945? Recent editors place it after *Oedipoda* in 943 (Töchterle with a colon, Boyle with a full stop). But a pause of such strength rarely occurs between the fifth and sixth foot: the only examples in this play are 697 and 698. The sense-pause must therefore be placed after *partus* in 944, where it rather disrupts the rhetorical interaction between *novos* 943 and *novetur* 945.

5. Shortening of the final *-o* in a gerund is paralleled at *Tro* 264 *vincendo*, *Phoen* 558 *petendo*, *HO* 1862 *lugendo*, Juv. 3.232 *vigilando*, all of which are ablative. There is no parallel for shortening in the dative of the gerund, but this may be due to the comparative rarity of dative gerunds; it is not clear in principle why the dative should be treated differently in this regard.

Agamemnon 195–9

> an te morantur virgines viduae domi
> patrique Orestes similis? horum te mala
> ventura moveant, turbo quîs rerum imminet!
> quid, misera, cessas? en adest natis tuis
> furens noverca!

> Or are you held back by the thought of unmarried girls at home and Orestes' likeness to his father? The thought of their future troubles should spur you on: a whirlwind is threatening them! Why hesitate, poor woman? See, a mad stepmother is at hand for your children!

In *Annaeana* I, like other critics, read lines 195–96a 'straight' (Fitch (2004b) 157), but I would now concur with Gärtner (2010, 28–9) in seeing them as ironic, just as 194 is ironic. The

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irony lies in the fact that a son's likeness to his father would normally be a reminder of *pudicitia* (Catull. 61.214–18, Hor. *C.* 4.5.23), and the presence of unmarried daughters would also urge restraint for the sake of their futures; but since Agamemnon is adulterous, and has killed one daughter, these considerations are invalidated.

I cannot, however, follow Gärtner in taking lines 196b–197 as referring to the probable results of Clytemnestra's planned murder of Agamemnon, and as indicating a momentary hesitation about that plan. The word *moveant* would be poorly chosen here if it were equivalent to *retineant*; rather it is contrasted with *morantur* in 195 and means 'spur you on'. The *mala ventura* and *turbo rerum* of 196b–97, then, are the results to be expected (in Clytemnestra's fevered and tendentious thinking) if Cassandra becomes mistress of the palace. *Cessas* in 198 does not indicate an immediately preceding hesitation, any more than at *Herc* 1283, *Tro* 870, *Phoen* 91, *Med* 895.

Agamemnon 481

I have now argued (Fitch (2016) 323–5) that the key to this puzzling line, which I formerly deleted (following Richter), lies in etymological wordplay. Consequently we can now eschew both the *crux desperationis* and deletion.

Thyestes 41–9

	liberi pereant male,
	peius tamen nascantur; immineat viro
43^a, 46^b	infesta coniunx: impia stuprum in domo
47	levissimum sit facinus. et fas et fides
48^a, 43^b	iusque omne pereat. bella trans pontum vehant,
44	effusus omnes irriget terras cruor,
45	supraque magnos gentium exultet duces
46^a, 48^b	Libido victrix. non sit a vestris malis
	immune caelum.

46b–48a *post* 43a *transposuit Fitch* 47 facinus *Bentley*: fratris *EA*

> Let death come to children vilely, but birth more vilely; let husband be menaced by wife's enmity; in this unnatural home let adultery be the lightest of misdeeds. Let right, faithfulness and law perish utterly. Let them carry war overseas, let spilt blood drench all lands, and over the mighty leaders of nations let Lust exult victorious. And let heaven not be immune to your evil.

I explained my transposition of 46b–48a after 43a in Fitch (2004a) 251–2. The purpose of this transposition was not (*pace* Gärtner (2010) 35) to allow *stuprum* to refer to Thyestes' adultery with Aerope: I explicitly wrote, 'the *stuprum* of 46 is now Clytemnestra's adultery'. Gärtner also considers it a disadvantage of my transposition that the allusion to the flight of the sun (51) now follows the reference to the Trojan War in 43b–46a. But (again as I showed

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in my note) the ordering of events throughout the passage is not chronological but rhetorical, moving (as in the source passage, Ov. *Met.* 1.144–51) from crime within the family to the soaking of the earth with blood, and finally to the heavens.

In the same note I gave my reasons for accepting Bentley's conjecture *facinus* for the transmitted *fratris* in 47, also accepted by Tarrant (1985) and Zwierlein (1986b). Instead, Gärtner conjectures *matris* for *fratris*: he wants the meaning to be 'let the lightest thing in this impious house be the *stuprum* of a mother'. The implication would be that the heavier thing is (Clytemnestra's) husband-murder. But the relationship involved in husband-murder is that of wife, not mother. And why would Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon be repeated from 42–3? Most important, the word-order of 46b–47a would clearly dictate the meaning 'let the lightest *stuprum* be a mother's', and it would not then be clear what the worse *stuprum* might be.

Thyestes 267–80

Although Seneca is here depicting a mind that is 'constantly shifting' (Tarrant (1985) ad loc.), the shifts of mood and thought can be followed reasonably clearly in my view. In 267–70a Atreus is aware of a plan forming itself in his unconscious mind. In 270b the plan of feeding Thyestes his children's flesh emerges into consciousness: *ita sit* ('So be it') marks Atreus' first assent to it, and *hoc anime occupa* ('Seize on it, my spirit!') his enthusiastic embrace of it. The planned crime is 'worthy' of both Thyestes and Atreus (271) not only because of their individual criminal pasts, but also because they are grandchildren of Tantalus, and therefore share a family inheritance of treating human flesh as meat.

This reading is supported by the similar sequence in *Medea*, where Medea's plan of revenge, again involving child-murder, is described in comparable language as made in her unconscious mind (917b–19a), and then emerges into conscious recognition at 919b.[8]

Gärtner (2010, 37–40) believes that at 271 Atreus is still trying to think up a revenge plan, and that lines 271–272a indicate a criterion which the yet unknown plan will have to meet. Correspondingly he writes:

> dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo,
> <ut> uterque faciat,

inserting *ut* before the transmitted *uterque*. This aims to mean, 'It is [i.e. would be] a deed worthy of both Thyestes and Atreus, that each should perform it.' But the Latin appears strained, in part because *facinus* is both subject of *est* and object of *faciat*. And Gärtner offers no explanation of the words '*ita sit. hoc, anime, occupa*' (270), which seem to contradict his reading.

Thyestes 920–37

Kovacs (2007, 790–1) writes:

8 *nescioquid ferox | decrevit animus intus et nondum sibi | audet fateri. stulta properavi nimis*, 'The spirit within me has determined on some brutality, but dare not yet acknowledge it to itself. Fool, I have been too hasty!'

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> Thyestes' principal point in these lines is that his circumstances are now happy. He no longer feels grief, fear or the penury and shame that accompany exile and ruined fortunes. He has fallen from high estate but has now planted his footsteps on a stable plane … In light of this, *magis unde cadas quam quo refert* [926] seems to give a sense opposite to the one the passage requires. The important thing is not where he has fallen from but where he has fallen to …

By the last phrase, Kovacs means Thyestes' present (apparently) happy circumstances. Consequently he would write *minus* in place of *magis*.[9]

I would read the lines rather differently, as an attempt by Thyestes to dispel his depression, which he interprets as an after-effect of the privations of exile (though it is really a premonition of disaster). First he tries to shrug off his anxiety, sadness and fear as part of a complex of negative emotions accompanying his exile, now ended (920–5). Then he tries to cheer himself up by congratulating himself on having survived unbowed his fall from high estate, despite the crushing weight of such a ruin (927–33). Line 926 makes sense as a transition between these two segments: it is more important that he fell from a great height (and heroically endured), than that he fell into depressing penury. The word *quo*, then, refers to impoverished exile, not to his present 'happy' circumstances.

Thyestes 1032–3

> utrumne saevis pabulum alitibus iacent,
> an beluis vorantur, an pascunt feras?

Earlier I wondered whether *beluae* are sufficiently distinct from the *ferae* in the same line. I should, however, have paid more attention to my own point that *beluae*, in its other appearances in Seneca's tragedies and in Ovid, always refers to sea creatures (Fitch (2004b) 188 with n. 10). Thyestes' questions, then, are about the three realms of sky, sea and land, and we may translate, 'Are they lying as fodder for cruel birds, or being swallowed by sea-monsters, or feeding beasts of the field?'

Hercules Oetaeus 243–5

Does the Maenad simile end after *agat* in 244 or *parumper* in 245? Most editors (including my earlier self) choose the second option by their punctuation:

> aut iussa thyrsum quatere conceptum ferens
> maenas Lyaeum dubia quo gressus agat
> haesit parumper. tum …

9 As Kovacs acknowledges, Gronovius' note on this line in his edition of 1662 begins, 'Manus illustris appinxerat Fort. *minus*: me non probante.' Billerbeck and Somazzi (2009) identify the 'manus illustris' as that of Grotius, and give his conjecture in full as *minus unde cadas quam qui refert*, where *qui* means 'how'.

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> or [she resembled] a Maenad, called to brandish the thyrsus, quickened and ridden by Lyaeus, who hesitates briefly, unsure where to direct her steps. Then …

But the perfect tense of *haesit* (245) works best if it takes up *stetit* in 240, both verbs referring to Deianira; similarly *tum* works best if it points to a development following *haesit parumper*. Consequently I now think the simile concludes at the end of line 244.

I owe the above arguments to Thomas Gärtner (pers. comm.), who however would end the simile after *Lyaeum* in the middle of 244. In my view the Maenad's hesitation (*dubia*) is needed to parallel Deianira's (*haesit*). In addition, the phrase *dubia quo gressus agat* is drawn from a Maenad simile at *Med* 383–4 *incerta qualis entheos gressus tulit … maenas*, 'like an ecstatic Maenad taking uncertain steps'.

Hercules Oetaeus 929–30

> quicumque misero forte dissuadet mori,
> crudelis ille est.

The paradosis would mean: 'Anyone who chances to dissuade the wretched from dying acts cruelly.' Gärtner (2010, 44) corrects the pointless *forte* of the MSS to *sorte*. For *misero sorte* 'unhappy with his lot', cf. *Ag* 104 *mediae … turbae sorte quietus*, *Oct* 378 *sorte contentum mea*, Hor. *Ep.* 1.10.44 *laetus sorte tua*. True, in these passages the 'lot' is qualified, which clarifies the meaning; but the *HO* author's phrasing is not always articulate. As Gärtner points out, *sorte* picks up Deianira's own words *fata iniqua sortitus* in 902.

Hercules Oetaeus 1015–17

> Sed quid hoc? tellus labat
> et aula tectis crepuit excussis minax.
> unde iste coetus?

But what is this? The ground is trembling, the palace buildings shaking and rattling in a menacing way. Where has this crowd come from?

Editors have used punctuation (dash or period) to insert a strong pause after *excussis* in 1016, this attaching *minax* to *coetus* in 1017; I followed suit in the first Loeb edition. But so strong a sense-break between the fifth and sixth feet seems improbable (see above on *Oed* 942–5): it would be paralleled in this play only in two cases where an isolated word ends the line for rhetorical point (1000, 1006). And nowhere else in the corpus is *unde* postponed to second place in a direct question. With punctuation moved to the end of the line, *minax* will qualify proleptically the palace buildings (*aula*) as they shake. For *minax* of inanimate entities cf. 479 *ignis minax*; for examples of its use of sounds (*crepuit*), see TLL VIII.997.17–23.

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Hercules Oetaeus 1459

> caecus dolore es: manibus irati Herculis
> occidere meruit.
> caecus dolore es *Fitch olim*: ceci dolores A: recte dolor es E

In the Loeb I translated 'You are blinded by grief! She deserved to perish at the hands of Hercules in his rage', and in the discussion at Fitch (2004c) 246–7 I argued against attribution of *dolus* to Deianira, as in Richter's conjecture *cecidit dolose* (cf. *certe dolose* Axelson, *clepsit dolo se* Delz, *fecit dolose* Giardina). More persuasive is Gärtner's conjecture *cecidit dolore* (2010, 45): here *cecidit* takes up *iacet* in 1458 and is picked up in turn by *occidere* in 1460. As Gärtner points out, the antithesis *dolore* (sc. *suo*) – *manibus Herculis* ('She died through her pain/grief, but she deserved to die by Hercules' hands') is answered by Hyllus in 1465–6 *dextra sua – tuo dolore* ('She died by her own hand, but through your pain' or '. . . through grief for you'). Gärtner does not say how he would punctuate; I have placed a question mark after *cecidit dolore* in the revised Loeb text to point the rhetorical contrast with what follows.[10]

Octavia 47–8

> . . . nec graves luctus valet
> ira coacta tegere crudelis viri.

. . . and cannot conceal her deep grief, though obliged to do so by her cruel husband's anger.

I argued in Fitch (2004b) 234–5 that this is the correct text. However, Tacitus tells us, in the context of Britannicus' murder, that Octavia had learnt from childhood to conceal her feelings: *Octavia quoque, quamvis rudibus annis, dolorem caritatem, omnis adfectus abscondere didicerat* (*Ann.* 13.16, cited by Boyle (2008) ad loc.). Does this invalidate my interpretation? Perhaps not: *pace* Tacitus, the drama portrays an Octavia who is barely capable (perhaps barely capable *any longer*) of dissimulation. See particularly lines 98–114, 219–56.

Octavia 500–2

> invictus acie, gentium domitor, Iovi
> aequatus altos saepe per honorum gradus,
> Caesar nefando civium scelere occidit.

Undefeated in battle, conqueror of nations, raised to the level of Jove through a continual series of high honours, Caesar fell through an unspeakable crime committed by citizens.

10 The conjecture in Averna (2002), *recte dolor est, sed manibus irati Herculis*, discussed by Gärtner, is unmetrical.

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This is the text and sense of A (*Octavia* is missing from E). The weaknesses of the reading *saepe* are acknowledged in the discussions ad loc. of Zwierlein (1986a), Gärtner (2010, 49), Ferri (2003) and myself (Fitch (2004b) 247). Gärtner corrects it to *nempe*, which is often used to confirm or justify a preceding statement: so here Nero's point about the folly of sparing potential plotters is confirmed by the example of Julius Caesar and Brutus. Similarly at 195 Octavia's Nurse confirms her general point about the transience of illicit amours with the example of Acte (*iam metuit eadem nempe*).[11]

The reading *altos* has also long been suspected, in part because the phrase *per honorum gradus* most naturally suggests an escalating series of honours, not all equally 'high'. In fact the point of the phrase *per honorum gradus*, as Gärtner argues, is that it was the Republican *cursus honorum* that brought Julius Caesar (unlike later, absolutist *principes*) to quasi-divine status. If *nempe* is adopted, it will emphasise Caesar's godlike status, and one will therefore read *alto* (Peiper) with Gärtner in place of *altos*.[12]

Octavia 756–61

> delubra et aras petere constitui sacras,
> caesis litare victimis numen deum,
> ut expientur noctis et somni minae,
> terrorque in hoste redeat attonitus meos.
> tu vota pro me suscipe et precibus piis
> superos adora, maneat ut praesens status.
> 761 status *Bücheler*: metus A

> I have decided to visit the sacred shrines and altars, and appease the sovereign gods with animal sacrifices, so as to avert the menace of night and the dream, and deflect this shock and terror onto my enemies. You, make vows on my behalf, and appeal to the gods with devout prayers not to allow any change of circumstances.

Here I should like to further my earlier support (Fitch (2004b) 254) for Bücheler's conjecture. The disjunctive *tu* in 760 points to distinct tasks for Poppaea and her Nurse, based on their contrasted characterisation in this scene.[13] Fearful Poppaea plans to make apotropaic sacrifices to turn terrors *away* (*expientur, redeat in hostes* 758–9); by contrast the resolutely optimist Nurse, who refuses to acknowledge any grounds for fear, is to make vows and prayers that something *remain* (*maneat* 761). That something is surely Poppaea's present

11 Logically *nempe* would stand in 498–9 or 502, to underline the folly of sparing plotters, but language is not always so logical: e.g. at *HO* 903 *nempe* appears not with the point at issue (viz. Hercules' self-forgiveness), but with the preceding event, just as here.

12 Gärtner explains the corruption of *alto nempe* to *altos saepe* as occurring through faulty word-division. It seems more likely that *alto* was altered through accommodation to *gradus*, and that *nempe* suffered loss of the *-m* stroke.

13 There is a comparable division of tasks in *Hercules*, where Hercules himself will worship Jupiter, while Theseus (*tu*, 915) is to venerate local divinities.

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position as empress, as in Bücheler's conjecture. Attempts to retain *metus* (such as Helm's awkwardly phrased conjecture *iam abeat ut praesens metus*) fail to register this dramatically effective distinction between the two roles.

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