

Seneca's TROADES

Seneca's
TROADES

A Literary Introduction with
TEXT, TRANSLATION,
and COMMENTARY

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PREFACE

I doubt if Aristotle would have approved of Seneca's *Troades*; measured by the criteria of the *Poetics*, it is hardly a proper tragedy. There is no single line of development, depicting a hero who passes from good to bad fortune through an error of understanding or moral judgment. Instead we have a dual plot based on the enforced death of two moral innocents, and dominated by the essentially passive state of two bereaved women, again without responsibility for the events that have brought their ruin. But Seneca himself would not have conceived his play in these terms: rather the whole action is the city's tragedy, and its downfall is presented as a demonstration of the arbitrary reversals of fate, and to a lesser extent, of retribution for the national inheritance of guilt. The legend of Troy meant more to a Roman than to a Greek, since this was his own origin, and the city's destruction had made possible the birth of Rome: but this proud theme of Augustan poetry, like Aeneas himself, is absent from *Troades*, in which *recidiva Pergama* (*Tro.* 472) is disowned as a deceitful hope. If the play ends in the annihilation of Troy, it is not because Seneca was out of sympathy with the *Aeneid*, or afraid to include a prophetic element in his plays: there is prophecy in *Troades*, which looms into closer focus as the play draws to its end, but it is prophecy of further retribution, when Greeks will succeed Trojans as the object of fortune's anger.

To read Senecan tragedy with understanding requires more than knowledge of the underlying myth, and of tragic tradition: we must share Seneca's own literary inheritance of familiarity with Roman poetry, his aesthetic principles, and the philosophical viewpoint that determined his interpretation of the established myths. We must also take into account the influence of nondramatic genres of poetry, and the implications of recitation, rather than stage performance, as the dominant medium of his time. In this introduction, I have tried to restore *Troades* to its full context, seeing it, as it were, three-dimensionally. The first approach follows an outline of the history of tragedy at Rome, which will give special emphasis to the tension between professional playwriting and a more dilettante dramatic poetry, to the growing independence of Romans from Greek tragedy, and to the diversity of compositions that were called *tragoediae*.

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Secondly, we should consider Seneca's own knowledge of earlier poetry, both Greek and Roman, and his moral and aesthetic views on poetic composition. What did he see as the function of poetry? How did he conceive the process of imitation or competition with his predecessors?

The third approach can be made along a narrower front. To evaluate his relationship to earlier literary presentations of the fall of Troy, we must trace the development of the legends from Homer and his cyclic successors through Greek tragedy into Roman tragedy and epic. To know that divergent forms of a myth exist—say the death of Astyanax—and show that Seneca's version is previously found in Arctinus or Accius is not to prove that he imitated or even directly knew this particular account. Every other line of the play reflects his intimacy with the Trojan narratives of the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*, but beyond this certainty we cannot link an earlier account to Seneca's work without evidence from his other writings that he knew this work, or internal clues in the form of close imitation of language, narrative detail, or sequence of argument and action. But once comparison with Euripides' *Hecuba* or *Troades* has shown Seneca's familiarity with these plays, it becomes legitimate to consider the omission or change of features in the Greek tragedy as part of Seneca's literary choice. What he has chosen not to write also contributes to our understanding the play before us.

Earlier generations, offended by the violence of Senecan tragedy and its preoccupation with horror and vengeance, rejected its rhetoric and condemned its divergence from classical Greek tragedy. Ours is a more violent and excessive age, but present-day appreciation of Seneca is not simply the fellow-feeling of companions in excess; it springs from a response to the sound of Seneca, and the urgent rhythm and passion of his speeches. This fundamental quality of his poetry outweighs the lapses of taste or consistency that no critic can ignore, and has led me, in both Introduction and Commentary, to recognize Seneca's weaknesses, but to concentrate on analyzing and displaying his real poetic achievement.

I could not have written this commentary without the help of many people, and my thanks to some of them will be quite inadequate return for their kindness. I might begin with the gallant stranger from Tivoli whose persistence enabled me to find the elusive *Tabula Iliaca* on a crowded Saturday night in the Capitoline Museum: I could not have found it alone. More conventionally, let me thank my students at the University of Toronto whose intelligence and sensitivity

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led me to hope that an edition on this scale could be of use and interest to student readers.

I originally hoped that I might be able to benefit from Otto Zwierlein's eagerly awaited Oxford text of the tragedies; but this Herculean achievement is still in the future. Instead Professor Zwierlein has been kindness itself in sending me material and answering my queries. Professor Alexander MacGregor of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, has been equally generous, providing me with his collation of an important manuscript and showing me his work to refine our understanding of the *stemma codicum*.

But I have been most blessed in the generosity of two friends: my colleague Richard Tarrant, himself the author of the most distinguished commentary on Senecan tragedy available today, has given me all the help that I have asked for and more. I would have been lost without his guidance on textual matters but it would have been poor repayment of his kindness had I yielded to temptation and imposed the entire manuscript upon him. Indeed it would have been a surrender of responsibility to take advantage of all the help he could have given. This commentary is very different from his own, but I hope he will approve of it. Gordon Williams encouraged me to write and to stand by the unorthodoxy of some of my views. With his unfailing good humor and patience he read through my second draft, and helped me to give better form to many of my arguments, and to rethink others. Despite his wise counsel there will be some errors and eccentricities for which I alone am to blame.

Dr. Brad Inwood read the manuscript before and in proof. It was a great reassurance to invoke his expertise in improving the form of my text and reducing the burden upon the staff of Princeton University Press.

To them, especially to Joanna Hitchcock, I shall continue to be grateful for their care, consideration, and efficiency since the inception of this book.

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September 1980

ELAINE FANTHAM

A BBREVIATIONS

ANCIENT AUTHORS AND TEXTS

Acc. Sc. (R)	Accius, <i>Scaenica romanorum poesis fragmenta</i> , ed. O. Ribbeck, 3rd ed., vol. 1, 1895.	<i>Tragedies</i>	<i>Tragedies</i> , ed. Jocelyn
Cat.	Catullus	Eur.	Euripides
Cic.	Cicero	Alc.	Alcestis
Acad.	Academica	Andr.	Andromache
Arch.	Pro Archia	Ba.	Bacchae
Att.	Epistulae ad Atticum	Hec.	Hecuba
Brut.	Brutus	Herac.	Heracleidae
de Opt. Gen.	de Optimo Genere	Hipp.	Hippolytus
	Oratorum	I.A.	Iphigenia Aulica
de Orat.	de Oratore	Med.	Medea
de Rep.	de Republica	Tro.	Troades
Div.	de Divinatione	Homer	
Fam.	Epistulae ad Familiares	Il.	Iliad
Fin.	de Finibus	Od.	Odyssey
Flacc.	pro Flacco	Hor.	Horace
Leg.	de Legibus	Epist.	Epistles
Mil.	pro Milone	Sat.	Satires
Off.	de Officiis	Lucret.	Lucretius
ND	de Natura Deorum	Macr. Sat.	Macrobius Saturnalia
Pis.	in Pisonem	Ov.	Ovid
QF	Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem	A.A.	Ars Amatoria
Sest.	pro Sestio	Am.	Amores
S. Rosc.	pro Roscio Amerino	ex P.	ex Ponto
Tusc.	Tusculan Disputations	F.	Fasti
Verr.	in Verrem	Her.	Heroides
Diog. Laert.	Diogenes Laertius	Met.	Metamorphoses
Enn.	Ennius	R.A.	Remedia Amoris
Ann.	Annales, ed. Vahlen	Tr.	Tristia
Scaenica	Scaenica, ed. Vahlen (Tragic fragments not in Jocelyn, q.v.)	Pindar	
		Isthm.	Isthmians
		Ol.	Olympians
		Pyth.	Pythians
		Plautus	
		Aul.	Aulularia
		Bacch.	Bacchides
		Capt.	Captivi
		Mil.	Miles Gloriosus
		Trin.	Trinummus

ABBREVIATIONS

Pliny		Soph.	Sophocles
Ep.	<i>Epistles</i>	Ant.	<i>Antigone</i>
N.H.	<i>Natural History</i>	O.T.	<i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i>
Plut.	Plutarch	Phil.	<i>Philoctetes</i>
Alex.	<i>Alexander</i>	Stat.	Statius
Cat. Min.	<i>Cato Minor</i>	Theb.	<i>Thebaid</i>
Cic.	<i>Cicero</i>	Ach.	<i>Achilleid</i>
Them.	<i>Themistocles</i>	Suet.	Suetonius
Prop.	Propertius	Aug.	<i>Augustus</i>
Quint.	Quintilian	D.J.	<i>Divus Julius</i>
Sall.	Sallust	Tib.	<i>Tiberius</i>
Cat.	<i>Catiline</i>	Claud.	<i>Claudius</i>
Jug.	<i>Jugurtha</i>	Ner.	<i>Nero</i>
Seneca		Tac.	Tacitus
Ben.	<i>de Beneficiis</i>	Ann.	<i>Annals</i>
Brev.	<i>de Brevitate Vitae</i>	Dial.	<i>Dialogus de</i> <i>Oratoribus</i>
Clem.	<i>de Clementia</i>	Val. Flacc.	Valerius Flaccus
Const.	<i>de Constantia</i> <i>Sapientis</i>		<i>Argonautica</i>
Ep.	<i>Epistulae Morales</i>	Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus
Helv.	<i>ad Helviam</i>		<i>Memorabilia</i>
Marc.	<i>ad Marciam</i>	Vir.	Virgil
N.Q.	<i>Natural Questions</i>	Aen.	<i>Aeneid</i>
Polyb.	<i>ad Polybium</i>	Ecl.	<i>Eclogues</i>
Prov.	<i>de Providentia</i>	G.	<i>Georgics</i>
Tranqu.	<i>de Tranquillitate</i>		
Ag.	<i>Agamemnon</i>		
H.F.	<i>Hercules Furens</i>		
H.O.	<i>Hercules Oetaeus</i>		
Med.	<i>Medea</i>		
Oct.	<i>Octavia</i>		
Oed.	<i>Oedipus</i>		
Phae.	<i>Phaedra</i>		
Pho.	<i>Phoenissae</i>		
Thy.	<i>Thyestes</i>		
Tro.	<i>Troades</i>		
Seneca Rhetor			
Contr.	<i>Controversiae</i>		
Suas.	<i>Suasoriae</i>		

GENERAL TERMS

ab.	ablative
acc.	accusative
codd.	codices
dat.	dative
f., ff.	folio(s); following
gen.	genitive
inf.	infinitive
recc.	recentiores
v., vv.	versus, versi (line, lines)

REFERENCES AND PERIODICALS

Standard reference works and journals are abbreviated according to the lists of abbreviations in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1970) and the *American Journal of Archaeology* 82 (1978).

Introduction to the Text

T One RAGEDY AT ROME

I. SENECA'S PREDECESSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES

Among writers of tragedy Accius and Pacuvius are the most renowned of the ancients for the high seriousness of their thought, their weighty language, and their impressive characters. They lack brilliance and the final touches in the polishing of their plays—but that may be thought to have been a deficiency of their age, not of themselves. Accius however is conceded to have more power, while critics who lay claim to learning would have us believe this is where Pacuvius excels. Varius' *Thyestes* is comparable to any Greek tragedy. Ovid's *Medea* shows, in my view, what its author could have achieved if he had been ready to control his genius rather than to pander to it. Of my contemporaries far the best is Pomponius Secundus. Old men thought him not tragic enough, but they had to agree that he excelled in learning and brilliance.

Quintilian, *Institutio* 10. 1. 97-99, trans. Winterbottom.

Let Quintilian's brief sketch serve to illustrate how the Romans of the first century of the principate viewed their national record in tragedy. It is a rhetorician's appraisal, more concerned with style and argumentation than characterization or dramatic structure, but then Roman tragedy from the beginning was shaped as much by the study¹ as by the working theatre. The first tragedy to be written in Latin was an adaptation of a Greek script by the Tarentine prisoner of war Livius Andronicus,² whose regular profession was that of a *grammaticus*, and who also provided a Latin text of the *Odyssey* for school-room use. Quintilian omits from consideration both Livius and his near-contemporary Naevius,³ who wrote both tragedy and comedy.

¹ The plays may also have been experienced more often in the study than on stage by the educated Roman of Cicero's day, for on his evidence, the Roman tragedies were regular reading matter. See *Acad.* 2.10: quid enim causae est cur poetas Latinos Graecis litteris eruditi, legant, philosophos non legant? *Fin.* 1.4: . . . idem fabellas Latinas ad verbum e Graecis expressas non inviti legant; *de Opt. Gen.* (a suspected interpolation): sed tamen et Pacuvium et Accium potius quam Euripidem et Sophoclem legunt. For a brief critical history of Roman tragedy, see the chapter by Adrian Gratwick, in *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 128-37.

² Performed at the *Ludi Romani* of 240 B.C. The evidence for the chronology of Livius, Naevius, and Ennius is presented by Cicero, *Brut.* 72-74 on the authority of Varro. On Livius Andronicus, see Fraenkel, s.v. Livius, *PW Suppl.* 5:598-607. There is a brief account in Beare, *The Roman Stage*, London, 1964, pp. 25-32. The tragic fragments are easily available in Warmington, *Early Roman Poetry*, vol. 2, London, 1936, 1-21.

³ See Fraenkel, *PW Suppl.* 6: 622-42; Beare (cited at n. 2), pp. 33-44; Warmington (cited at n. 2), 2: 110-37.

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He also passes over Ennius, whom Cicero regarded as the greatest tragic writer of Rome:⁴ again in Ennius we have a poet, rather than a man of the theatre; he wrote not only the famous *Annales* incorporating myth and history in one epic, but also minor poetry in various sophisticated genres reflecting his erudition and Greek culture. However, his comedies were unsuccessful, and the greatness of his tragedies lay chiefly in the pathos of his monodies, which are extensively quoted by Cicero. Ennius shared with his predecessors an interest in themes based on the *Iliad* and post-Homeric tales of the Trojan cycle. Compare from Livius *Achilles*, *Ajax Mastigophoros*, *Equos Trojanus*, from Naevius, *Aesiona* (Priam's sister, Hesione), *Equos Trojanus*, and *Hector Proficiscens*. Among Ennius' tragedies are recorded an *Achilles*, *Ajax*, *Alexandros* (based on the first play of the Euripidean trilogy which ends with the *Troades*), *Andromacha Aechmalotis*, apparently set at Troy after the death and burial of Ashtyanax, a *Hectoris Lytra*, based on Priam's ransom of his son's body in *Il.* 24, and a *Hecuba* whose fragments show its adaptation from Euripides' play. Like the Augustan tragedians and Seneca he wrote a *Medea* (modeled closely on Euripides) and his last play was the *Thyestes* of 169 B.C.⁵

The first poet to limit himself to tragedy, and first to be mentioned by Horace, Quintilian, and Tacitus,⁶ is Ennius' nephew Pacuvius,⁷ famed for his often harsh innovations of diction; the constant epithet *doctus* applied to him by the critics (Cic. *Brut.* 155; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.55; and Quint. above) implies Alexandrian erudition and allusion. It is perhaps also Alexandrian that although he lived to the age of ninety he wrote only thirteen plays. From the Trojan cycle he adapted an *Armorum Iudicium* (obviously a theme rich in rhetorical appeal) and *Iliona*, another version of the sequel to the death of Polydorus told in Euripides' *Hecuba*. Like his predecessors, Pacuvius wrote *Praetextae*, dramas in tragic form based on episodes of Roman history. The interest of these lost plays lies in their lack of Greek models and their

⁴ On Ennius, see the introduction to *The Tragedies of Ennius*, ed. H. D. Jocelyn, but note that Jocelyn does not comment on the unassigned fragments. For Cicero's praise, and quotations of Ennian monody, see especially *Tusc.* 3.44-45 (from the *Andromacha*), *de Orat.* 3.21f., *Acad.* 2.88-89, and *Div.* 1.42 and 66-67. The best study of Cicero's knowledge of the tragedians is W. Zillinger, *Cicero und die Altrömische Dichter*, Erlangen, 1911; see also H. D. Jocelyn, "Greek Poetry in Cicero's Prose Writings," *Yale Classical Studies* 23 (1973).

⁵ On the date of the *Thyestes*, see Cic. *Brut.* 78.

⁶ In Tacitus' *Dialogus*, Pacuvius and Accius are mentioned only by the modernist Aper (20.5; 21.7), who treats them without distinction as hopelessly archaic.

⁷ On Pacuvius, see Beare (cited at n.2), pp. 79-84; Warmington (cited at n. 2), 2: 158-323; M. Valsa, *M. Pacuvius Poète Tragique*, Paris, 1957; and S. Mariotti, *Introduzione a Pacuvio*, Urbino, 1960. There is a new edition of the fragments by G. D'Anna, *M. Pacuvii Fragmenta*, Rome, 1967.

use of annalistic subject matter: for although the dramatists will surely have adapted appropriate scenes and motifs from Greek patriotic plays such as Euripides' *Heracleidae* or *Erechtheus*, they will ultimately have had to impose their own dramatic techniques in order to convert epic material for the stage—in some ways a precedent for the creative process by which Seneca was later to dramatize episodes from Virgil and Ovidian Epic.

Accius,⁸ the last of the professional playwrights, was also very much a man of letters, writing on orthography and style as well as the history of the Roman theatre. In the list of his surviving titles, there are many Trojan themes: *Achilles* (or *Myrmidones*), *Antenoridae*, *As-tyanax* (to be discussed below, in chapter 4, section 3), *Deiphobus*, *Epinausimache* (the Trojan attack on the Greek fleet known to us from *Il.* 15–16), *Hecuba* (probably the same as his *Troades*), *Neoptolemus*, and a *Nyktegresia* based on the exploits of Ulysses and Diomedes told in *Il.* 10. Reviewing the titles of all the dramatists, we note several—*Hector Proficiscens*, *Hectoris Lytra*, *Epinausimache*, and *Nyktegresia*—which may have been based not on Greek dramas but directly on the epic narrative of Homer. Accius' *Armorum Iudicium*, on the other hand, like that of Pacuvius, adapted Aeschylus' *Hoplōn Krisis*.

Accius reflects the tendency of Roman tragedy to rhetoric, and is most renowned for his powerfully emotive speeches. An anecdote from Quintilian⁹ suggests his real interests: asked why he did not become a court orator, since he showed such powers of disputation in the tragedies, he explained that in tragedy the argument followed his direction, but in court the adversary would advance arguments that he did not wish at all. His exclamatory style, rhetorical questions, *sententiae*, and heightened diction show that drama was above all a medium for his rhetorical skills: Accius had *vires* (*Cic. Brut.* 155) and elevation (*Hor. Epist.* 2.1.55). Nothing is known about his sense of the stage, but it is perhaps ominous that the gala revival of his *Clytemnēstra*¹⁰ in 55 B.C. paraded six hundred mules in Agamemnon's

⁸ See Beare (cited at n.2), pp. 119–27; Warmington (cited at n.2), 2: 324–577; and *Lucio Accio frammenti*, ed. A. R. Barrile, Bologna, 1969. Leo's discussion of Accius' life and writings in *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur*, Berlin, 1913, pp. 392–408, has not been superseded, and a detailed study of the tragic fragments is still needed.

⁹ 5.13.43: Aiunt Accium interrogatum cur causas non ageret cum apud eum in tragoe-diis tanta vis esset, hanc reddidisse rationem, quod illic ea dicerentur quae ipse vellet, in foro dicturi adversarii essent quae minime vellet.

¹⁰ Reported by *Cic. Fam.* 7.1. Accius' plays were greatly favored in Cicero's day, not least for their political allusions; compare the performance of *Eurysaces* and the *Praetexta Brutus* in support of the motion to recall Cicero in 57 B.C. (*Sest.* 119–22 and 123). His *As-tyanax*, (or possibly another Trojan play involving *As-tyanax*) was performed in 54 (see *Att.* 4.15), and his *Tereus* was Brutus' choice for the *Ludi Apollinares* of 44 B.C. (see *Att.* 16.2).

retinue. Nevertheless he was an experienced playwright, and we can sympathize with his refusal to rise from his seat in the College of Poets for the young aedile Caesar Strabo, "because he knew his superiority in their common literary pursuits."¹¹

Strabo was a symptom of the amateur's intrusion, which may have done more harm to tragedy than to any other literary genre at Rome. Cicero's generation is full of litterateurs; in the *Brutus*, after reporting the succession of serious dramatists from Livius to Accius, he is left with only dilettantes to mention, such as Strabo and the knight C. Titius, who shared Strabo's wit, but whose plays displayed wit at the expense of tragic feeling.¹² Quintus Cicero's four tragedies composed over sixteen days, possibly including a *Troades*,¹³ were the product of isolation in the off-season of Caesar's Gallic campaigns, Caesar's own *Oedipus* being a youthful experiment, rightly suppressed by his heir.¹⁴ Augustus too, for all his love of drama, recognized the weakness of his *Ajax* and let it die unpublished.¹⁵ There was a great flowering of interest in poetry, as Horace protested in his letter to Augustus: besides the tragic ambitions of the younger Pisones, there were more persistent authors, such as Asinius Pollio,¹⁶ whose tragedies are praised by Horace and Virgil as worthy of Sophocles. They did not survive him. Servius reports that he wrote tragedies in both languages, and Tacitus' *Dialogus* criticizes his tragedy and oratory alike as archaizing; the evidence suggests imitative composition without any original contribution.

One play in this generation achieved enormous success: the *Thyestes* of Varius Rufus was commissioned by Octavian for the games of 29 B.C. to celebrate his triple triumph and rewarded with a gift of a million sesterces.¹⁷ For Quintilian, Varius is the only Roman dram-

¹¹ Val. Max. 3.7.1: quod in comparatione communium studiorum aliquanto se superiorem esse confideret. On Strabo, compare Cic. *Brut.* 177: sunt aliquot orationes, ex quibus, sicut ex eiusdem tragoediis lenitas sine nervis perspicui potest.

¹² *Brut.* 167: easdem argutias in tragoediis satis ille quidem acute, sed parum tragice transtulit.

¹³ Cf. Cic. *QF* 3.5(6)7: quattuor tragoedias sedecim diebus absolvisse cum scribas, tu quicquam ab alio mutuaris? et ΕΛΕΟΣ quaeris, cum Electram et † Trodam † (Troades? Troada?) scripseris?

¹⁴ Suet. *D.J.* 56.7

¹⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 86; cf. Macr. *Sat.* 2.4.2.

¹⁶ The evidence of Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.111: scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim; the tragic ambitions of the Pisones seem to be implied by *Ars Poetica* 24f., 366-90. On Pollio see Vir. *Ecl.* 8.9, with Servius ad loc., Hor. *Odes* 2.1.9-12, Tac. *Dial.* 21.7: Pacuvium certe et Accium non solum tragoediis set etiam orationibus suis expressit; adeo durus et siccus est.

¹⁷ See now Eckard Lefèvre, *Der Thyestes des Lucius Varius Rufus: Zehn Überlegungen zu seiner Rekonstruktion*, Akad. der Wissenschaften u. der Literatur, Mainz, 1976, n9, reviewed by R. J. Tarrant, *CQ* 29 (1979): 149-50, and R. J. Tarrant, "Senecan Drama

atist of classic stature, fit to be measured against any Greek; according to Tacitus' speaker, he is more famous than any contemporary orator. But for all his fame only four certain lines survive, less than is preserved of Maecenas' private verses.

Ovid's *Medea* is coupled with Varius' tragedy by both Quintilian and Tacitus, and the assessment of Quintilian suggests that this tragedy may have been more disciplined than many of his other works, but again quotations survive only in Quintilian and Ovid's contemporary Seneca the Elder. There is no evidence that it received a public performance; indeed, a later comment by Ovid seems to deny it.¹⁸ But then without the incidental quotation of the *didascalia* for Varius' play, there would now be no evidence even for that showpiece production. Obviously, once recitation became a public occasion, plays would be more easily introduced to literary circles in recitation, and subsequently perpetuated by publication for readers. Yet despite the growing predominance of mime and spectacle, tragedies continued to receive public performance.

Little can be inferred about the tragedy written by Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, which angered Tiberius because it contained abuse of Agamemnon,¹⁹ but the sources imply that it circulated only privately and had not received any public showing. A closer parallel to Seneca as a public figure and a dramatist is the distinguished ex-consul and *triumphator* Pomponius Secundus, stepbrother of Caligula's wife Caesonia, who survived to enjoy the favor of Claudius. Tacitus reports that Claudius intervened on his behalf when he was abused by the theatre crowd, and Pliny (*Ep.* 7.17) tells a charming anecdote of Pomponius' reaction when his tragedies were criticized by his friends: he used to declare that he would "appeal to the people," and follow his own or his friend's choice on the basis of the applause or silence of the crowd. This presupposes three stages in shaping his tragedies: first recitation, then public performance, and finally publication in a form modified for readers. Cichorius has shown us how to interpret the brief notice in Quintilian on the dispute between Pomponius and

and Its Antecedents," *HSCP* 82 (1978): 258-61, on the common characteristics that can be predicated of Varius' and Ovid's plays.

¹⁸ On the dating of the *Medea* see H. Fränkel, *Ovid, a Poet between Two Worlds*, Berkeley, 1945, chap. 5 with notes, pp. 193-94. In default of evidence, Fränkel suggests a date for the tragedy of about 8 B.C. It is quoted at Quint. 8.5.6; Seneca Rhetor, *Suas.* 3.7; Ovid's denial, *Tr.* 5.7.27: *nil equidem feci, ut tu scis ipse, theatris*.

¹⁹ Dio 58.24; Tac. *Ann.* 6.29; Suet. *Tib.* 61. Suetonius does not name Scaurus, or the play, but quotes Tiberius as penalizing a dramatist for criticizing Agamemnon in a tragedy; Agamemnon would be out of place in an *Atrous* as named in the other sources. It was Macro who informed Tiberius about the content of the play, quoting the verses that could be interpreted unfavorably.

Seneca in their *Praefationes* about the legitimacy of archaism.²⁰ Quintilian's memory would go back to about A.D. 50, but in view of Seneca's exile until 49 and Pomponius' absence as governor of the Germanies in 50 and 51, the dispute must belong in or after A.D. 51. The discussion was oral, for the *Praefationes* were the preliminary remarks of the recitalist before presenting his new work; as Cichorius suggests, Seneca, who deprecated archaism must have been the critic, and it will have been Pomponius, the older writer, who defended the use of *eliminare* (a favorite word of Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius, which was thereafter attested only in satire). Pomponius, like Seneca, wrote a play on the theme of Atreus and Thyestes, and among his fragments there is a piece of choral lyric dealing with the fall of Troy, and spoken by a Trojan chorus.²¹ But Quintilian's praise for Pomponius in 10.1.98 recalls Caesar Strabo: "old men thought him not tragic enough . . . he excelled in learning and brilliance."

Why then did Quintilian, who gives extensive personal attention to Seneca in his survey of prose writing, omit his plays from the survey of tragedy? He certainly knew them, for in 9.2.8 he quotes *Med.* 354 as *Medea apud Senecam* using the same formula of citation as his next excerpt, *Sinon apud Virgilium*: so the tragedies would be familiar to his readers also. Possibly he did not think of the *Medea* as tragedy proper? More likely the omission of Seneca sprang from his immense distaste and unwillingness to give further notice to his literary bête noire.

One problem in evaluating the medium of these dramatic works is the ambiguity of the word *carmina*. Pomponius' Tragedies were *carmina* for Tacitus; Seneca too, according to Tacitus, *Annals*, wrote *carmina*,²² and wrote them more frequently after Nero developed an interest in composition. But what were Nero's *carmina*? Besides the inevitable dithyrambic prize-songs with which he toured Greece, Suetonius reports²³ that he sang (that is performed) *tragoediae* of heroes and gods, wearing the mask, and with the masks adapted to

²⁰ C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien*, Leipzig, 1922, pp. 426-29: Quint. 8.3.31: nam meminisse iuvenis admodum inter Pomponium et Senecam etiam praefationibus esse tractatum, an "gradus eliminat" in tragoedia dici oportuisset.

²¹ Pomponius' play was called *Atreus*, like that of Accius; the choral fragment implying Trojan speakers is *obruere nos Danaosque simul* (fr. 7, p. 231 [R]).

²² *Carmina* of Pomponius, *Ann.* 11.13; of Seneca, *Ann.* 14.52: obiciebant etiam . . . carmina crebrius facitare, postquam Neroni amor eorum venisset.

²³ Suet. *Ner.* 21: Tragoedias quoque cantavit personatus heroum deorumque, item heroidum et dearum, personis effectis ad similitudinem oris sui et feminae, prout quamque diligeret. Inter cetera cantavit Canacen Parturientem . . . etc. On Nero's tragic performances see Juvenal *Sat.* 8.223; Dio 62.26 and 63.22; and H. Wagenvoort, "Pantomimus und Tragödie," *NJbb* 45 (1920): 111-14.

Nero's features or those of his current mistress. Suetonius quotes these works by a double title, of protagonist and action: *Canace Parturiens*, *Orestes Matricida*, *Oedipus Excaecatus*, *Hercules Insanus*. But unless these were full dramas named after their most striking episode, they were most probably one-man shows, presenting a *scena ed aria* of Nero's own composition, and combining techniques of tragedy and pantomime. Suetonius calls both Nero's and Scaurus' works *tragoediae*; Tacitus refers to both as *carmina*. This might be a stylistic avoidance of the Greek form, but the contexts are too vague for us to determine the reference of Nero's *carmina*, and in the *Dialogus* Tacitus' speakers freely mention *tragoediae* (2, 3, 4).

The plays so described are the recitation dramas of the moralist Curiatius Maternus. The *Dialogus* is set in the time of Vespasian, and Maternus has newly given a recitation of his *Cato*: there is anxiety in case he has offended authority by too passionate an identification with his hero; he is described²⁴ as revising this work for publication and at the same time preparing a *Thyestes* for recitation. The Roman and Greek plots alike are seen as vehicles for his political ideals. Obviously he is an independent composer on the Roman theme (where there is no question of a Greek model), but both works are treated as the same kind of creation; his word *disposui* is the equivalent of Greek *diatithenai* and implies the organization of his own structure of acts and scenes for each play. Both will be presented first in recitation and then in book form.

Was Seneca more like Pomponius or Maternus? I see Seneca's *carmina* or *tragoediae* more in terms of Maternus' procedure and purpose, but any attempt to pronounce whether his tragedies were intended as stage plays or recitation drama must consider not only dramatic history, as we have done, but the form of the compositions themselves. First, however, it will be convenient to outline the course of Seneca's crowded life and the limited evidence from the plays themselves and from historical sources that can be used to suggest a dating for Seneca's activity as a dramatic poet. This in turn will lead us to examine his motives for turning to drama and the literary aims and values reflected in his prose writings.

II. THE DATING OF SENECA'S TRAGEDIES

Seneca himself never mentions his tragedies in his prose writings, and Tacitus, our main source for the public events of Seneca's life,

²⁴ *Dial.* 3: Si qua omisit Cato, sequenti recitatione Thyestes dicit; hanc enim tragœdiam *disposui* et intra me formavi.

offers only one ambiguous reference to the composition of *carmina*.²⁵ Thus if we wish to assign a date or range of years to the composition of *Troades* or any other of the tragedies, we are reduced to various indirect approaches. The last thorough analysis of the different types of evidence available was that of Otto Herzog²⁶ fifty years ago. Since then scholars have if anything become more reluctant to draw conclusions from what are essentially ambivalent data, and the most recent scholarly edition of a Senecan tragedy is willing to accept only a *terminus ante quem* of 54 for the *Hercules Furens*, and the early sixties for the other tragedies.²⁷ While sympathetic to the idea that the tragedies are "youthful" works, Tarrant rejects many of the inferences about specific plays reported below, and ends by endorsing the *non liquet* of Coffey's *Lustrum* report twenty years back: "In general the tragedies may have belonged to any stage of Seneca's literary career."

Seneca was born in or around 1 B.C., the third son of the wealthy and cultured Cordovan L. Annaeus Seneca, himself the author of a lost history of Rome and surviving memoirs of his youth in the rhetorical schools.²⁸ By the early years of Tiberius' principate, Seneca was a student at Rome, devoted to the philosophical school of Q. Sextius, an ascetic who combined Stoic and Pythagorean doctrine. But he was delicate, almost certainly consumptive, and after a period of ill health and convalescence in Egypt under the care of his maternal aunt, wife of the Prefect Galerius, he returned to Rome about A.D. 31 and was soon elected quaestor. His early political and rhetorical career proceeded smoothly until the accession of Gaius in 37, but his brilliance as a speaker provoked the resentment of the emperor, who according to anecdote (Cassius Dio 59.19. 7-8) would have executed him if Seneca's health had not seemed so precarious that he was not expected to live. When Claudius became emperor Seneca was seen as a dangerous figure by the emperor's first wife Messalina and exiled to Corsica, on the grounds of adultery with Gaius' sister Julia Livilla. He remained there for eight years until Messalina's downfall and Claudius' remarriage to Agrippina, who now secured his recall, and the continuation of his political career, designating him as praetor for A.D. 50. She was responsible for his

²⁵ *Ann.* 14.25, quoted and discussed below.

²⁶ "Datierung der Tragödien des Seneca," *Rh. Mus.* 77 (1928): 51-104.

²⁷ *Seneca Agamemnon*, ed. R. J. Tarrant: Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 18, Cambridge, 1976. Coffey's verdict is quoted for his first survey of scholarship, "Seneca, *Tragedies*," *Lustrum* 2 (1957): 150.

²⁸ For a more detailed account of his life see M. Griffin, "Imago Vitae Suae" in *Seneca*, ed. C. D. Costa, London, 1974, pp. 1-38, or A. L. Motto, *Seneca*, Twayne World Authors Series, New York, 1973.

appointment as tutor to her son Domitius Ahenobarbus, adopted by Claudius in 50 as Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus,²⁹ and marked out by his seniority to Claudius' child Britannicus, as the emperor's heir. Seneca was now about fifty years old, and from this time identified with the interests of Agrippina, and Nero so long as they coincided. On Claudius' death in 54 it was Seneca who composed both Nero's *laudatio* of the dead emperor (his least successful work³⁰) and the brilliantly funny satire on the official ritual of deification, the *Apocolocyntosis*, or "Pumpkinification" of Claudius.

With the succession of Nero, first Seneca's brother Gallio, then Seneca himself, became *suffect consuls*. Seneca held this honor in 56, but it represented a less significant claim on his time and loyalty than his continuing role as political counselor of the emperor, a responsibility he shared with the Praetorian Prefect Afranius Burrus. At the time of Burrus' death in 62 Seneca recognized that he could not control (or survive) Nero's increasing irresponsibility, and the immorality and folly of his personal life. He went to the emperor, begging to be allowed to retire and surrender his wealth for the emperor's use. Although Nero only partly acceded to this request, Seneca withdrew from court to compose his philosophical and scientific works, the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*. Even so, he was implicated in the Pisonian conspiracy of 65 and forced to commit suicide.³¹

When would such a man have time for tragedy? It was usual for Romans of the political classes to divert themselves with poetry in their youth before passing on to moral, political, or historical writings. We might compare Caesar's *Oedipus*, grouped by Suetonius (*D.J.* 56) among the works written *a puero* or *ab adulescentulo*, or the unidentified Greek tragedy written by Pliny at the age of fourteen. Again Romans tended to absorb themselves in composition away from the city, at their villas, in slack periods of provincial or military duty, or in exile. Thus Senecan scholars normally assign his plays to the empty years of exile, when as he reports, his mind either diverted

²⁹ Recall of Seneca, Tac. *Ann.* 12.8. The adoption, 12.25-6; Seneca was seen as a popular figure, and a valuable ally. 12.8 is worth quoting at length: Agrippina . . . veniam exilii pro Annaeo Seneca, simul praeturam impetrat, laetum in publicum rata ob claritudinem studiorum eius, utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur, quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur.

³⁰ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.3: nemo risui temperare, quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret, ut fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum.

³¹ Retirement requested, Tac. *Ann.* 14.52; discreetly taken, 14.56; his implication with Piso and suicide, 15.60-65.

itself with *levioribus studiis* or with the more lofty enquiry into the nature of man and the universe.³²

On the other hand, Cichorius's discussion of the debate between Seneca and Pomponius over the diction of tragedy led to the conclusion that Seneca was writing tragedies *after* his return from exile, and Pomponius' last provincial command, in A.D. 51 or 52.³³ This is firmer evidence than the accusation made against him by unnamed opponents in 62 that he had intensified his output of poetic works since Nero had developed an enthusiasm for them (Tac. *Ann.* 14.52): *carmina crebrius factitare postquam Neroni amor eorum venisset*. The accusation may be random, the genre of poetry is unspecified, and *amor eorum* could equally denote love of composing his own *carmina*, or of reading Seneca's work. Herzog links this with Tacitus' allusion in *Ann.* 14.16 to Nero's new practice in 59 of composing *carmina* (surely lyric, if the word *pangere* is precise) with a group of dilettanti.³⁴ But the *carmina* of 14.52 could well be Seneca's epigrams, and the notice hardly justifies Herzog's inference that Seneca was writing substantial poetry, and therefore some tragedies, between 59 and 62.

Internal evidence is scanty. We might consider dating on grounds of verse technique. For instance, the choral lyrics of *Thyestes*, *Hercules Furens*, and *Troades* are simpler than those of the other plays, being based on Horatian meters.³⁵ But *Troades* is more innovative than the other plays, since it introduces an anapaestic monody at 705f; in this it resembles *Medea*, which has conventional choral songs, but a complex monodic sequence in the third act (740–842). Herzog also singles out *Thyestes*, *Hercules Furens*, and *Medea* as early because the chorus seems to perform without participation in the soloists' actions, whereas he sees the Trojan women as more closely involved, through their *kommos* with Hecuba; it is true too that their third and fourth songs are in character and related to the progress of the drama. But this merely reflects the Euripidean presentation of the fall of Troy and

³² *Helv.* 20: *animus omnis occupationis expers operibus suis vacat et modo se levioribus studiis oblectat, modo ad considerandum suam universique naturam veri avidus insurgit.*

³³ See above, n. 20.

³⁴ *Ne tamen ludicrae tantum imperatoris artes notescerent, carminum quoque studium adfectavit, contractis quibus aliqua pangendi facultas necdum insignis erat.* The collective versification described by Tacitus does not seem a suitable procedure for the composition of dramatic dialogue.

³⁵ Herzog (cited in n.26), p. 66: but he is surely mistaken to argue that in *Troades* as in *Phaedra* and *Oedipus* "the chorus is always deemed to be present." See further the discussion in chapter 3 below.

need not imply evolution in Seneca himself. Nor does the verse technique of the dialogue offer any leads toward a relative chronology.³⁶

Affinities of treatment are ambivalent as evidence. I have noted in the commentary strong resemblances of motif and phrasing between *Hercules Furens* and *Troades*; these lend support to the common assumption based on the order of plays in the Etruscus, that *Troades* was written next after *Hercules Furens*. But I have also argued elsewhere³⁷ that the affinities between *Troades* and *Agamemnon* are partly careless echoes in *Agamemnon* of material from *Troades*, which establish the priority of the Trojan play, and partly conscious reuse in the mythological sequel of moral and architectural themes featured in the earlier play. When a poet's idiosyncrasies are so prominent in all his works, attempts to assign an order amongst them may go astray by making cross-references out of coincidence.

Herzog's suggestions for a chronology based on topical allusion tend to conform with his previous inferences, but he himself recognizes that they are speculative.³⁸ For *Troades* he suggests a dating after 49, on the ground that allusion to the *lusus Troiae* in 77-79 would be inspired by Nero's participation in the ritual in A.D. 47,³⁹ but would only date from 49, when Seneca was first concerned with young Nero. A particularly opportune time would be 53, when Nero, aged seventeen, made his first court appearance, acting on behalf of the town of Ilium.⁴⁰ But this is to be too precise. There was a long tradition of interest by the Julio-Claudians in Ilium; Tiberius had founded the *sacrum gentis Iuliae* at Bovillae in which the *tabula Iliaca Capitolina* was found; Germanicus had been sent to visit the site early

³⁶ L. Strzelecki, *De Senecae trimetro iambico quaestiones selectae*, Kraków, 1938, p. 4, notes that *Troades* is more sparing in the use of *antilabai* (changes of speaker within the line) than *Thyestes* or *Medea*, and closer to *Phaedra* in practice, but the incidence of first-foot proceleusmatics and tribrachs is higher than in any other play (*ibid.*, pp. 78, 92) so that the statistics would be in conflict if used as an index of relative dating.

³⁷ "Seneca's *Troades* and *Agamemnon*: Continuity and Sequence," *CJ* 77 (1982): 118-129.

³⁸ Herzog (cited in n. 26) p. 83. See also the recent cautious attempt of P. Grimal, *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'Empire*, Paris, 1977, pp. 424-28.

³⁹ At the secular games; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 11.11: *Sedente Claudio circensibus ludis cum pueri nobiles equis ludicrum Troiae inirent interque eos Britannicus imperatore genitus et L. Domitius adoptione mox in imperium et cognomentum Neronis adscitus, favor plebis acrior in Domitium loco praesagii acceptus est.* If anything, Seneca's allusion to the *lusus Troiae* would be more valuable before Nero's adoption was ensured than after, when it might merely recall that he had shared the honor with the displaced Britannicus.

⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 12.58: *causa Iliensium suscepta Romanum Troia demissum et Iuliae stirpis auctorem Aeneam aliaque haud procul fabulis vetera facunde executus perpetrat, ut Ilienses omni publico munere solverentur.*

in Tiberius's principate (Tac. *Ann.* 2.54) and Nero's interest in Troy persisted into his principate. The *lusus Troiae* certainly suggests a *terminus ante quem* (though surely of 47, not 49) but we can say little more.

The question of cross-references with Seneca's philosophical works must be left aside as unprofitable, since the dating of the dialogues is itself tentative; the firmest cross-reference I have noted is between the allusions to periodic conflagration of the Universe at *Tro.* 38f. and the same theory advocated in *Marc.* 26.6, but deprecated in *Polyb.* 1.2-4. But there are equally close verbal echoes of this chorus in the *Epistulae Morales* which we know to have been written after A.D. 62,⁴¹ while other affinities could be adduced with the undatable *de Brevitate Vitae*.

The most reliable criteria are technical aspects of diction or versification, offering a consistent pattern of formal change from play to play. Recently Professor John Fitch has taken as an index the increasing proportion between sense-pauses in the dialogue of each play, a statistic he shows to give valid results when applied to the Sophoclean corpus and Shakespearian tragedy.⁴² The percentages indicate three groups of plays: *Agamemnon*, *Phaedra*, and *Oedipus*, with between 32.4 percent and 36.8 percent of pauses within the line; *Medea*, *Troades*, and *Hercules Furens* with between 47.2 percent and 49.0 percent of internal pauses; and finally *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* with 54.5 percent and 57.2 percent, respectively. Given the accepted dating of *Hercules Furens* prior to the parody of its dirge in the *Apocolocyntosis* in 54 B.C. the chronological implications would exclude, for example, allusions to events of Nero's principate seen by several scholars in *Oedipus*, or my own hypothesis that the affinities between *Troades* and *Agamemnon* arise from Seneca's imitation of elements in *Troades* in the other play. Yet it is also supported by Fitch's statistics for Seneca's growing license in shortening the final -o, in which *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* clearly go well beyond the other plays. We might also note that this dating puts Seneca's boldest metrical experiments at the beginning of his career, and thus implies paradoxically that he is showing increasing confidence in his handling of the trimeter at the same time that he is becoming more cautious and restricted in his use of lyric meters.

⁴¹ See below, chapter 5.

⁴² "Sense-Pauses and Relative Dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare," *AJP* 102 (1981): 289-307.

STwo ENECA'S MOTIVES AND METHODS IN COMPOSING THE TRAGEDIES

I. THE CASE FOR PHILOSOPHICAL DRAMA

Judged by traditional criteria, the writing of tragedies and of moral treatises seem far apart, and to the Romans of Cicero's time also they must have seemed different pursuits, of a different order of seriousness; the wise and mature thinker who would compose philosophical treatises would surely have no use for tragedy. Thus up to the time of Erasmus, who edited both Seneca's tragedies and his prose corpus, it was assumed that the author of the tragedies was not the philosopher but a brother or son.¹ Scholars since the nineteenth century, who have accepted the identity of moralist and tragedian, have instead asked why the philosopher should have spent his time on writing tragedy; many, as we saw above,² have inferred that Seneca wrote his tragedies while still relatively young, perhaps specifically during the period of exile when he was prevented from the active life of public service that Romans saw as the role of a responsible member of the governing class. By his own admission,³ Seneca even during his exile made the distinction between moral writing and *leviora studia*: are the tragedies these *leviora studia*, or should the student look for an ulterior moral motivation behind the literary form, a lesson concealed as entertainment that would explain the philosopher stooping to imaginative fiction? There is surely no reason why a creative writer should act from only one motive, and a literary form that serves an ideology need not be denied aesthetic purpose. Thus it seems to me that the right formulation of the question is not "Was Seneca's motive in composing tragedies literary or philosophical?" but rather "To what extent was Seneca led to write tragedy by nonliterary motives?" or "Can we determine whether his purpose was primarily moral or aesthetic?"

¹ On Erasmus' concern with Seneca see W. Trillitzsch, "Erasmus und Seneca," *Philol.* 109 (1965): 270-93, and "Seneca Tragicus, Nachleben und Beurteilung im Lateinischen Mittelalter," *Philol.* 122 (1978): 133. Erasmus himself saw the moral prose writings as the work of the rhetorician Seneca the Elder, and distinguished the tragedian from the moralist; cf. *Ep.* 2091, 530f. (Allen): nam tragoediarum opus eruditi quidam malunt Senecae filio tribuere quam huic; sunt qui fratri Senecae adscribant.

² Introduction, chap. 1, sec. 2, above; Herzog, *Rh. Mus.* 77 (1928): 51-62, arguing against Birt, *NJbb* 27 (1911): 352ff.

³ *Helv.* 20.

The case for an ethical purpose was most powerfully expressed in the last generation by Berthe Marti in an influential paper "Seneca's Tragedies: A New Interpretation."⁴ But her thesis that Seneca composed the tragedies to provide a systematic moral program is contingent on assumptions that few scholars can now accept. She argued that the order in which the tragedies were preserved in the Codex Etruscus, *Hercules Furens*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*, and *Hercules Oetaeus*, was that intended by Seneca, whether or not he composed the plays in that order, to convey a systematic demonstration of Stoic moral teaching. Thus the corpus opens with the ordeal of Hercules, the great Stoic exemplum, as he learned to endure life burdened with his unwitting murder of his family, and ends in his triumphant apotheosis in the *Hercules Oetaeus*. She divided the other tragedies into three progressive groups; *Troades* and *Phoenissae* were designed to illustrate the implications of defeat, showing death as liberation for the passive victims of war; *Medea* and *Phaedra* demonstrated the evil consequences when passion (*furor*) defeated reason (*ratio*) within the soul, consequences that were evil for the offender, for his victims, and for the whole world surrounding him. In the next three plays, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, and *Thyestes*, she saw dramatizations of the hazards of kingly power, and retribution for its misuse; finally, she argued, all that seemed unexplained or unjust in the outcome of these tragic actions would be resolved in the reward of apotheosis earned by Hercules when he had attained the wisdom of the Stoic sage.

Even after scholars had raised objections to her interpretation, Marti persevered in attempts to vindicate the authenticity and crowning function of the *Oetaeus*.⁵ But the formulation of her moral theory leaves too many difficulties: thus the order of the plays given in the Etruscus cannot be shown to have superior status over that of the A family,⁶ and since the investigations of Axelson⁷ few students now adhere to Senecan authorship of the *Oetaeus*. Again too little of *Phoenissae* survives for us to infer its projected contents, while the fact that it is incomplete jars with Marti's claim that it was deliberately ordered in the collected plays as part of an integrated moral

⁴ TAPA 76 (1945): 216-45. See also Grimal, *Sénèque ou la Conscience de l'Empire* (Paris, 1977), pp. 424-31.

⁵ "La Place de l'Hercule sur L'Oeta dans le corpus des Tragédies de Sénèque," REL (1949): 189-210. For a criticism of Marti's thesis see N. T. Pratt, "The Stoic Basis of Senecan Drama" TAPA 79 (1948): 1-11.

⁶ H.F., Thy., Pho. (called *Thebais*), Phae. (called *Hippolytus*), Oed., Tro. (called *Troas*), Med., Ag., Oct., and H.O. See chap. 8 below.

⁷ In *Korruptelenkult: Studien zur Textkritik der Unechten Seneca-Tragoedie "Hercules Oetaeus"* (Lund, 1967).

demonstration; its unfinished state belies considered publication by the author. There is no cogent reason why the tragedies of defeat should precede those dealing with the passion of the individual. Indeed, judged as vehicles for the instruction of the Stoic *proficiens*, the plays, especially those based on female lust and jealousy, seem inappropriate. We would have expected drama more like Corneille's *Polyeucte*, to glorify principled resistance to the tyrant or the mob by the sage whom wisdom has released from fear of death, the *iustus et tenax propositi* of Horace *Odes*. 3.3.1f. There is no doubt that the plays conform with Stoic understanding of psychology; Herington has illustrated from the *Medea* the close adherence to the description of anger in the *de Ira*, and E. C. Evans earlier demonstrated, chiefly from this play, the use of Stoic treatises of physiognomy to describe the effect of passion upon the facial features.⁸ Both *Medea* and *Thyestes* portray the growth and ruinous triumph of personal evil within and beyond the individual soul; again several plays feature an argument between the protagonist and a subordinate, who urges the case for restraint⁹ and warns of evil to follow: we may note such scenes in the second act of *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Thyestes*, and *Agamemnon*; but the warning given to Oedipus, like that given by Agamemnon in the second act of *Troades*, does not ultimately affect the predetermined outcome of the tragedy.

Marti has stressed the concern with death that dominates *Troades*, which she sees as intended to dispel false fears and teach men to welcome death as liberation. Certainly for the reader in sympathy with Stoic values it can be exhilarating to contemplate the heroic deaths of the child and the maiden, who make a virtue of necessity and, by the manner of their death, give moral value to a martyrdom they cannot choose or reject. It is also true that the famous denial of the life after death in the second choral interlude harmonizes with views frequently asserted by Seneca in the moral writings.¹⁰ But in this play and others there are mythological elements incompatible with Stoic teaching—the only too real ghost of Achilles, or the underworld traversed by Hercules and Theseus in the *Hercules Furens*.

⁸ See Herington, "Senecan Tragedy," *Arion* 5 (1966): 455; E. C. Evans, "A Stoic Aspect of Senecan Drama, Portraiture," *TAPA* 81 (1950): 169-84.

⁹ See Herington, *ibid.*, p. 453f. *Troades* differs from the other plays because it is the subordinate who urges on the evil course of action that will duly triumph, while the superior, Agamemnon, resists it.

¹⁰ Marti, *TAPA* 76 (1945): 225-27. See also introduction, chap. 5, below. J. Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung* (Heidelberg, 1974), treats the tragedies as late works, written to express the pessimistic obverse of Seneca's philosophical teachings. In his study of *Troades*, pp. 92-94, he perversely argues that the events of the play are intended to override and invalidate the enlightened view of the second chorus.

It is to be expected that Senecan choruses will advocate moderation and advise withdrawal from dangerous power and corrupting luxury: even the non-Stoic choruses of fifth-century Athens had traditionally counseled restraint, and mistrust of luxury typifies all genres of Roman poetry from Lucretian didactic to Horace's *Odes* and the *Satires* of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. There are, however, passages in the Senecan tragedies that show the powerful instinct of one who writes imaginative literature to create character and let it respond to situations. Seneca shows his literary independence of moral stereotypes as much by the weakness of his "good" characters as by the dynamism of his passionate offenders. Moralizing roles like Agamemnon in *Troades* may be shown as weak or petty, yielding to the temptation to score a rhetorical point; Agamemnon descends to cheap abuse of Pyrrhus' birth; Andromache resorts to physical violence and abuse against Ulysses (668f., 750f.) and the noble Polyxena dies with a gesture of violent hatred towards her infernal suitor (1157-59).

The good Stoic does not hate—nor does he hope or fear—but good drama depends on hope and fear; it is only Andromache's futile hope that gives vitality to the long central act of *Troades*. Seneca writes to stir pity, fear, revulsion, and indignation; two of these emotions were the recognized response of classical tragedy, but revulsion and indignation are perhaps peculiarly his own.¹¹ It is true that he also stirs admiration for the morally good, but alongside the respect which the audience feels for the suffering Hercules is an even stronger, amoral, fascination with the uninhibited evil of Medea or Atreus. Just as Lucan's Caesar is the most powerful character in the *Bellum Civile*, so Seneca's wrongdoers carry his dramas by their own momentum. It is their emotional impact that made Senecan tragedy, despite its unremitting high tension and its melodrama, so popular in the Renaissance and so influential upon the history of the European stage. Our own generation since 1945, when Marti wrote her paper, has responded to Senecan tragedy for the same reason. It is not just the lack of a conciliatory ending which differentiates Senecan tragedy from the Christian dramas of the French seventeenth century, Corneille's *Polyeucte* or Racine's *Esther* and *Athalie*; the plays impress through their evocation of characters beyond restraint, and through their power to seize the attention and emotions of their public.¹²

¹¹ All these reactions can be illustrated from Seneca's report of the spectators at the sacrifice of Polyxena: cf. *Tro.* 1129, *odit scelus spectatque* (revulsion); 1134-36, revealing their indignation through quotation of their words; and 1147-48, *tremunt mirantur et miserantur* (fear, admiration, and pity).

¹² Cf. Herzog, *Rh. Mus.* 78 (1928): 62, who draws the analogy with Pomponius. Like Pomponius, Seneca wrote from a genuine literary impulse, because he wanted to create

What I have tried to convey is ultimately a literary effect, and the result of a peculiar kind of imaginative talent. The furious vitality of Seneca's characters shows, I believe, that he felt the same urge to create these roles and set them in action as a novelist who is moved to compose a fiction or interpret a historical episode. It is easier to speak generally of a literary motivation than to determine why Seneca chose to present his creation in dramatic form. The Romans traditionally thought in terms of genre, relating specific genres to certain types of material, but in the post-Augustan generation, genre itself was in the melting pot; orators sought poetic coloring for their prose, while at least one poet—Seneca's nephew Lucan—was seen as a better model for orators than for poets.¹³

The problem requires us to consider the influence on Senecan tragedy of three literary forms: of tragedy itself, consisting of the Greek and Roman predecessors who dramatized the content of his plays; of rhetoric, the medium of his education, which can be studied from the reminiscences of his father, and indirectly in Seneca's own prose-writings; and finally of narrative poetry, above all the epics of Virgil and Ovid, which dominated education and literary taste in Seneca's lifetime and must have colored the conception of poetry held by all his generation. Before considering the internal evidence for these influences in the plays themselves, it will be useful to examine the prose works for traces of his interest in the different poetic genres in both Greek and Latin, and his expressed tastes and judgments about poetry.

II. SENECA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD POETRY AND POESIS

The most recent studies¹⁴ of Seneca's attitude to and knowledge of the poets have demonstrated the surprising narrowness of Seneca's

characters in action. Thus even Eckard Lefèvre, a strong advocate of Seneca's philosophical motivation for writing the tragedies, acknowledges (in "Schicksal und Selbstverschuldung in Senecas *Agamemnon*," *Hermes* 94 [1966], reprinted in *Senecas Tragödien, Wege der Forschung* 310 [Darmstadt, 1972], pp. 457-76) that the "real moral theme" is not only overlaid but often contradicted by elements of popular philosophizing and traditional poetic material. He stresses the priority of the *interpretatio Stoica* more insistently in his later paper on the same topic, "Die Schuld des Agamemnon," *Hermes* 100 (1972): 64-91, esp. 65.

¹³ Cf. Tac. *Dial.* 20.5: *exigitur enim iam ab oratore etiam poeticus decor, non Accii aut Pacuvii veterino inquinatus sed ex Horatii et Virgilii et Lucani sacrario prolatus; Quint. 10.1.90: Lucanus ardens et concitatus et . . . magis oratoribus quam poetis imitandus.*

¹⁴ W. S. Maguinness, "Seneca and the Poets," *Hermathena* 88 (1956) 7: 81-98; Giancarlo Mazzoli, *Seneca e la Poesia* (Milan, 1970); and J. Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung*, pp. 48-58.

allusions to poetry in his prose works. There are no quotations in Greek outside the *Apocolocyntosis*, but it was probably a point of stylistic etiquette to avoid this, since, for example, he even composes his own verse translation of an excerpt from Cleanthes' hymn to Zeus (in the same trimeters we know from his tragedies) so that the flow of elegant Latin shall not be disturbed. Although Lucilius, the addressee of his letters, undoubtedly read Greek with ease, Seneca's Greek philosophical forbears are not quoted but paraphrased.

Of special interest for us is his knowledge of Homer and the Greek tragedians. If we based our assumptions of his reading on the quotations in the *Epistulae Morales* we would find only one classic allusion to Homer's comment on the mourning of Niobe (*Il.* 24.602) and an erudite reference to Homer's knowledge of the potter's wheel—there are no allusions to the *Odyssey* in all the letters. Even so, like every educated Roman Seneca must have learned to read from Homer—see *N.Q.* 6.23: *quisquis primas litteras Graecas didicit, scit illum apud Homerum ἐνοσίχθονα vocari*.¹⁵ We need not infer from scholarly arguments reproduced in *Ben.* 1.3 about the names of the Graces in Homer and Hesiod, or the derivation of an Ennian line from *Il.* 5.749 in *Ep.* 108.34, that Seneca himself had this academic concern with Homeric criticism; indeed he repudiates such discussions as futile in *Ep.* 108 and *Ep.* 88.6f. But his allusions to the last book of the *Iliad* at *Tranqu.* 2.12 and *de Ira* 2.33.5 bear out the appreciation of Homer that he shows in the essay of consolation to Polybius, who distracted his leisure by translating Homer into Latin prose and Virgil into Greek (*Polyb.* 11.5): *nullus erit in illis scriptis liber, qui non plurima varietatis humanae incertorumque casuum et lacrimarum ex alia atque alia causa fluentium exempla tibi suggerat*.¹⁶ Tears and the uncertainty of fate were especially important to the bereaved Polybius, yet in Seneca's tragedies they are a source of exaltation; it was for these *lacrimae rerum*, as Mazzoli has shown, that Seneca most valued Homer, even though Virgil held first place in his loyalty and admiration.

The Greek tragedians, on the other hand, are barely quoted; Aeschylus and Sophocles are named only once—as authorities on the flooding of the Nile in an inherited catalogue at *N.Q.* 4.2.17. Of the two excerpts translated from Euripides, one, from the *Danae*, is mis-

¹⁵ "Whoever has learned his elementary Greek knows that he is called 'Earthshaker' in Homer."

¹⁶ "There will not be any book of their poetry that fails to offer countless examples of human vicissitudes and unforeseen chances, and tears that flow for one reason after another."

attributed in *Ep.* 115.15, probably because it was an indirect quotation from the moralist source of Seneca's theatrical anecdote. His tragedies do show familiarity with both plots and dialogue elements of Euripidean tragedy, and the freedom of his choice of action and thought for imitation argues for a longstanding familiarity, rather than the short-term study appropriate to a translator.¹⁷

Seneca's citations of the Latin poets are more influenced by his sense of style than by the—nonetheless relevant—question of genre. His allusions to Ennius are the traditional excerpts available through Ciceronian quotation, from the *de Re Publica* (*Ep.* 108.30f.), from *Brutus* (*Ep.* O.C.T. 2:540 = Gellius 12.2) and from the *Tusculans* (*Polyb.* 11.2). There are no first-hand quotations from Plautus, Terence, or the republican tragedians; Gellius (12.2.10) reports that he rejected their diction and could not understand what merit it had in the eyes of Cicero and Virgil: Vergilius quoque noster non ex alia causa duos quosdam versus et enormes et aliquid supra mensuram trahentis interposuit quam ut Ennianus populus agnosceret in novo carmine aliquid antiquitatis.¹⁸

This quotation shows the paradox of Seneca's attitude; for it was Virgil's achievement that prevented his successors from being able to accept the element of inspiration in archaic poetry which Virgil himself had understood. As it is, Virgil, *poetarum maximus*, dominates Seneca's literary consciousness and is quoted more than four times as often as any other poet, even Ovid, the favorite of his addressee Lucilius (*N.Q.* 4.2.2). Virgil was now universally known, guaranteeing to the writer who introduced a Virgilian allusion into his argument the full understanding of quotation and context by his readers. This familiarity may explain the incidence of quotations from *Georgics* or *Aeneid* used to bear out a moral statement that could equally have been supported from the evidence of tragedy.

¹⁷ See also Herington (reviewing Tarrant, *Agamemnon*), *Phoenix* 32 (1978), p. 273; he points to the evidence of Quintilian for the study of Greek poetry by boys under the *grammaticus*, and Quintilian's explicit recommendation of Euripides (10.1.67). He adds that, with the exceptions of the *Hercules Furens* and *Thyestes*, the titles and themes of the Senecan tragic corpus belong to fifth-century Greek tragedies which were incorporated in the ancient school-selection of seven plays each by Aeschylus and Sophocles, and ten by Euripides; hence the natural inference that the young educated Roman of Seneca's era had studied some classical Greek tragedies. Seneca could therefore expect a moderate acquaintance with them in his public. Tarrant himself, in "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents," *HSCP* 82 (1978): 258, notes that the lack of allusion to Greek tragedy in Seneca's prose works "cannot be pressed too hard," since these writings reveal virtually nothing about his activity as a poet.

¹⁸ "Our great Virgil worked in some harsh and irregular lines that overflowed the meter, just so that Ennius' nation could recognize a touch of archaism in the new poetry."

Dingel offers another interpretation for the neglect of tragedy in Seneca's prose writings: that as a moralist Seneca held aloof from the entire genre of tragedy because he wanted to study only works that would advance his progress toward the *beata vita*; he could, Dingel argues, find this stimulus in Virgil but not in tragedy.¹⁹ The positive claim for Virgil is true, but the contrast is false, as Marti²⁰ has illustrated from the *N.Q.* 6.2.1-2. There Seneca quotes as a message for the human race Virgil's comment on the fall of Troy (*Aen.* 2.354): *una salus victis, nullam sperare salutem*.²¹ He reflected this belief in the words of every Trojan captive and the exemplary deaths of his young martyrs in the *Troades*; he could also have found this message implied in Euripides' repeated rejection of false hope for Polyxena, Astyanax, and Troy itself. There is nothing antiphilosophical, as Dingel would suggest, in the genre of tragedy, and Seneca's neglect of the genre is adequately explained by his low esteem for the Roman adaptations of Greek tragedy, and the predominance of Virgilian epic. As a moralist Seneca passes over poets whose skill elsewhere earns the honor of imitation by Seneca the poet; the lesser genres are left aside, with no reference to Catullus, or Propertius, or Tibullus—indeed there is virtually no allusion to Ovid outside the *Metamorphoses*. Except in the satiric *Apocolocyntosis* Seneca quotes only from hexameter poetry, from Lucretius, several times quoted in excerpts of two or more lines, from Virgil's didactic *Georgics*, from the *Aeneid*, and from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, giving special preference to the cosmic first book and the Pythagorean speech of book fifteen. Horace, whose odes Seneca echoed in meter and diction in the tragedies, is represented only by quotations from the *Satires*. Because of its moral content, satire achieves quotation along with the more dignified genres. The only exceptions to this principle are the several excerpts from Maecenas' poetry, not confined to the letter on stylistic decadence (114) but serving elsewhere as a paradigm of art ruined by loss of moral strength—*Ep.* 92.35: *habuit enim et grande et virile, nisi illum secunda discinxissent*.

What did Seneca want from poetry? At the least it could soothe the bereaved (*Polyb.* 11.2) and calm the inflamed (*de Ira* 3.9.1: *lectio illum carminum obleniat et historia fabulis detineat*). It attracted him as a superior vehicle for moralizing. He can praise (*Ep.* 33.6, 94.27) the efficacy of *praecepta* compressed into verse, and singles out the pedestrian Publilius Syrus (*Ep.* 108.9) for his superiority over prose

¹⁹ Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung*, p. 58.

²⁰ *TAPA* 76 (1945): 226.

²¹ "There is but one hope for the conquered, to hold no hope of survival."

in stimulating the audience to shame and moral reform, quoting Cleanthes' dictum: *sensus nostros clariores carminis arta necessitas efficit*.²² He uses Virgil, whom he loves most, as a basis for sermons, even where Virgil intended no secondary allegorical meaning, as at *Aen.* 2.726-29, which is turned in *Ep.* 56.12 into a text on courage. We can agree in *Ep.* 108 when he rejects the grammarians' approach to Virgil as inadequate and irrelevant, because we see their antiquarian comments had no literary value; but what evidence is there that he had literary appreciation in the modern sense of aesthetic, rather than moral, enthusiasm for the poets?

Again and again he shows us that he is deeply aware of the power of poetry to move the spirit, and of the quality of spiritual exaltation which is close to poetry; cf. Seneca *Tranqu.* 1.14: *ubi se animus cogitationum magnitudine levavit, ambitiosus in verba est, altiusque, ut spirare, ita eloqui gestit et ad dignitatem rerum exit oratio; oblitus tum legis pressiorisque iudicii sublimius feror et ore iam non meo*.²³ He knew the Platonic tradition of the inspired poet (*Ep.* 58.17) and shared Plato's fear of the poet's power to provoke human emotion for evil—as in *Ep.* 115.12: *carmina poetarum quae adfectibus nostris facem subdant*²⁴—but escaped the consequence of Plato's condemnation of the poets because he saw the pity and fear of the auditorium as: *motus . . . animorum moveri nolentium, nec adfectus sed principia proludentia adfectibus* (*de Ira* 2.2.5).²⁵ Passions were evil and destructive of the soul's calm and capacity for good, but these were involuntary movements of the spirit, preliminary exercises testing control of passion. Thus Seneca sees the poet as able both to feel and to cause in others exalting emotion conducive to virtue.

At the level of mere craftsmanship, we can deduce his idea of the process of composition from his advice on how the literary artist should read so as to foster his own creativity. He advocates alternation of reading and composition, but he stresses that the artist must separate absorption from creation by a lapse of time to allow for assimilating what is read. He relies on two analogies, to the skill of bees in converting nectar into honey (*Ep.* 84.3) and to digestion, (*ibid.* 6-7) in which food must not be left whole and undigested lest

²² "The confining discipline of verse makes our perceptions more vivid."

²³ "When my spirit is uplifted by the grandeur of its thoughts, it grows ambitious in its diction and yearns to express itself more loftily, just as it breathes more loftily; then the style emerges worthy of the dignity of its subject, and forgetful of convention and more inhibiting judgment I soar aloft with a speech that is not mine."

²⁴ "Poems that set a torch to kindle our emotions."

²⁵ "The voluntary emotions of the soul, not passions, but the first stirrings that precede the onset of passion."

it remain foreign to the body; so we must really digest intellectual food, *alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium*.²⁶ His measure of artistic capacity is that the man of real talent will impose his own stamp on everything he has absorbed from any source, so that separate components will form a unity in which the identity of any author imitated is not perceptible. Here Seneca is talking of *oratio*, prose speech, and more particularly of the formation of a personal style, but we may equally apply to poetry his repudiation of piecemeal imitation, and pastiche. Stylistic imitation is to be something diffused, transforming the original into a new idiom.

We are often told that the Romans felt no inhibitions about repeating familiar material, seeing a positive challenge to artistry in the rehandling of traditional themes. Seneca endorses this general principle in a letter answering Lucilius' proposal to write a description of his visit to Sicily. Seneca encourages his friend to write about Aetna, *hunc sollemnem omnibus poetis locum*,²⁷ adding (*Ep.* 79.5) that Virgil had done this perfectly, but it had not discouraged Ovid, nor did either poet deter Cornelius Severus from treating the topic. He distinguishes between material that is worked over, like a plowed field (*subacta*), and material that is worked out like a mine. Far from being exhausted, the topic of Aetna offers increasing scope, and the advantage goes to the most recent poet; he finds the words ready-made, and when he has reorganized them they have a new appearance—*aliter instructa novam faciem habent*. Like Horace,²⁸ Seneca sees existing literature as public property to be freely exploited.

III. AEMULATIO AND THE ROLE OF RHETORIC IN SENECA'S POETRY

Lucilius' poem on Aetna was to be a purely intellectual exercise; the goal was a new presentation of traditional narrative material and conventional responses to it. So we can expect Seneca himself, in artistic reaction to his forbearers, to practice adaptation of their language as a technique for pointing new emphases, or highlighting new emotional colors. Sometimes this adaptation is disguised, drawing ele-

²⁶ "Otherwise it will enter the memory, not the intellect." On imitation, see Mazzoli, *Seneca e la Poesia*, pp. 87-91, "Imitazione ed Originalita," and pp. 91-96, "Criteri d'Imitazione;" also A. M. Guillemin, "L'Imitation dans la Literature Romaine," *REL* 2 (1924): 35-37.

²⁷ "That obligatory commonplace of all poets."

²⁸ *Ars Poetica* 131-32: *publica materies privati iuris erit si/non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem*, "subject matter publicly available will fall to your private right, so long as you do not stick to the dreary beaten track."

ments from more than one passage in the Augustans and transferring motifs from one context to another, but often it will be explicit, aiming to be recognized as a variation, like Ovid's adaptation of the phrase *plena deo* allegedly from Virgil. Ovid claimed that he had used it in his play *Medea*, *non subripiendi causa sed palam mutuandi, hoc animo ut vellet agnosci*.²⁹ When he chooses, Seneca deliberately tests his skill by working close to an admired model, as in his imitation of *Aen.* 2.270f. in *Troades* 438f., or of *Met.* 12.108f. at *Troades* 215f. Here he would have felt that only part of his artistry was appreciated by those who read his work unaware of his model—the goal is overt *aemulatio*.

The kind of artistic dispute that arose over such conspicuous imitation can be illustrated from the memoirs of Seneca's father at *Contr.* 7.1.27. He quotes two lines of Varro of Atax which Virgil was supposed to have reworked at *Aen.* 8.26-27: *nox erat et terras animalia fessa per omnes/alituum pecudumque genus sopor altus habebat*. In fact it is more likely that Virgil's lines were based, like Varro's, on Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* (3.749-50) and quite independent of the other Latin poet. Ovid had criticized Varro's line *omnia noctis erant placida composita quiete*, arguing that Varro should have cut away the second half and written simply *omnia noctis erant*. Although father Seneca saw that this changed the meaning (and syntax of *noctis*), he expresses no preference, treating each version as suitable to the poet's intent. Yet if we look for the motive behind Ovid's suggestion, I think it will help us to understand the strength and weakness of baroque poetry. Varro's line has a weak, because predictable, ending; the adjective *placida* anticipates the content of *composita quiete* (whereas Virgil's *sopor altus habebat* gives in full measure the awaited sense of envelopment, with deep sleep holding them secure). But Ovid is not merely eliminating a weak half-line, he is trading on the implications of night, requiring his readers to see in the characterizing genitive *noctis* a whole set of associations. A similar cult of the elliptical and epigrammatic is shown by the emphasis on characteristic behavior, the predication of a set of responses and actions for each role, which is common to the declamatory writers; we will find it in Senecan tragedy as the participants argue about types—Tyrants, Mothers, Captives, Victors—in a way that does not merely suggest thought patterns but dictates phraseology. *Materque tota coniuge expulsa redit*, says Medea (928); we must gloss, "all the feelings of a mother return, driving away the attitudes of a wife." Or from the great *agon* of Andromache and Ulysses in the third act of *Troades*, compare 626

²⁹ Seneca Rhetor. *Suas* 7.3. The phrase *plena deo* does not occur in the extant text of Virgil. See E. K. Borthwick, *Mnemosyne* 25 (1972): 408-12.

matrem timor detexit, "her fear has betrayed the mother's nature." Even names are used with this pointed intensification of reference; Ulysses invokes his guile: *nunc advoca astus, anime, nunc fraudes, dolos/nunc totum Ulixem*, "all that Ulysses stands for" (613-14); or argues that Hector's greatness as a fighter dooms his son as a threat to Greek peace: *et si taceret augur haec Calchas, tamen/dicebat Hector*, "yet all that Hector was declared this as clearly as overt speech could have told us" (534-35). To gloss these trenchant phrases helps us to appreciate their fierce economy. But this kind of typological shorthand is just one outcome of the quest for original and effective expression.

In fact it is impossible to separate discussions of *aemulatio* in Ovid or any subsequent poet from the ideals and demands of contemporary rhetoric. Yet the effect of the declamatory training that Seneca received in his youth is of a different order from the influence exercised by the great Augustan poets, since it does not offer a rival model for his poetic output, but directs the manner in which his competitive imitation will modify the poetic material. It was Leo who expressed most forcefully, and perhaps unfairly, the role of rhetoric in Senecan tragedy, coining the phrase *tragoedia rhetorica* for what he saw as a perversion of the Greek tragic form: cuius indoles breviter sic describi potest ut ἦθος in ea nullum, πάθος omnia esse dicatur. nam quae ad mores spectant sententiis comprehenduntur, affectus plene et diffuse repraesentantur, oratione omnis generis coloribus sensibusque instructa, descriptionibus et narrationibus undecumque arcescitis et ubicumque inlatis.³⁰ Not only in specific discussion of declamatory influence but throughout the introduction to his edition of the tragedies Leo offered many insights into the unquestioned rhetorical coloring of Seneca's tragic diction, which have since been amplified by S. F. Bonner, in his study *Roman Declamation*.³¹ But the tragedies show more coherence and consistency of outlook than Leo acknowledged, and it requires a greater love of poetry and richer creative ability to compose *Agamemnon*, for all its faults, or *Troades*, than to devise a *suasoria* like those of Arellius Fuscus or Cestius Pius on the theme *deliberat Agamemnon an Iphigeniam inmolet, negante Calchante aliter navigari fas esse* (Seneca Rhetor, *Suas.* 3).

But if the influence of rhetoric serves to explain the limitations

³⁰ "Its nature can be briefly described in this way: characterization has no part in it, but the play on emotions is all-pervading. For moral judgments are compressed into aphorisms, while the passions are fully and widely presented, and the style is arrayed with nuances and sentiments of all kinds, and set descriptions and narratives are brought together from every kind of source to be inserted in every possible place," quoted from *Seneca Tragoediae* (Berlin, 1963), 1: 147-59.

³¹ (Liverpool, 1949), pp. 149-67.

rather than the merits of Senecan tragedy, one must still recognize its effects in order to distinguish the general patterns imposed by Seneca's training upon his poetry from the particular imitation of his poetic models, and from his own contribution of interpretation or expression. We have seen how Seneca's predecessors practiced *aemulatio*; before examining his own techniques in relation to Virgil and Ovid, I would like to add to the discussions of Leo and Bonner some comments on post-Augustan taste and its reflection in Senecan tragedy. For this our best source is Quintilian, especially his views, expressed in books 8 and 9, on the problem of *corrupta eloquentia* and its origin.

It is significant that Quintilian cites the tragedies only once, for the rhetorical question *quas peti terras iubes* (*Med.* 453), framed, as Quintilian points out (9.2.8), to evoke an emotional effect of resentment against Medea's interlocutor. The contribution of rhetoric to Senecan tragedy lay more in figures of thought, such as this, than in figures of diction. Indeed there was no figure of language that had not already been exploited to the full in Ovid's poetry, both epic and elegiac. But however versatile Ovid's *inventio* in devising new figures of thought, the ensuing generation went beyond him in the preference for obliquity, for allusion, irony, and innuendo. In the declamations of the schools the speaker could choose the characterization and circumstantial detail of his fictional brief more freely than any tragedian working with an established myth, but even so, once the natural interpretation of a declamatory context had been preempted by an early speaker, his successors had to resort to a more distorted or paradoxical formulation: the need for novelty and the desire to impress imposed excess and artificiality upon the latecomer. Quintilian's discussion of contemporary trends in oratory illustrates these failings in what has been called the pointed style.

In the *praefatio* of the eighth book he reproaches the orators of the new generation, the one most influenced by the prose if not the verse, of our Seneca. "We beat around what could be said simply out of our relish for words; we repeat what we have said adequately, and say in several phrases what is apparent in one. In general we think it better to imply rather than say most things" (8. *Praefatio* 24-25); this leads to condemnation of orators who borrow figures of speech from the most affected and extravagant poets (*a corruptissimo quoque poetarum*) and pride themselves on requiring real cleverness to be understood. Thus he regarded the cult of allusion and *adianoeta* (8.2.20) even in poetry as a mark of bad artistry. We might illustrate *adianoeta* (ordinary words used to convey an obscure sense) or indeed the fash-

ionable figure called *noema* (8.5.15) from this or any scene of the *Troades*; *utrimque est pater* says Andromache at 650; that is, both father and child are in some sense Hector; *perdere est patriam grave/gravius timere* argues Helen at 912-13, moving from a conventional *sententia* to the obscure *patriam timere*, explained by her fear of punishment by Menelaus.

Both the fashion for *sententiae* and the high esteem given to brevity help to explain the age's obsession, in both prose and verse, with the pregnant word. The same pursuit of aphorisms also contributed to the staccato rhythm of both declamation and tragedy, for, as Quintilian pointed out, any *sententia* is in a sense terminal: *subsistit enim omnis sententia* (8.5.27). The listener is brought to a stop and has to renew his momentum afresh. At the same time the tendency to look for a secondary meaning in every phrase led both speaker and listener to burden language with a significance it could not convey.

Quintilian himself gives to the loaded use of plain terms like *homo*, *vir*, *vivere*, the name *emphasis* (8.3.83), but he sees this procedure primarily as a figure of thought and so treats it more fully, when he discusses irony and its variants at 9.2.44f. Irony is the most conspicuous figure produced by play, not on the form, but on the reference of language, and Quintilian gives it an extended discussion. A favorite type in verse is the mock command, e.g., *Aen.* 4.381, *i sequere Italiam ventis*, which Dido utters contemptuously at the departing Aeneas. From *Troades* compare Achilles' ghost, *ite, ite inertes manibus meis debitos/auferte honores* (191-92), or Hecuba's last words at 1165-67. There is irony of statement in Agamemnon's retort to Pyrrhus at 318, *at non timebat tunc tuus, fateor, parens . . .*, or Andromache's insult to Ulysses at 755, *nocturne miles, fortis in pueri necem*.

In discussing the related figure of *emphasis* Quintilian attributes to it three advantages (9.2.64-66): the speaker could imply what it was unsafe to say outright, or what would have been improper, or he could merely exploit *emphasis* for variety and stimulus: *ipsa novitate et varietate magis quam si relatio sit recta delectat*.³² In our tragedies, as in the declamations, there is a great reliance on the use of figured speech (*figurata oratio*, or *schema* in a special sense, cf. 9.2.65, 66), and it is noteworthy that Quintilian reports this mannerism as a fashion of his own youth, that is the Neronian period of Seneca's prime (9.2.77). It was of course especially favored in communication with stage or declamatory tyrants, as a satisfying method of implying allegations without incurring retribution, but as Quintilian is quick to

³² "It gives more delight by its sheer novelty and variety than if the narrative had been straightforward."

observe, this was often quite unrealistic; most examples of this type of diplomatic irony were only too intelligible even to an unimaginative tyrant, and the dominant motive was really the third—the speaker's quest for novelty. Such endless ingenuity led incompetent declaimers to utter innuendoes that were contrary to their own logic, or loyalties, or characterization: *Itaque non solum si persona obstaret rectae orationi, quo in genere saepius modo quam figuris opus est, decurrebant ad schemata, sed faciebant illis locum etiam ubi inutiles ac nefariae essent* (9.2.79).³³ I cannot illustrate precisely this from *Troades*, for Seneca usually maintains a clear grasp of the loyalties of his *personae*, and their will to die relieves him and them of the need to conceal their opinions, but there is a comparable sacrifice of consistency to ingenuity in, for example, Hecuba's conflicting comments on Priam's lack of burial,³⁴ or Agamemnon's use of Achilles' ransom of Hector's body, firstly to praise Achilles' respect for the suppliant Priam, in contrast with the brutal murder committed by his son (312), but later (325-26) to reproach Achilles with the withdrawal from war that permitted Priam's safe passage. In general, however, we find in Senecan tragedy this very overworking of irony and allusion that strains and can even induce resistance in the listener, while the repetitiousness and excessive reliance on aphorism of Quintilian's contemporaries had been an affliction, not only of Seneca's generation (in Quintilian's youth), but of the late Augustans before him. Indeed Seneca's father had tried to warn his sons, with a shrewd comment on Ovid and other Augustan declaimers, against the faults that we find in his own son's writing. He blames Montanus, "the Ovid of the schools," for spoiling his own *bons mots* by repetition (*sententias suas repetendo corrumpit*, *Contr.* 9.5.17) and formulates the famous criticism of Ovid that he could not leave well alone: *nescit quod bene cessit relinquere*. But his illustration, taken from *Met.* 13.503-5, is particularly relevant for students of the tragedian. The occasion is

³³ "So they resorted to figures not only if respect for persons was an obstacle to straightforward speech, a category in which there is more need of restraint than of figures, but they also gave them room even when the figures were harmful and vicious."

³⁴ At *Tro.* 30, Priam has all Troy as his tomb, *quem Troia toto conditum regno tegit*, but in 55 (criticized by Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, p. 166, as an "unnecessary point"), although father of so many children, *caret sepulchro Priamus . . . /ardente Troia*. But in 137f. the chorus will use his many children to make a different point: *post elatos/Hecubae partus regumque gregem/postrema pater funera cludis*. R. Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur Griechischen und Römischen Konsolations-Literatur* (Munich, 1958), p. 43, illustrates the similar contradictory use of a single motif for both lament and consolation from the *Consolatio ad Liviam* (393f., opposed to 95) and Statius *Silvae* 2.6. I have noted such conflicting uses wherever they occur in *Troades*.

Hecuba's outcry against the dead Achilles' demand for the sacrifice of Polyxena, also treated in act 4 of Seneca's *Troades*. Ovid had written *cinis ipse sepulti/in genus hoc saevit, tumulo quoque sensimus hostem,/ Aeacidae fecunda fui*; but while Seneca the Elder blames Ovid for presenting all three variations on the theme "even dead, Achilles attacks our family," his son particularly admires this very passage, and at *Tro.* 955-57 builds up his own variations based on lines 501-2 of Ovid's text: *adhuc Achilles vivit in poenas Phrygum/adhuc rebellat? O manum Paridis levem./cinis ipse nostrum sanguinem ac tumulus sitit*. He has echoed Ovid's double allusion to ashes and tomb, but added the vivid physical image of ashes absorbing blood and made a new point; the double verbs *vivit* and *rebellat* balance the double nouns, and the relatively uncommon *rebellat* graphically suggests renewal of war; finally the whole is twisted to make a reproach against Paris, whose arrow slew Achilles, but to no effect; he is *levis*, ineffectual, as he was always *levis*, irresponsible.

In fact the larger narrative of *Met.* 13.399-575, presenting the Fall of Troy as the setting for Hecuba's metamorphosis, was Seneca's chief inspiration for both narrative detail and stylistic or emotional coloring in *Troades*. Ovid interweaves the Fall of Troy and sacrifice of Polyxena with the tragedy of Polydorus (429-38, 534-75) following the order of action in Euripides' *Hecuba*, but he has influenced more in Seneca's play than the two messenger narratives of Achilles' apparition and Polyxena's death scene. Seneca has kept Polyxena silent, and has excluded from his death narrative any counterpart of her speech in Ovid (457-73), but he has drawn repeatedly on the long lament of Hecuba (494-532) for the characterization of both Hecuba and Andromache. I list instances of certain or probable imitation in the order of Ovid's narrative from *Met.* 13, indicating change of context or speaker, and quoting both authors, wherever competitive variation (*aemulatio*) is apparent.

408-10: *Ilion ardebat, neque adhuc consederat ignis/exiguumque senis Priami Iovis ara cruorem/combiberat*. Seneca stresses the continuing flames in his prologue 16-20, *diripitur ardens Troia*, and rephrases the hyperbolic reference to Priam's blood; 50, *ensis senili siccus e iugulo redit*.

415-17: . . . *illis de turribus unde/pugnantem . . . /saepe videre patrem monstratum a matre solebat*. Seneca echoes the symmetrical antithesis of 417, but modifies the allusion, 1071f.(cf. 1074, *paterna puero bella monstrabat senex*). Both authors draw on *Aen.* 2.455-57.

425-28: Hecuba . . . tamen unius hausit,/ inque sinu cineres secum tulit Hectoris haustos./Hectoris in tumulto . . . crinem lacrimasque reliquit. Seneca has given the hair and tears to Andromache in her ritual over the living Astyanax (799-800, 806-7) as well as the kisses of *Met.* 13.424; he transfers to Andromache unchanged the desperate desire for any trace of Hector's ashes (811-12).

441-43: quantus cum viveret . . . temporis illius vultum referebat Achilles/quo . . . Seneca varies *quantus* by the simple *ingens umbra* (*Tro.* 181) and replaces the circumstances of Achilles' anger by three coordinate occasions of his triumphs 182-89, *qualis . . . aut cum . . . aut cum*.

445-48: Immemores . . . mei disceditis . . . utque meum non sit sine honore sepulchrum,/placet Achilleos mactata Polyxena manes. Seneca combines these motifs in *Tro.* 191, *manibus meis debitos/auferte honores, solvite ingratas rates*, and retains the verb *mactare* in 196, but he has changed the question of 445 to a scornful command, with an implied threat (*per nostra ituri maria*), and inserted here an allusion to his great anger, omitted above at the equivalent place to *Met.* 442-43. The "bridal" motif is his own innovation.

449f.: In 450: quam iam prope sola fovebat. Ovid, mindful of Polydorus, adds *prope*; Seneca's Hecuba claims Polyxena as unique, 960-63, *sola nunc haec est super . . . hac sola vocor/iam voce mater* (but this also uses *Met.* 13.514f.).

451: fortis et infelix et plus quam femina virgo/ducitur. Seneca's parallel account of the sacrifice divides this thought into 1146, *animus . . . fortis et leto obviis*, and 1151, *audax virago*.

455: utque Neoptolemum stantem . . . vidit; a more or less standard feature of such a narrative. *Tro.* 1148, *ut primum . . . tetigit atque alte edito/iuvenis paterni vertice in busti stetit* may be quite independent.

474-75: populus lacrimas quas illa tenebat/non tenet. This is transferred by Seneca to the death of Astyanax, 1099, *non flet e turba omnium/qui fletur*.³⁵ Compare the weeping of the crowd for Polyxena, without imitation of form, 1161 *Uterque flevit coetus*.

³⁵ Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, p. 167 notes the play on active and passive forms of the verb in this passage (as he does in Ovid and other Silver Latin authors), but he misses the derivation of this figure from Ovid's parallel account.