Innocuus Errat

The Golden Age Speech of Hippolytus in Seneca's Phaedra *483 – 564*

Karl Kristian Rådahl Kirchhoff

Masteroppgave ved Institutt for filosofi, ide- og kunsthistorie og klassiske språk

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

15.05.2012

Innocuus Errat

The Golden Age Speech of Hippolytus in Seneca's *Phaedra* 483 – 564

2012

Innocuus Errat: The Golden Age speech of Hippolytus in Seneca's Phaedra *483 – 564*

Karl Kristian R Kirchhoff

Oslo: Arkan

Summary

In this thesis I analyse the references to Ovid (*Met*. I.89ff., *Amores* III.8, and *Heroides* IV) and Virgil (*Geor*. I.121ff. and *Geor*. II.493ff.) in the Golden Age speech of Hippolytus in Seneca's *Phaedra* (483 - 564). The two Augustan authors have a marked presence in this passage, a fact acknowledged by most commentaries. But interestingly, there has not yet been made any attempt to interpret these references as something more than a simple borrowing of phrases and topoi. The references expose that Hippolytus constructs his Golden Age from two incompatible ideals, the soft Golden Age of leisure found in Ovid and Virgil's notion of man as ennobled through a hard primitivist existence.

By applying Richard Thomas' method of analysing poetic reference I have found that the use of references to Virgil and Ovid allows Seneca to reveal to the audience the mechanism behind the delusion of Hippolytus. As a term for this delusion I have used Anthony Boyle's expression, pathological idealism, and given it my own definition. The results yielded are strong indications that Seneca use poetic reference to illuminate Hippolytus' character. He is irrational, in Stoic terms, because he assigns moral value to an emotive response, in this context the impulse to flee urban life and women. But the impulse takes on a rational cloak, thereby earning the definition of Pathological Idealism, which is characterised through the development of a complex fantasy world, the Golden Age, the purpose of which is to lend credence to his passions.

I also show that Pathological Idealism can be read, in the terms of Denis and Elisabeth Henry, as one of the conflicting abstracts of Senecan tragedy and that this paves the way for a political reading of the plays. This does not imply that the plays are a form of subversive criticism of the Imperial court. Instead, I hope that my thesis will convince the reader that Pathological Idealism as a motivating force, used by Seneca in the characterisation of Hippolytus, can be understood as a contribution to a larger discussion important to Seneca, the Stoics, and indeed, any citizen: The Dilemma of Political Participation.

Preface

The Dilemma of Political Participation is one of the many topics where modern society still can find inspiration in Classical literature and philosophy. Especially now, when an increasing number of people choose not to engage in public life, the lessons of Seneca, and the Stoics in general, can teach us a thing or two about the importance of taking an active part in society. Therefore, I first wish to thank Morten Johansen for joining me when we ran for office at The Norwegian Student Society. Although it forced me to postpone the thesis, it was a direct consequence of it, which he made me aware of.

Contents

1. Introduction

Istam terra defossam premat,
gravisque tellus impio capiti incubet.　　　　　　　　(*Phaed.* 1279 - 1280)
May the earth crush her, once buried,
and the heavy mould weigh down on her impious head.[1]

Such is the farewell Theseus bids his wife after she has committed suicide at the end of
Seneca's *Phaedra*. These words complete the tragedy, and the Roman audience to whom the
story was familiar, must have been weighed down themselves by the darkness and despair
unfolded in the approximately 1300 lines that make the play. After long introspective
monologues, stichomythia between temperaments of reason and passion, and gruesome,
imaginative deaths, the *Phaedra* closes in the vein of almost all the tragedies marked by the
stamp of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, with an unnerving sense of meaninglessness and futility.

　　　　The merits of the tragic works by Seneca has been a topic of debate ever since scholars
in the late sixteenth century linked the two, Seneca the philosopher and Seneca the author of
tragedies.[2] The realisation that the younger Seneca produced both was bewildering, seeing as
the themes and *Weltanschauung* permeating the Senecan tragic *corpus* appears to conflict
with the Stoic philosophy and moral restraint taught in his philosophical works. Therefore,
many attempts have been made to reconciliate, as it were, the two Senecas. In addition, the
historians tell us of a third Seneca. "Without the testimony of Tacitus, Seneca the statesman
could hardly exist."[3] It is indeed puzzling that there are so few links between the
philosophical works, his tragedies, and his life in Imperial politics. It does, however,
strengthen the impression that he was a man of many facets: Tutor and advisor to an
increasingly paranoid Emperor, preaching a rigorous and austere philosophical regime to
Lucilius while being himself one of the richest and most powerful men in Rome, and
undertaking to write tragedies that explore the failure of reason in the face of overwhelming
passion and desire. Considering these seemingly incompatible deeds it is difficult to imagine
that all three Senecas were in fact one and the same man.

　　　　My own interest in Seneca as a tragedian was kindled by these paradoxes and the
scholarly attention they have attracted. Beginning at the middle of the 20th century, a wave of

---

[1] My translation. Excepting when something else is noted, all translations are mine.
[2] The link is now well established but rests almost exclusively on internal evidence. For an account of how the
two Senecas became one: Roland Mayer, "Personata Stoa: Neostoicism and Senecan Tragedy", *Journal of the
Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994), 153ff.
[3] Sir Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 552.

scholarship has penetrated deeper into Seneca's tragic world, but also produced a multitude of different readings and opinions regarding what the tragedies are supposed to convey.

The brunt of scholarly attention has been on the relation between the tragedies and Seneca's philosophy, but political readings have also been presented. These are usually efforts to prove that there is a direct commentary on contemporary Roman political issues, such as the Imperial family, in Senecan drama. I believe a more productive approach when attempting a political reading, would be to emphasise an issue we definitely know troubled Seneca, the question of participation in, or abstention from, public life. We might call it the Dilemma of Political Participation. In his philosophical works this is a recurring theme,[4] but not much attention has been given to his tragedies in this respect.

How can we investigate traces of this dilemma in Senecan drama? Denis and Elisabeth Henry, who emphasise that the Imperial milieu changed the meaning of tragedy,[5] argue that ideas and concepts provide a struggle in Seneca's dramatic universe, shown through key abstract nouns such as *ius, decus, pietas, fides,* and *libertas*. "Where there is dramatic conflict in Senecan drama it is expressed as often in terms of conflicting abstracts as conflicting characters."[6] The Dilemma of Political Participation is too multifarious to function as a conflicting abstract, but there is an aspect of this dilemma which might be able to fulfill such a function. Many of Seneca's tragic victims, such as Jason, Thyestes, and Hippolytus, are incapable of confronting or challenging the main protagonists.[7] The reason for this is that they tend to dote on utopian ideals, instead of dealing with their precarious situation. It might just be hopeless naïveté on their part,[8] but I believe these illusions are more complex. Anthony J. Boyle coined a term to depict this complex motivating force in Hippolytus' Golden Age speech in Seneca's *Phaedra*:

> Hippolytus' golden age reverie (483ff.), conspicuous for the contradictions it
> exposes between vision and personal practice, and conjoined as it is with the most

---

[4] He handles it in many of his prose works, most importantly *De Brevitate Vitae*, *De Constantia Sapientis*, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, *De Otio* and in many of his letters to Lucilius. A good outline of his somewhat shifting positions on the matter can be found in Miriam Griffin's *Seneca: a Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 (repr. 2003), chapter 10, "The Philosopher on Political Participation", 315 - 366.

[5] Denis and Elisabeth Henry, *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Rome* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd, 1985), chapter 8, "Tragedy and Imperial Power", 157 - 176.

[6] D. Henry and B. Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll: an Element of Seneca's *Phaedra*", *Greece & Rome* 13, No. 2 (Oct., 1966), 225. (In some of the Henrys' works, Mrs. Henry write under the name of B. Walker.)

[7] Atreus, Medea, and Phaedra, respectively.

[8] As proposed by Eleanor W. Leach: "Neronian Pastoral and the World of Power", in ed., Anthony. J. Boyle, *Ancient Pastoral: Ramus Essays on Greek and Roman Pastoral Poetry* (Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1975), 142 – 4; Also Michel Ruch, "Phèdre romaine et Hippolyte romain", *L'information littéraire* 16 (1964), 205.

2

neurotic, frenetic misogyny (555 - 79), seems product not of primeval innocence or Stoic wisdom but of self-deceived, pathological idealism.[9]

The expression pathological idealism is accurate for Hippolytus because it is something more intricate than just wishful thinking; it is the construction of, and retreat into, a fantasy so crafted that once you are in, it is impossible to get out. However, Boyle does not develop the term or its implications further. I hope to show in this thesis that by applying Pathological Idealism as a specific term,[10] it is possible to explore it as one of the conflicting abstracts in Senecan tragedy, with some adjustment to the concept presented by the Henrys.

The product of Pathological Idealism is not just a confusion or a crisis of identity, but blindness to reality. The Golden Age speech of Hippolytus is a good place to substantiate my thesis since it evidently portrays an illusion, the Golden Age fantasy. Additionally, it contains a number of references to two earlier authors, Virgil and Ovid. I argue that Seneca made these references not just for ornament; they are aides to revealing the nature of Hippolytus' Pathological Idealism. To analyse Seneca's use of Virgil and Ovid I shall be following Richard Thomas' system of poetic references.[11]

In summary, my main purpose in the following chapters is through analysis of poetic references in lines 483 – 564 of the *Phaedra* to expose what I believe to be a key concept in Senecan drama, the inertia of Pathological Idealism. By such a character trait, Seneca brings depth to his secondary characters beyond being the simpleton victims of passionate protagonists. Moreover, this relates to the Dilemma of Political Participation, a theme familiar from his philosophical writings and one he himself faced in his career as teacher and advisor to the Emperor.

 Seneca has been subject to quite thorough scholarly attention in the latter part of the 20th century, and my second chapter is an outline of two dominant trends; philosophical and political readings, and two forms of close reading which are hard to categorise. The third chapter opens with an introduction to the speech and a brief presentation of Richard Thomas' typology of poetic references. The main part of the chapter is dedicated to a close reading of the references to Ovid and Virgil in the speech and thereby making the case for Pathological Idealism as an important abstract in Seneca's characterisation of Hippolytus.

[9] Anthony J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997), 78. He also has used it earlier in the article "In Nature's Bonds: A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*'", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* II.32.2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 1306.
[10] I have capitalised Pathological Idealism to distinguish between Boyle's pathological idealism and my interpretation of the term.
[11] Presented in "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 90 (1986).

Before the main chapters, four issues need to be briefly discussed in this introduction, not to bog us down later on. These are the questions regarding Greek antecedents, recital, the manuscript tradition, and dating of the tragedies.

1.1 Greek Antecedents

When trying to explain the shift from Sophocles' to Seneca's Oedipus, Norman Pratt says that unlike Greek tragedy, where the confrontation is between the human and divine, Seneca's tragedy even eradicates the divine presence, leaving the remaining characters in a void. Seneca thus paves the way for introspective drama.[12]

  C. J. Herington, in his acclaimed essay marking the 1966 reprint of the 1927 edition of *The Tenne Tragedies* (the first English translation) proclaimed the years 1581 and 1927 to be the two most important dates in the history of English reception of Senecan drama.[13] 1581 was the date for the first complete translation of the tragedies, which became an important influence on Elizabethan drama. The reason for the latter date is that the 1927 edition was prefaced with an introduction written by T.S. Eliot, an author whose poetic sensibility was susceptible to Seneca's style.[14] Eliot's introductory essay to the 1927 edition manifested the end of a prolonged habit of reading Seneca as an emulator of the Greek triad.[15] He argued that they follow other principles than the canonical Greek tragedy. Senecan drama finds the rhetorical more important than the dramatic situation. The dramatic language and the word gain predominance over action and plot.

> In the plays of Seneca, the drama is all in the word, and the word has no further
> reality behind it. His characters all seem to speak with the same voice, and at the top
> of it; they recite in turn.[16]

In Greek tragedy it is impossible to separate moral lessons from the dramatic action, where human suffering and the yokes of faith are intertwined in a fashion that creates the dramatic wholeness celebrated by Aristotle.[17] The manic, high-speed and unstoppable juggernauts

---

[12] Norman T. Pratt, *Seneca's Drama* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 10.

[13] Cecil J. Herington, "Senecan Drama", *Arion* 5, No. 4 (winter, 1966), 422.

[14] Ibid., 428.

[15] "[…] the proper approach to his appreciation and enjoyment is not by comparison and contrast, to which, in his case, criticism is violently tempted – but by isolation." Thomas. S. Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation", *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 58.

[16] Ibid., 54.

[17] Ibid., 57 – 58. Aristotle demanded tragedy to be a "mimesis of an action that is complete, whole and of magnitude". *Poetics* 1450b. 20. Translation of Stephen Halliwell.

which are Seneca's protagonists show strikingly different characterisation from the "skeptical and heterodox intelligence"[18] found in Euripides' Medea or Sophocles' Oedipus.

Eliot's arguments regarding Greek influence were based on his own poetic sensibility; further philological studies have established as fact what he felt to be true. With "Senecan Drama and its Antecedents" Richard Tarrant made a convincing case for Seneca being in a Roman tradition by looking at formal criteria like plot structure, use of choruses, plot devices, stylistic and linguistic similarities.[19] He maintains that Seneca primarily constructed his plays inspired by Latin literary models, especially Virgil and Ovid, in addition to now lost Roman tragedians such as Accius and Naevius.[20] This is not to say that Seneca does not at times borrow from Greek tragedy,[21] but his style is distinctly within the tradition of the Roman theatre and his shots at emulation and poetic reference are first and foremost aimed at Augustan predecessors.

In addition, his tragedies bear the mark of their own time, much of the rhetorical flourish and extreme emotions can be attributed to the post-Augustan literary style. The same is true of the dark and depressing mood that the Elizabethans found gripping,[22] but which has troubled so many of his later readers. His plays are formed of a rich rhetorical texture, the fighting ground for abstracts such as *furor*, *dolor,* and *pudor*, punctuated by the Silver Latin trademark quip, the sharp and pointed *sententia.* As remarked by Denis and Elisabeth Henry:

> When the maxim appears in Greek tragedy, it usually stands out in marked contrast to the rest of the speech in which it occurs. (…) In Seneca's tragedies moral observations of this kind do not have the startling effect they may have in the Greek. There is no change in the texture of the language, and the static, often oracular, utterances cause no break in the dramatic action.[23]

I will therefore not discuss any possible Greek influence, since there seems to be little of it generally in Senecan drama. The literary predecessors of Hippolytus' Golden Age speech have to be found amongst Latin authors, not in Euripides, Hesiod or Aratus.

---

[18] Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation", 56.

[19] Richard J. Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82 (1978), 213-263.

[20] His arguments are furthered in Tarrant, "Greek and Roman in Seneca's Tragedies", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, *Greece in Rome: Influence, Integration, Resistance* (1995), 215-230.

[21] In the case of the *Phaedra:* Clemens Zintzen, *Analytisches Hypomnema zu Senecas Phaedra* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1960). See also n. 1 in Elaine Fantham, "Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines", *Greece & Rome* 22, No. 1 (Apr., 1975), and Boyle, *Roman Tragedy* (London: Routledge, 2006)*,* 205 – 206.

[22] The translation of *The Tenne Tragedies* in 1581 instigated a deep Senecan influence on the Revenge Dramas of Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare. Cf. Jessica Winston, "Seneca in Early Elizabethan England", *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, No. 1 (spring, 2006), 29 – 58.

[23] Henry & Walker, "Seneca's *Agamemnon*: Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom", *Classical Philology* 58 (1963), 3.

1.2 Plays or *Lesendrama?* – Rhetorical Influence

The never-ending debate on whether Senecan tragedy was written to be performed, either by a troupe or as declamation pieces for a single actor, or just to be read, will not be stressed in this thesis.[24] Suffice it to say that the arguments of Patrick Kragelund have convinced me that it certainly is possible to stage the tragedies, and that they are the better for it.[25] I will therefore use the word audience when referring to implied readers of the text. It might be argued that complex poetic references in a stage drama would not be recognised, but there is good evidence to suggest that Greek Tragedy, which of course was staged, made ample use of literary allusion.[26] Also, the well-bred Roman met the great Latin authors in his education, memorising long passages from drama, prose and poetry, which is indicated by the many literary quotes found in the prose works of Cicero and Seneca. For such an audience, a key passage of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or Virgil's *Aeneid* would not go unnoticed.

Even though I believe they were meant for the stage, it is clear that the plays have drawn deep from the well of contemporary rhetorical practice.[27] In the late Julio-Claudian Empire, two new kinds of public performances manifested themselves to the literary public. The *declamatio*, an exercise in schools to prepare the students for political life and the courts, became a show-piece publicly staged with intricate legalities or sometimes fictitious legal framework. Seneca the Elder wrote two collections of the two genres of the *declamatio*, *Controversiae* and S*uasoriae*. The other genre was the *recitatio*, which had been a usual step in the process of writing a work, the closed doors-reading before friends. This developed into public readings before larger audiences. Regardless of how one positions oneself in the debate of *Lesendrama* or theatrical production, it is hard to overestimate the effect the rhetorical training of his youth must have had on Seneca's drama. When some of the most common forms of literary performance and reception were public readings and declamations where poignancy and style dominated, this had a natural effect on the content.

> As often happens, the change in a literary work's intended audience brings about a
> transformation in the formal characteristics of the work itself. Now an article of

---

[24] A key work by a skeptic is Otto Zwierlein's *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas,* (Meissenheim: Anton Hain, 1966). On the other side of stage performance is Dana F. Sutton, *Seneca on Stage* (Leiden: Brill, 1986). A recent and balanced collection of the *status quaestionis* is William M. Harrison. ed., *Seneca in Performance* (London: Duckworth, 2000).

[25] Patrick Kragelund, "Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?", *Classica et Mediaevalia* 50 (1999), 235-247.

[26] Cf. Richard Garner, *From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1990), chapters 2 – 5, 21 - 177.

[27] A thorough study can be found in Howard V. Canter, *Rhetorical Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1925).

consumption in public halls or theaters, literature tends to acquire theatrical, "spectacular" features.[28]

Therefore, characterisation is done differently in Roman Imperial tragedy from what we experience in Greek drama. The characters "have a declamatory personality. They are not delineated as living individuals but are created as voices of attitudes and emotions that serve the dramatist's purpose."[29] The declamatory contest of conflicting sides within a character is also an important part of the reception of Seneca, for example in Shakespeare.[30]

I therefore think that Pathological Idealism is not just a trait or an attribute of the character Hippolytus. Instead, Hippolytus' character is the medium through which Seneca portrays idealism in its perverted form. He is less a person and more an idea of confused contempt of civilisation. The Golden Age speech is in this characterisation very important since it is set as a counter argument to the advances made by the nurse (*Phaed*. 435 - 82), and thus is supposed to put forth evidence for the validity and naturalness of his choice – to abandon city walls and love the forest (*Phaed*. 485).

1.3 The Manuscript Tradition

There are about 400 MSS containing Seneca's tragedies and they are divided into two main branches. The earliest of these is represented by the *Codex Etruscus*, E (Florence. Laur. 37.13). Dated to the eleventh century, it contains nine of the ten tragedies associated with the Senecan tragic *corpus* in the following order: *Hercules (Furens)*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes* and *Hercules (Oetaeus)*.

The other tradition, A, is not a single MS but a branch containing over 300 MSS and characterised by *interpolatio* and *contaminatio,* usually from E, making it difficult to establish a text. The four MSS considered to be the purest within A are C (Cambridge. Corpus Christi College 406), S (Escorial 108 T. III. ii.), P (Paris. Lat. 8260), and T (Paris. Lat. 8031). P and T are assumed to have a common ancestor, the hyparchetype δ, while C and S, together with most of the other MSS in the A branch, derive from the hyparchetype β.[31] When E and A differ, it is not possible to give one an absolute preference to the other, as stated by Richard Tarrant:

---

[28] Gian B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History,* trans. Joseph B. Solodow, revised by Glenn B. Most, and Don Fowler (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987 (repr. 1999), 405.

[29] Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 152.

[30] Neil Rhodes, "The Controversial Plot: Declamation and the Concept of the "Problem Play", *The Modern Language Review* 95, No. 3 (July, 2000), 609-622.

[31] Tarrant, "The Younger Seneca: Tragedies" in edd., Leighton D. Reynolds and Peter K. Marshall, *Texts and Transmissions: A Survey of The Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 378 - 381.

> The choice between them must be based on internal grounds alone. […] The process of *selectio* is significantly complicated by the thorough interpolation of A; while in many places its readings are better because they are authentic, in others the attractions of A are specious and E's difficulty or obscurity are genuinely Senecan.[32]

In this thesis I will use the text of Zwierlein's OCT edition,[33] which is also the one used by Coffey and Mayer in the most recent critical commentary on the *Phaedra*.[34] In some contested lines I have had much help from Fitch's recent and comprehensive overview of disputed passages.[35] There are few of these in Hippolytus' speech, most noticeably those concerning the supposed lacuna in 509 -10. Not many are relevant to my subject, and my view is that if the correspondence of E and A can provide a sound reading, there is no need for conjecture.

1.4 Dating and Sequence of the Tragedies

The dating of the tragedies is currently perceived to be almost impossible and there is nothing within the plays themselves that can give us a clue. A chronology based on assumed historical references was attempted by Herrmann,[36] but has since been refuted.[37] Inferences based on philosophical development to establish a specific sequence have not produced anything convincing.[38] The external evidence is inadequate.[39] Seneca does not mention his tragedies in his prose works, and his biography is too unclear to make any deductions from it. Coffey and Mayer claim on stylistic grounds that the date of 54 AD is the likeliest *terminus ante quem* for the *Phaedra*.[40]

We must probably accept that a conclusive dating of the tragedies is impossible with the sources, external and internal, available. For my purpose this is of little consequence,[41] since my idea of a political reading is not that of finding contemporary references in the plays.

---

[32] Tarrant, ed., *Seneca: Agamemnon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 63 (introduction).

[33] Otto Zwierlein ed., *Annaei Senecae: Tragoediae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[34] Michael Coffey and Roland Mayer edd., *Seneca:* Phaedra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[35] John G. Fitch, *Anneana Tragica: Notes on the Text of Seneca's Tragedies* (Boston: Brill, 2004).

[36] Léon Herrmann, *Le théâtre de Sénèque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924).

[37] Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 13.

[38] E.g. Berthe Marti's very influential article "Seneca's Tragedies: A New Interpretation", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 76 (1945), 216 – 245. In which she argues that the order in which the Etruscan manuscript has preserved the plays is intended by Seneca and therefore the clue to a systematic reading of all the plays. See also Pierre Grimal, *Sénèque ou la Conscience de l'Empire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977).

[39] In fact, the only direct external evidence for Seneca's interest in tragedy we have through Tacitus, who relates a dispute between Seneca and the consular tragedian Pomponius Secundus on a point of propriety in tragic diction. (*Ann*. XIV. 52. 2 - 3).

[40] The introduction in Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 4 – 5.

[41] But, of course, it would be satisfying to my thesis if he wrote the *Phaedra* after his own abstention from public life in 62 AD.

Instead, I believe Seneca employs the tragic world to tackle larger more abstract issues that a philosopher and statesman would be occupied with in Imperial Rome. It is not necessary, though very tempting, to read Atreus as Nero, since no other sources than the cruelty of both is available to prove it.

2. Reading Seneca's Tragedies

The early stages of modern scholarship came in the 1920s with works like the substantial study by Herrmann.[42] Regenbogen's discussion on the philosophical and cultural orientations in the tragedies became very influential.[43] But despite these early constructive attempts, the assessment of the tragedies for a long period remained in the vein of Friedrich Leo, who in 1878 seemingly spoke for everyone when he remarked that we would gladly sell all nine of Seneca's tragedies for Ovid's (lost) *Medea*.[44] More positive criticism has prevailed during the latter half of the 20th century, and many scholars have attempted to establish a sense of what these tragedies are meant to convey.[45] Roland Mayer has remarked that the different schools of, and readings in, modern Senecan scholarship can be bewildering to the uninitiated, especially since they at times seem to be irreconcilable.[46] This chapter will give an introduction to the main positions and introduce those scholars most relevant to the subject of my thesis.

2.1 Philosophical Readings

Most common is the long tradition of reading Seneca's plays through the lens of his philosophical works. In this view, the plays "not only reflect the author's deep attachment to Stoicism but are designed to propagate his creed in the audience."[47] The Stoicism he adhered to, [48] with its insistence on the mutual dependence and inner coherence of the three main

---

[42] Herrmann, *Le théâtre de Sénèque*.

[43] Otto Regenbogen, "Schmerz und Tod in den Tragödien Senecas", *Vortrage der Bibliothek Warburg* 7 (1927 – 1928 (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963). Characterisation from Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 12.

[44] Friedrich Leo, *Tragoediae: Observationes Criticae* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1878 (repr. Berlin: Löwe-Druck, 1962), 149: "*Libenter enim Ovidii Medea novem Senecae tragedias venderemus.*"

[45] For a bibliography of surveys of scholarship, cf. Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 209.

[46] Mayer, "Personata Stoa: Neostoicism and Senecan Tragedy", 151.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Seneca belonged to what has been labelled the late or Roman Stoa, and drew inspiration from the middle Stoa leaders Panaetius and Posidonius. On middle Stoa influence: Griffin, "Philosophy for Statesmen: Cicero and Seneca", in edd., Hans .W. Schmidt and Peter Wülfing, *Gymnasium,* Beiheft 9, *Antikes Denken: Moderne Schule* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987), 133-150; For the Roman stamp: Brad Innwood, "Seneca in His Philosophical Milieu", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, *Greece in Rome: Influence, Integration, Resistance* (1995), 63-76.

components of its philosophy: Ethics, physics and logic, in many ways invites such an interpretation.[49]

Seneca had a deep respect for Stoic logic, and his fascination for physics is evident from the *Naturalium Quaestionum Libri VII*. But his main interest was philosophy as a route to leading the good life, and his philosophical production is dominated by the search of this goal in a variety of perspectives, e.g. *De Constantia Sapientis, De Otio, De Ira* etc.[50]

Norman Pratt's *Seneca's Drama* is a monograph typically within this tradition. The complex moral system of the Stoics, often ridiculed for its subtleties and producing explanatory works like Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum,* needed a more direct form that could speak to audiences with both emotional and philosophical effects.[51] In prose, the diatribe fulfills the role of making philosophical intricacies simpler; Senecan tragedy similarly provides an inflated moral universe in verse. "Emotions and attitudes, destructive and constructive, are pumped up to full capacity."[52] An interesting Stoic reading is Rosenmeyer's focus on Stoic physics rather than ethics. He claims that the most viable Stoic approach is to analyse the dramatic universe created by Seneca. Hence, the mutual dependency of physics, logic, and ethics mentioned above provides a key to the tragedies.[53]

Developing the ideas of ethical propagation is what I name the *exempla*-approach. In these readings, the tragedies moralise by presenting the negative image of letting passion control our minds. The Stoics agreed that all humans will have impressions of an emotional nature. But even though they arise in everyone, they should not be granted any value, since true value can only be given to virtue. Therefore, reacting to an emotional impression is a falsely motivated act. [54] Through the rigorous training of Stoic logic one should after a while be better equipped against such false beliefs, but the problem of ethical training is that it cannot only be achieved through understanding of ethical subtleties, it has to be internalised in order to prove effective as a guiding principle. Therefore, the Stoics present condensed moral teachings through examples*,* paradoxes, and the easily remembered *sententia*. Seneca's

---

[49] For the emphasis of mutual dependency in Stoicism Cf. John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 42 – 43.

[50] Griffin, *Seneca: a Philosopher in Politics,* chapter 1, "Introduction", 1 - 26.

[51] Seneca was positive to the educational role of the theatre: *De Ira* II.2.4.

[52] Pratt, *Seneca's Drama*, 197.

[53] Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkley: The University of California Press, 1989). In relation to the *Phaedra*, Michael Skovgaard-Hansen's article "The Fall of Phaethon", *Classica et Mediaevalia* 29 (1968), 92 – 123, argues in a similar vein that the entire tragedy expresses the mechanics of a determinist universe.

[54] Sellars, *Stoicism*, 64 – 74. The argument is based on their epistemology, a subdivision of Stoic logic.

preference for moral instruction through these means is well attested.[55] Martha Nussbaum devotes a chapter in *The Therapy of Desire* to the *Medea*, in which this point is given psychological depth. Medea's devastating *tour de force* of vengeance is presented to us as a warning of allowing ourselves to be driven even by a passion of justified revenge.[56] Schiesaro has developed this line of thought extensively in his monograph on the *Thyestes*, introducing the concept of a Poetics of Passion,[57] meaning that passion, once in control, produces a reasoning in itself, bending it's context to its will and forcing upon its surroundings the same mad logic as held by the protagonist.[58] The latest branch of this *exempla*-approach is Staley's recent attempt to recreate a Stoic poetics, based on the poetics of Aristotle.[59]

It should be noted that there are those who take the opposite view, such as Joachim Dingel, who completely rejects any presence of Stoic philosophy and declares the tragedies to be anti-Stoic.[60] In Dingel's view the plays were written by a Seneca who became disillusioned by the ideals of Stoicism at the court of Nero.[61] Another charge against philosophical readings has been made by Harry Hine, [62] who demonstrates the ease with which one can produce both Epicurean and Stoic interpretations of the tragedies, and thus purports that the plays are open for a variety of readings. Hine's article is a welcome reminder that reductionist readings, in which Seneca's tragedies are merely the vehicle for the moral *sententiae* in Seneca's prose, do not treat them seriously as literature.

---

[55] Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca", in edd., Oliver Reverdin and Bernard Grange, *Sénèque et la prose latine, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 36 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1991), 141-169.

[56] Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chapter 12, "Serpents in the Soul", 439 - 483.

[57] Alessandro Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 6, "The Poetics of Passion", 221 – 243.

[58] Poetics of Passion is similar to the term phantasmagoria used in Henry & Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll: an Element of Seneca's *Phaedra*".

[59] Gregory A. Staley, *Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[60] Joachim Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1974).

[61] Ibid., 118: "Damit ist aber klar, dass, wenn, Seneca eine Maske trägt, er sie als Philosoph trägt. Denn sich maskieren heisst, etwas verbergen, und der Philosoph Seneca verbirgt etwas."

[62] Harry M. Hine, "*Interpretatio Stoica* of Senecan Tragedy" in edd., Margarethe Billerbeck and Ernst A. Schmidt, *Sénèque le tragique, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 50 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 2004), 173 – 220.

2.2. Political Readings

Seneca, although a gifted writer, is all the more interesting because of his place in Roman Imperial history. His own dramatic career shows the precipitous circumstances of a Roman senator who wanted to participate in forming the politics of the 1st century Empire. Some scholars have used this as an approach to his dramatic works, be it with varied success.[63]

Most extreme is the comprehensive study of J. David Bishop, in which he generates a Senecan code from the choruses of the tragedies, in order to read the tragedies as political attacks on the emperor Nero and his family.[64] This imaginative approach is marred by straining the evidence too far, giving compromising political intention to sometimes very commonplace themes such as the instability of power or even the many invocations and prayers that are widespread phenomena in the plays. His analysis of the first chorus' hymn to Cupid (274 – 357) in the *Phaedra* serves as an example.

> The addressee is <u>diva</u> 274 to whom the ode describes <u>geminus Cupido</u> 275 as <u>iste lascivus puer</u> 227. […] <u>Diva</u> is a regular gloss for the empress, here the queen mother Agrippa Augusta described as <u>non miti generata ponto</u>. She became empress at the expressed wish of the state in a huge wave of popular demand. Since the result, the equivalent of the impact of a turbulent sea, was not good for the state or Claudius, <u>non miti ponto</u> criticizes those nobles who supported the marriage and its results […].[65]

Clearly, a hymn to Cupid would also involve his mother Venus, who was born from a troubled sea, *non miti generata ponto*. There is no reason to believe that this *diva* should signify the empress, when the language used by Seneca is what would be natural in such a hymn. The idea, though fanciful, bears the burden of proof, and for such a radical interpretation better proof is needed.

Bishop has had a marginal influence on the mainstream of Senecan scholarship, but I have included him in this introduction because his method is not necessarily unrewarding. The idea of decoding Seneca can be quite productive at times, but it is important to give up when the evidence no longer supports the hypothesis. My own belief is that Seneca in some passages of his tragedies invites decoding of his poetic references, but not to a specific political situation and certainly not in every line.[66] A reading based on the notion that the tragedies are a code for political criticism, is just as reductionist as readings where Seneca is

---

[63] One of the first modern proponents of political readings were William M. Calder III, who compared the literary freedom of Neronian Rome to that of Soviet dominated Eastern Europe: "Seneca: Tragedian of Imperial Rome", *The Classical Journal* 72 (1976), 6. See also Eckard Lefèvre, "Die Politische Bedeutung der römischen Tragödie und Senecas 'Oedipus'", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* II 32.2 (1985), 1242-62.

[64] J. David Bishop, *Seneca's Daggered Stylus: Political Code in the Tragedies* (Köningstein: Anton Hain, 1985).

[65] Ibid., 228. His emphasis.

[66] As is very much the case with Bishop. Ibid., 454 - 458.

solely a moral instructor, or rhetorical showman. Such one-mindedness on one side or the other rejects any attempt of reading Senecan tragedy as literature. If he already has given moral lectures, rhetorical exercises and perhaps a sort of political criticism in his *De Clementia*,[67] why should the tragedies be a repetition of this?

Thus we turn to the work of Denis and Elisabeth Henry, who in the 1960s did much to revitalise the study of Senecan drama.[68] They found the state of Senecan scholarship to be bogged down by endless discussions on Greek antecedents, criticism based on Aristotelian poetics and the tragedies' well-known deficiencies on these grounds.[69] Instead they developed Eliot's concept that Senecan drama was all in the word, trying to analyse his tragedies as an entirely different genre than Greek tragedy. In their view, the plays provide a texture of language through which Seneca presented ideas in conflict with each other. Their use of the word texture is important. They believe that each Senecan tragedy has an extremely consistent and symbolically charged language, where key abstract nouns, such as *ius*, *pudor* and *furor* present "a human experience by the static analysis of states of mind."[70] Thus the long monologues are not only there to create characterisation, they are also a vehicle for presenting the abstracts between which the characters are drawn. This works both at an intra-character level and when reading a tragedy as a whole.[71]

Such an approach has as a prerequisite that it is possible to decode the dramatic texture and, by isolating the abstracts, to deduce what human experience is conveyed in each tragedy. The Henrys' detailed analyses of the plays are attempts at this, and the political aspect of their readings is that the human experience found is usually that of a person trapped in the Neronian court.[72]

---

[67] For such a notion, cf. J. Rufus Fears, "Nero as the Vice Regent of the Gods in Seneca's *De Clementia*", *Hermes* 103 (1975), 486-496.

[68] Through the articles: "Seneca's *Agamemnon*: Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom", *Classical Philology* 58 (1963), 1 – 10; "The Futility of Action: a Study of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*", *Classical Philology* 60 (1965), 11 – 22; "Phantasmagoria and Idyll: an Element of Seneca's *Phaedra*", *Greece and Rome* 13 (1966), 223 – 239; "Loss of Identity: *Medea superest*? A Study of Seneca's *Medea*", *Classical Philology* 62 (1967), 169 – 181; "The *Oedipus* of Seneca: an Imperial Tragedy", in ed., Boyle, *Seneca Tragicus* (Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1983), 128 – 139; and finally their already mentioned monograph: *The Mask of Power*. (As noted above, Mrs. Henry, in the earlier articles, wrote under the name of B. Walker).

[69] Henry & Walker, "Seneca's *Agamemnon*: Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom", 1 – 2.

[70] Ibid., 3.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., 10: "Elsewhere Seneca writes directly, though inevitably with reserve, of his actual experiences of public life and his relationship with Nero. [...] clearly ideas of a moral and even metaphysical kind did become heavily charged with emotion as the result of Seneca's extraordinary role in public and court life. The plays, ostensibly concerned with mythological material of the accepted kind, provided an opportunity for expressing this emotion and for distancing the ideas from actual circumstances and from personal elements." Cf. "The Futility of Action: a Study of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*"; "The *Oedipus* of Seneca: an Imperial Tragedy"; and *The Mask of Power*, chapter 8, "Tragedy and Imperial Power", 157 - 176.

This reading the Henrys applied to the *Phaedra*, finding in it a conflict between the one-track evil passion of Phaedra, which they name phantasmagoria, and the idyll of the chorus. The Henrys argue that the passion of Phaedra, sparked by her love for Hippolytus, quickly becomes an abstract force of its own, a *Furor*, and penetrates the other characters, beginning with the nurse. Opposing the increasing madness of *Phaedra,* the chorus displays a remarkably benign and well-meaning outlook that seems aloof from the gruesome destruction of the dramatic action.[73] The Henrys find the bridge between the two opposites, phantasmagoria and idyll, in Hippolytus Golden Age speech, where his wish for an ideal life is marred by unease and a desire to flee.[74]

I find that ascribing idyll to the chorus is a mistake, since in many passages it describes the violence and unpredictability of the human experience.[75] Instead, I believe the opposite of Phaedra's passion is not a naive idyll, but the carefully constructed idealism of Hippolytus. The Golden Age ideal he presents in his speech at the middle of the play is the key to this idealism, and if understood, it can be read as an abstract in the sense the Henrys use in their political readings of *Agamemnon*, *Hercules Furens* and the *Oedipus*.[76] Moreover, I think it unnecessary to locate specific abstract nouns to define an abstract. In fact, there is a development in this regard in the Henrys' own works. Where they, in their early 60s articles, were keen to identify abstracts through abstract nouns, they are quite willing to refer instead to systems of imagery in their 1985 monograph.[77] Here they apply the image of flight and pursuit in the *Phaedra* in a way similar to how they earlier spoke of abstracts

But abstract is, in my view, a better term. It stands for a form of motivation in the characters, while systems of imagery focus on concepts that tend to permeate the texts of the tragedies. This is perhaps consequence of the Henrys' focus on texture, since it sometimes overlooks that, regardless of whether they were staged or not, these are supposed to be plays with identifiable dramatic characters. Thus, if we shed the requirement for abstract nouns and instead apply the term abstract to specific forms of motivation in Seneca's characters; it is still possible to speak of the abstracts of *furor* and *pudor*, while in addition allowing for the abstract of Pathological Idealism.

---

[73] Henry & Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll", 231 – 4.

[74] Ibid. Regarding their observations on *impetus est* and *versantem,* cf. pp. 29 – 31 below.

[75] E.g. *Phaed.* 959 – 988.

[76] Cf. n. 72.

[77] D. & E. Henry, *The Mask of Power*, 25 – 26. Partially inspired by Norman Pratt's article: "Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 94 (1963), 199 - 234.

2.3 Two Forms of Close Reading

At the end of this chapter I will present two further readings which are not in any specific tradition. Their common trait is that they are forms of close reading of Seneca's *Phaedra*, be it in very different ways.

Charles Segal, who has written the only monograph dedicated solely to the *Phaedra,* uses a methodology and theoretical framework heavily indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis, above all the works of Jaques Lacan. The psychoanalytic idea that there is an unconsciousness of knowledge not known by the conscious mind is the hub about which Segal concentrates his analysis.[78] Segal's close reading of the *Phaedra* leads him to the conclusion that the poetic language, especially when describing nature or the physical world, represents a Landscape of Desire. This landscape includes the Golden Age presented by Hippolytus.[79]

The overarching premise that Seneca's *Phaedra* primarily expresses unconscious desires attracts two points of criticism. Firstly, I find it very unlikely that this is in line with the Seneca we know. His Stoic philosophy and his experience with the Imperial court's excesses are not compatible with a notion that the *Phaedra* is primarily intended to convey the unease of repressed sexual emotions. In fact, it can be argued that it is somewhat single-minded only to look for this when the tragedies are so flexible as to invite Stoic, anti-Stoic and political readings.[80] Secondly, although I concur with Segal's description of Hippolytus as deluded, I disagree about the nature of his delusion. Segal's fixation on his theoretical framework fails to notice the importance of references in the speech of Hippolytus.

> [...] Seneca draws heavily on Lucretius' fifth book, Catullus 64, Virgil's Fourth
> *Eclogue* and Second *Georgic,* Horace's Second and Sixteenth *Epodes*.[81]

He mentions no textual correspondences between the speech and any of these sources, and I have not been able to find it in any of these, apart from the Second *Georgic,*[82] the others merely have the same theme. The most obvious source of Ovid's first book of the *Metamorphoses* is not mentioned, neither are the more subtle references to Virgil's First *Georgic.* That Seneca is conscious of the Golden Age literary tradition is clear, but what Segal fails to notice is that there are references here in an intertextual dialogue with Seneca's

---

[78] "(…) Particularly in drama, the unconscious, with its repressed contents of unspeakable desires, fears and anxieties, can find expression in the imaginary events enacted before us on stage or in our mental reconstruction of the events in which we participate as we read." Charles Segal, *Language and Desire in Seneca's* Phaedra (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 19.
[79] Ibid., Chapter 4, "The Golden Age and Nature", 77 - 105.
[80] Cf. n. 62.
[81] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 78.
[82] Cf. chapter 3.4.1.

literary predecessors more significant than mere borrowing. A quite recent study of the *Phaedra*, which follows in the vein of Segal but attempts to look at the references in the text, has been made by Cedric Littlewood.[83] He finds that "the significant inheritance for Seneca from Ovid is not a model for one of his characters but a more general literary phenomenon: the erotic contamination of hunting."[84] In his reading, Hippolytus is an "ironic victim" because he does not see the latent sexuality of his hunting life, shown through Seneca's use of erotic hunting language from Ovid.[85] Littlewood thus extends Segal's views by tracing the references in the Landscape of Desire.

Littlewood and Segal are both essentially arguing that Hippolytus does not realise what his own words imply, thus the notion of him being an "ironic victim". As I hope to prove in chapter 3, the interpretation of the references in the Golden Age speech shows Hippolytus' delusion to be more conscious than they claim. I do not think that Hippolytus' Golden Age fantasy primarily is a retreat into childhood; it is a consciously chosen construct of an ideal world. It is not the repressed sexuality and hunting mania of Hippolytus that Seneca wishes to portray, although they are necessary to show the mechanism behind utopian flights from reality. Nevertheless, Segal's close reading is still important. We need not accept the Lacanian framework to make use of his numerous acute observations and interpretations, which are truly valuable to anyone who wants to study the *Phaedra*. Likewise, Littlewood's notion of Hippolytus' unknowingly using erotic language is interesting, because it shows the extent of Seneca's interest in "Ovid's pathological verbal playfulness".[86]

The final reading which needs to be presented is the approach of James A. Boyle,[87] which is in some ways akin to the Henrys' notion of poetic texture in need of interpretation through close reading. His emphasis is on Seneca as a dramatic author rather than Senator and Imperial advisor.[88] He focuses on the idea of *natura* and human impotence.[89]

When Hippolytus describes a natural life, he has the hunter image of himself as a model. This includes an incongruity between a need for dominion and control over nature, while at the same time living in peaceful union with it. The result, says Boyle, is delusion; a pathological idealism where nature is tame and void of complicating forces like savagery and

---

[83] Cedric A. J. Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 5, "Phaedra: *Intertextuality and Innocence*", 259 - 301.
[84] Ibid., 274.
[85] Ibid., 277.
[86] Ibid., 6. The phrase is used of Senecan borrowings in *Thyestes* from Ovid's myth of Procne in *Met*. VI.
[87] Boyle's article on the *Phaedra*, "In Nature's Bonds", develops many themes; I have here only focused on what is relevant to my thesis.
[88] Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*, 3 – 12.
[89] Boyle, "In Nature's Bonds", 1290.

yearnings.[90] Hippolytus fails to recognise that he does not live in the Golden Age and needs to stop trying to realise his fantasy world.

> What is called for is a different attitude to nature, one which recognises the violence, amorality and power of the force that governs both the wild and *humana vita* itself – the violence, amorality, power which the first chorus has already observed (274 – 357).[91]

I believe Boyle is right when he says it is the chorus that tells us what nature is, and I find the term pathological idealism to be a very good description of Hippolytus' illusion. But as mentioned in the introduction, Boyle does not develop the term, and I wish to define it further to show its usefulness in exploring the nature of Hippolytus' delusion.

The brilliance of the term Pathological Idealism, in my understanding of Boyle's term, is that it captures the essence of what Seneca wishes to portray. This is neither a naive dream, such as the Henrys would have it, nor Segal's notion of an ignorant flight from one's own sexuality. Instead of focusing on the source of his idealism, i.e. an emotion, it denotes the process or mechanism of how it works. Hippolytus' is not blindly fleeing; he consciously *chose* to be an idealist. Caught between a train of madness, phantasmagoria, coming from Phaedra, and the ambiguous and treacherous *natura* shown in the play, this idealism is confronted with a choice. It must either accept and confront reality, or twist reality to conform to the ideal. Hippolytus cannot do much about phantasmagoria and *natura*, so he inventively uses the myth of the Golden Age as an ideal. The problem with this is that the Golden Age traditions he reaches out to, Ovid's life of leisure and Virgil's heuristic man, are not compatible with his own ideal, or even between themselves. The wrong choice, not confronting reality, was the point of no return. His idealism, as portrayed in the Golden Age speech, is such a complex construction that it is difficult for him to get out of it, consequently deserving to be stamped as pathological.

Pathological Idealism is a trait I believe several secondary characters have in Senecan drama, such as Jason or Thyestes. It relates to the Dilemma of Political Participation because it is what Seneca so vehemently argues against in many of his prose works. The character trait is such that it can be analysed in terms of the Henrys' notion of conflicting abstracts and my next chapter is devoted to showing how Seneca, through poetic reference, is able to convey such an abstract.

---

[90] Boyle, "In Nature's Bonds", 1306.
[91] Ibid. This is in strong contrast to Littlewood, who reads desire in the *Phaedra* as a "principle not of nature but of literature": *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy,* 269.

This chapter has presented the parts of recent Senecan scholarship that will be important in the further discussion. The dominant trend of philosophical readings, herein the *exempla*-readings, are important because it is possible, perhaps necessary, to discuss Pathological Idealism within a Stoic framework. The five scholars who have received particular attention are central because they have all made close readings of the *Phaedra*, but arrived at different conclusions. Boyle's term of pathological idealism is, I believe, the most accurate to describe what is behind Hippolytus' Golden Age, but it involves implications that Boyle does not develop. In addition, I agree with Boyle that the *natura* of the play is fundamentally a chaotic force. The Henrys have with their notion of conflicting abstracts given a good framework for reading Seneca's tragedies politically, without resorting to Bishop's decoding, and their notion of a phantasmagoria seeping from Phaedra is akin to the readings in the *exempla*-tradition. Littlewood's literary approach give indication of a strong Ovidian influence, but like Segal he insists on Hippolytus not being conscious of his delusion, an "ironic victim". The many interesting observations made by Segal are pertinent in any discussion of the Golden Age speech. Nevertheless, I have found it necessary to present my reservations to his Lacanian approach.

None of the scholars in this chapter, apart from Littlewood, has given any serious attention to the texts that Seneca reaches out to in Hippolytus' speech. The Henrys only have an observation on *impetus est* (518);[92] Boyle makes no point of it in his study of the *Phaedra*, and though he in his monograph on the tragedies mentions that there is a presence of Virgil and Ovid, he mainly discusses the conflation of elements in the dramatic sequence of events from Ovid's *Heroides* and Euripides' versions of the theme.[93] Segal has an interest in possible antecedents to the passage, but only the Fourth *Eclogue* of Virgil receives anything more than a polite mention.[94] All commentaries on the *Phaedra* mention parallel passages, but usually without interpretation, as is the case with the most recent one by Coffey and Mayer.

---

[92] Cf. p. 29.
[93] Boyle, *Senecan Tragedy*, 86.
[94] Segal, *Language and Desire,* 85 – 86.

Chapter 3. The Golden Age

Non alia magis est libera et vitio carens
ritusque melius vita quae priscos colat
quam quae relictis moenibus silvas amat.　　　　　　(*Phaed*. 483 – 5)
No other life is freer, more innocent,
and better at observing the old customs,
than the life that leaves city walls behind and loves the forests.

With these three lines, Hippolytus opens his reply to the advances and reasoning made by Phaedra's nurse. Freedom, moral purity and the old ways are the hallmarks of a good man's life, which to him corresponds to life in the Golden Age. I believe that such idealism is an important abstract, in the Henrys' terms, and that it is usually portrayed through the medium of Seneca's tragic victims. The choice of the Golden Age speech (*Phaed*. 483 - 564) to provide support for this general hypothesis can be explained by the following two main reasons.

Firstly, although Hippolytus is a secondary character, prey to the protagonist's passion, he is more resilient than Jason is in the *Medea* or Thyestes in his title play. Hippolytus' strong character allows him, the victim, to instigate the tragedy with a monologue, something unusual to Senecan drama which typically opens with a tirade from the active and evil force in the play, i.e. the protagonist or a supernatural agent.[95] His self-discipline and intelligence make him suitable to exemplify my notion of a secondary character misled by idealism, since his construction of his ideal is more complex than would be the case with the feebler Jason or Thyestes. To Hippolytus, the ideal is a utopian life without the conflict of love or the manacles of civilisation. This utopia is noticeable in many of his passages, but perhaps best detectible in this long monologue so central in the play.[96]

Secondly, using the conventional topos of the Golden Age allows Seneca to enter an intertextual dialogue with his predecessors. That Seneca was versed in Augustan and Republican literature and his fondness for alluding to his literary predecessors are both well-known facts.[97] This opens for a comparative reading of the passage with Virgil's *Georgics* and the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, two texts I shall later argue are his most important sources. Given that Seneca does seem to allude to literary forerunners in this speech, I find it probable that analysing these references will allow us to penetrate deeper into the Pathological Idealism portrayed in these 70-odd lines.

---

[95] Protagonist opening: *Medea, Oedipus, Phoenissae.* Supernatural opening: *Thyestes, Agamemnon, Hercules Furens.* The supernatural agents are not very active participants, but they ally with the main protagonist and thus represent the evil forces at play.
[96] Lines 483 – 564, out of a total of 1280.
[97] Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents".

The investigation in this chapter will be conducted along the following lines: I will begin with a brief general look at the Golden Age speech (3.1), followed by a presentation of the method developed by Richard Thomas to distinguish different forms of poetic references (3.2). The main part of this chapter is devoted to finding and analysing the poetic references in the Golden Age speech. First, those which refer to Ovid will be examined (3.3), and secondly, the references to Virgil (3.4). I think it necessary to study the Ovidian references first so as to establish the context for understanding the function of the references to Virgil. Therefore, the Ovidian references are discussed before turning to Virgil, despite the fact that the Virgilian references are mainly found in the first part of the speech.

3.1. The Golden Age Speech and its Context

The speech is made in response to Phaedra's nurse. She has accepted to be a go-between for her mistress who has agreed not to commit suicide if the nurse helps her (*Phaed*. 255 - 273). The nurse rebukes Hippolytus for not accepting the natural course for his age: courtship and pleasure (443 – 460). Each phase in life has its purpose; to be young is to be frivolous (453), so why cannot Hippolytus be young? His barbaric manners make him an enemy to civilisation and the nature of things (461 - 482). She concludes forcefully with a line of "Stoic flavour":[98] man is a social animal and should strive to be one.

> *Proinde vitae sequere naturam ducem:*
> *urbem frequenta, civium coetus cole.*   (*Phaed.* 481 – 482)
> Thus, follow nature as life's guide:
> Frequent the city; cultivate the company of its citizens.

She thereby establishes a link between urban life and youthful pleasures; by alluring him into the former he will be enticed to the latter. He evades her charges and launches upon a vision of purity, where the nurse's norm for civilisation is represented as the symptom of a fallen age.

The speech can be divided into three parts.[99] Hippolytus first presents his ideal of a perfect life (483 – 525), where he describes in present tense the various activities of a man who loves the forest: how he sleeps, eats and drinks. The imagery and themes echo his call to the hunt from the opening monologue of the play (1 - 84). He is labouring to prove that there

---

[98] Peter J. Davis, *"Vindicat Omnes Natura Sibi:* A Reading of Seneca's *Phaedra"*, in ed., Boyle, *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama* (Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1983), 125.

[99] Alternatively, two parts: the ideal life (486 - 525) and the Golden Age and its fall (525 - 564). For an extremely detailed thematic division, cf. Vicente C. López, "Edad de oro, lugar ameno y vida feliz en *Fedra*, 483-564", *Cuadernos de filología clásica* 16 (1979), 156-8.

is a different form of pact with nature than the one that the nurse preaches, namely, that of a hunter's life. The old customs (*ritus priscos,* 484) of this ideal existence are identical with the ones the first race of men lived by (525 – 6). The second, and shortest, part describes what these old customs entail (525 - 539). The description is a negative presentation, i.e. a list of aspects of modern life non-existent in the Golden Age. In the third part, he rushes through the evils following upon the mad lust for gain (*lucri furor,* 540) and wrath (*ira,* 541), which beset mankind and produced social and moral deterioration (541 - 564). At the end of this list of sins and bloody destruction he suddenly launches into a misogynist rant (559 - 563). At the end, he stops abruptly and exclaims that he only needs to mention Medea, the spouse of Aegeus, to provide a sufficient example of this terrible race (563 - 4).

It has been noted that Hippolytus does not answer the nurse directly, [100] which to some extent is true since his reply does not follow her neat dialectic. Instead, he rejects the very premise of her argument, that urban life and female companionship are natural things to be desired. Instead of responding to her advice he presents his own view, based on his version of the Golden Age which he uses to legitimise his contempt for urban pleasures, soft living and women in general.

After his speech, he is adamant in his resolved hatred of all women (566 - 573). A confrontation with his stepmother then follows (589 - 718), where Phaedra reveals her love. Hippolytus threatens to sacrifice her (704 - 709), but flees when she reacts with joy, leaving his sword to incriminate him upon his father's return. Theseus is led to believe that his son attacked Phaedra and condemns him to death with one of the boons given by his own father, Poseidon (903 - 958). Hippolytus is then killed by the famed bull from the sea (1000ff.), Phaedra commits shameful suicide (1200) and Theseus is left on stage to bewail his fate and dead son.

3.2. The Art of Reference

The degrees by which classical authors allude or refer to their predecessors have always been a contested issue in classical philology. [101] The recurring question is usually whether a passage or a word is in some way a direct reference or just a commonplace expression, phrase or

---

[100] Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra (London: Duckworth, 2002), 38 – 39.
[101] The modern father of this discussion is Giorgio Pasquali's "Arte Allusiva", *Italia che scrive* 25 (1942) 185-187. Richard Thomas follows in his tradition. In 3.3.2. I will through the example of the *fraga* in *Phaed*. 516 discuss the critisim this method can be met with.

theme any author would use, with no allusion to a specific earlier text intended. The dilemma is neatly presented by Richard Thomas in "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference":

> Methodologically there is one chief danger in a study such as this, that is, the problem of determining when a reference is really a reference, and when it is merely an accidental confluence, inevitable between poets dealing with a shared or related language.[102]

Thomas wants to prove that Virgil in his references is engaging in poetic competition with his predecessors, and that this can bring new depth and subtlety to his works. My claim is not that Seneca is a writer at the same level; most probably he put politics and philosophy before literature. But occasionally he makes an effort to vie with the greatest.

Since my approach is based on the assumption that there are intentional references in the text, the methodological danger mentioned by Thomas should warrant some consideration. This I will provide by presenting Thomas' two criteria for references, which will be used below (3.3.1 and 3.4.1) to establish that the speech has references to the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* the *Amores* III.8, *Heroides* IV and Virgil's First and Second *Georgic*.

Thomas gives two conditions for identifying a word or a passage as a reference.[103] Firstly, there must be verifiable evidence or at least a high probability of the text referred to being known by the author. The second condition is that the reference has to be meaningful i.e. it has to be susceptible to interpretation.[104] Although these criteria seem fairly straightforward, there are already some obstacles to accepting them without reservation. The first condition is exposed to circular argument, where the proposed reference is used to claim that the text referred to was known by the author. To guard against this it is advisable to have some other evidence for the claim to strengthen the assertion. Such evidence can be found in other passages in the referring author's works, e.g. quotes or paraphrases from the passage of the author to which a reference seems to be made. The fact that Seneca in *Ep*. XC quotes several lines from Virgil's description in the First *Georgic* of man's hardships following the Golden Age (121.ff.) is ample evidence to prove he knew and engaged with this text. Another type of external evidence is information found in contemporary Roman sources, usually

---

[102] Thomas, "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", 174.
[103] Ibid.
[104] The importance of these conditions is made evident in López, "Edad de oro, lugar ameno y vida feliz en *Fedra*, 483-564". By citing all possible parallel passages it is impossible to distinguish which are important to Seneca and which we, for lack of evidence or plausible interpretation, merely can site as parallels or borrowings. Cf. Thomas' example of Pindar in Vergil: "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", 174.

historical works.[105] But more often than not these external sources are scarce, as is the case with Seneca.[106]

If such evidence cannot be produced it is necessary to look for internal evidence in the text where it has been proposed that a reference has been made. An option is to look for several passages that could be interpreted as references. If these seem to follow a pattern or line of argument similar to what can be found in the proposed text referred to, this lends additional weight to the claim. For example, the sequence of traits in the Golden Age description in Hippolytus speech (528 - 38), corresponds with those found in the Golden Age sequence of Ovid's first book of the *Metamorphoses* (94 – 102). The rareness or distinctness of expression in a proposed reference can also be used as an argument, since the likelihood of two authors using the same rare word in the same context or having exactly the same combination of themes by just accidental confluence is rather small.

That Seneca acknowledged and appreciated the practice of poetic reference, we can learn from a letter to Lucilius where he describes the practice of emulation. Lucilius has a strong wish to describe Etna, and Seneca states that even though the topos had been covered by many illustrious predecessors, it is still possible to write something new.

> *Quem quominus Ovidius tractaret, nihil obstitit quod iam Vergilius impleverat; ne Severum quidem Cornelium uterque deterruit. Omnibus praeterea feliciter hic locus se dedit, et qui praecesserant non praeripuisse mihi videntur quae dici poterant, sed aperuisse. Sed multum interest utrum ad consumptam materiam an ad subactam accedas: crescit in dies, et inventuris inventa non obstant. Praeterea condicio optima est ultimi: parata verba invenit, quae aliter instructa novam faciem habent.*
> (*Ep.* LXXIX.5–6)

> Nothing prevented Ovid from handling it [i.e. the *locus communis* of Etna], even though Virgil already had satisfyingly done so. Indeed, neither of them could thereafter deter Cornelius Severus. What's more, this topos gave itself happily to them all, and it seems to me that those who came before did not forestall further development, but rather opened the field. But there is an important difference between approaching a field that has been exhausted and one that merely has been cultivated. In the latter case, it will grow each day and what has been invented will not stand in the way for new inventions. Furthermore, to be last in a tradition is the best position. One finds that words are available which, when they are set together differently, will have a new face.

Seneca is here extolling the virtue of borrowing from your predecessors' works on famous topics, claiming that, with some rearrangement, one can give an entirely new face, *nova facies*, to old topoi. That there are parallels to other texts in Hippolytus' speech has been

---

[105] For example, the knowledge that the two authors Horace and Virgil belonged to the same literary circle makes it more plausible that there could be references to the other in their works.
[106] Cf. n. 39.

noted by many; Mayer and Coffey emphasise the presence of Virgil and Ovid.[107] But no systematic study has interpreted the parallels as references intended to convey a specific meaning, the second condition in Thomas' system. I believe that the parallels to Virgil and Ovid in the Golden Age speech are not unconscious borrowing or a consequence of the topos. They bring additional meaning to the text.

To analyse poetic references, Thomas has made a typology of those he found in Virgil's *Georgics*, maintaining that this list could be applied to Latin poetry in general.[108] The list is as follows: *«Casual reference, Single reference, Self-reference, Correction, Apparent reference,* and *Multiple reference* or *Conflation".*[109] A *Casual reference* is a hint or an allusion with no particular intention; it tends to copy a style or an expression without doing anything with the interpretation of the text. A *Single reference* has a clear and unique antecedent and expects the reader to be reminded of and use the text referred to in interpreting the reference. A *Self-reference* is similar to a Single reference but within an author's own *oeuvre*. A C*orrection* refers to a predecessor but changes something, either in word order, rhythm, context or choice of word to show a disagreement. It is an indication of the author's taste and provides an opportunity to differ with previous concepts or even factual claims. An *Apparent reference* seems to be a reference but thwarts any attempt to be interpreted. A *Multiple reference/ Conflation* is a combination of two or more of the above and is a reference that relates to more than one antecedent, usually with the aim both to correct and refer.

A final note**:** Virgil wrote pastoral, didactic and epic poetry. Ovid's list of genres is exhaustive. Seneca wrote tragedies. That there are some differences between the genres might be an objection against applying Thomas' method to dramatic literature, but I think Senecan drama, with its highly rhetorical nature and strong consciousness of previous versions of the myths told in it, is not too far from Virgil's or Ovid's genres.[110] When the literary vogue of the 1st century is taken into account, its obsession with details and scholarship,[111] it is not improbable that Seneca would at least to some degree apply poetic reference, even when writing tragedies.

---

[107] Coffey & Mayer *Seneca:* Phaedra, 135. I have for this chapter mainly used their commentary as a source for references that are already known, although not interpreted. They have an excellent list of all possible borrowings on pp. 197 – 203.

[108] Thomas, "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", 198.

[109] Ibid., 175.

[110] It certainly does not hinder Littlewood from finding references to Roman elegy: *Phaedra*: *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy,* 6.

[111] Conte, *Latin Literature*, 401 – 404.

3.3.1 Ovid

The strongest presence of another author in the speech is that of Ovid, whom Seneca admired and emulated. Ovid is a principal source of inspiration for his tragedies, and Seneca regularly borrows elements of both style and plot.[112] There are also several rare word occurrences in the speech with antecedents only in Ovid, which leads us to believe that Seneca, at least in this case, saw Ovid as a writer who provided him with *parata verba* to reassemble into a *nova facies*.

The most convincing argument for Ovid's presence in the speech is the similarity in structure between the versions of the Golden Age in Seneca and Ovid. In the middle passage of Hippolytus' speech we find a quick sequence of characteristic traits of the Golden Age (*Phaed*. 528 – 38). The sequence of the traits is as follows; no boundary stones (528-9), no sailing (530), the sea being the natural boundary of man (531), no defences (531-2), no weapons (533-5), and no ploughing (535-8). This sequence is found in exactly the same order in *Amores* III.8.41 – 48, with the exception that the lack of ploughing appears first, in line 41. The first book of the *Metamorphoses* also has the same order (94 – 102), apart from that the mention of the lack of boundary stones first appears in line136.[113] Such a degree of structural correspondence is rare, even with typical themes within the same topos, and is a strong argument supporting that Seneca did in fact use the Ovidian descriptions of the Golden Age as a guide when writing his own.

In general, the passage in the *Metamorphoses* is probably more important, since there are additional references to this Golden Age description in the first and last part of the speech. Besides, the occurrence of the Golden Age in the *Amores* is somewhat ornamental; it is there used as a contrast to the modern world where gold is preferred to genius (*Am*.III.8.3). Littlewood claims that *Phaed*. 528 - 38 predominantly are modelled after the passage from the *Amores*, reading it as a form of deviant, erotic intertextuality.[114] I believe the focus on the erotic overlooks an important point. Both Golden Age passages from Ovid function as templates for Hippolytus' version, and what they portray is a leisurely Golden Age free from toil. But, as will be shown below, Hippolytus makes changes to this template in order to suit his own situation. This implies that the Ovidian Golden Age one some level is a conscious

---

[112] Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and its Antecedents", 263 - 4. All possible parallels have been collected in Rainer Jakobi's *Der Einfluss Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988).
[113] This structural similarity with the *Amores* and *Metamorphoses* is well-known: Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*, 139.
[114] Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy,* 264.

choice for Hippolytus.[115] If this is the case, it is more likely that he is following the Golden Age from the *Metamorphoses*, since this fits into a grander narrative on mankind's decline, which Hippolytus also refers to in the first and third part of the speech. Hippolytus is reaching out to a specific Golden Age idea, and this strengthens the claim that he is attempting to back-track time by referring to the Golden Age of the *Metamorphoses*, instead of unknowingly erotisising by reference to the *Amores*. This is not to say that the list in the *Amores* is not used by Seneca, but the intertextual dialogue is more complex with, and the allusions are more numerous to, the *Metamorphoses,* and thus it is probably the most relevant.

Apart from the passages in the *Metamorphoses* and *Amores*, it will also be argued that the idea of using the Golden Age as a hideaway from the expectations of civilisation is something Seneca found in Ovid's *Heroides* IV.129 - 34, and I will also discuss the reference to *Heroides* IV.38 mentioned by the Henrys. This will be argued below; suffice it to say that these letters from tragic heroines have been noted by Tarrant to be a profound influence on Senecan tragedy.[116] The first book of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Amores* III.8 provide for Seneca's Hippolytus a backdrop or a template Golden Age mythology. The many correspondences make it advisable to note when Seneca decides to make Hippolytus alter the template; these alterations are significant because some of them help reveal the nature of his Pathological Idealism.

3.3.2 Hints of Ovid – Constructing Pathological Idealism (483 - 525)

In the programmatic first three lines of his speech (483 - 5) Hippolytus makes it quite clear that his idea of natural life is diametrically opposed to what the nurse argued for. He picks up the imperative from the last line in her speech, *civium coetus cole*, cultivate the company of citizens (482), and changes the premise of the argument.[117] Natural life is not urban; it is far away from city walls (485) and observes or cultivates the old customs (*ritus priscos colat*, 484). But his *colat* also echoes the *colebat* in Ovid's first book of the *Metamorphoses*, where it is reported that the Golden Age observed honesty and uprightness (*fidem rectumque colebat, Met*. I.90) by its own volition, without protection and need for codified law.

---

[115] It is the template's idea that Hippolytus is aware of and tries to use, the use of Ovid's words is of course Seneca's.

[116] Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents", 262. Here he argues particularly that the characterisation of Seneca's tragic heroine in the *Phaedra* owes much to *Heroides* IV. This is supported by Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra*,* 14; and Boyle, *Seneca's* Phaedra, (Liverpool: Francis Cairns Publications, 1987 (repr. Leeds: 1992), 234.

[117] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra*,* 135. They also note that he picks up the nurse's *libertas* in 460 through *libera* in 483.

Hippolytus does not mention the Golden Age explicitly before the middle part of the speech (525 - 39), which is the passage most heavily indebted to Ovid, but the *ritus prisci* in 484 foreshadow it. Indeed, the middle part opens by claiming that all the activities praised in the first part correspond to the *ritus* of the Golden Age.

> *Hoc equidem reor*
> *uixisse ritu prima quos mixtos deis*
> *profudit aetas.*   (*Phaed.* 525 - 7)
>   Indeed, I believe
>   the first Age produced men who lived
>   amongst the gods and by these customs.

The life described in the first part has mainly references to Virgil's postlapsarian man in the *Georgics,* as will be discussed below (3.4.1 - 3). In this chapter we shall go straight to the end of the first part, where Ovidian references occur more frequently. In lines 515 – 525 there are three such occurrences, opening a window to the mythological background of the story, the ancestry of Phaedra and Hippolytus, and to the myth of the Golden Age. The first reference emerges where Hippolytus extolls the blissful life of the man who freely roams the countryside. In this context he describes the simple diet such a man would live on.

> *Excussa silvis poma compescunt famem*
> *et fraga parvis vulsa dumetis cibos*
> *faciles ministrant.*   (*Phaed.* 515 - 517)
>   Apples, shaken from the trees, satisfy hunger,
>   and wild strawberries, twisted from small shrubs,
>   provide easy meals.

Coffey and Mayer note that the presence of *fraga* might be read as an allusion: "The word is unusual and could point to Seneca's source."[118] The source here is Ovid's description of the Golden Age, *montanaque fraga legebant,* they picked the mountain's wild strawberries (*Met.* I.104.). This might be suspected to be a Single reference, since rare words used in the same context is rather uncommon and therefore they are often interpreted as a form of allusion.

But the *fraga*, although the word is unusual, can just as well be seen as part of the commonplace description of the bounties of nature in the Golden Age, a standard trait in all passages on early man's life such as Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* V. 939 ff.[119] This illustrates a problem in the catalogue of references used by Thomas. To demonstrate that something is not a mere "accidental confluence" is not very difficult. But to determine whether something is a Single reference, rather than the side-effect of a traditional topos, where the same words

---

[118] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra*,*138.
[119] Where the diet was acorns and arbute berries.

would have to be used by any author, is a tougher task. Concerning whether *fraga* is a reference to Ovid, the argument against is that any passage unfolding the circumstances of early man's life must include something on his diet and the cornucopia of Golden Age nature, be it arbutes, strawberries or honey. *Fraga* could just as well have been the preferred choice because together with *famem* and *faciles* it produces a nice alliterative effect, no reference intended.

I have included this discussion to make a point, namely, that the critique of Thomas' catalogue of references with relation to topoi common to any classical author can be turned on its head.[120] It is not necessary, when claiming that the text stands within a typical tradition, to deny any possibility of intertextual relation. In fact, the topos is itself a nexus of intertextual play where a range of predecessors and a shared concept (in this case, the concept of the Golden Age) form something more multifaceted than a singular predecessor to which an author in Thomas' system must make his reference. True, Thomas does include a category in his catalogue of references which he names Multiple reference or Conflation, but this still relies on determining specific antecedents to which an author can refer.[121] Such a strict terminology attracts a critical observation: An author who has chosen to write within a topos may in fact not be referring directly to any predecessor. One can instead free the audience from having to identify two or more direct antecedents, as Thomas insists on, and say that the topos as a whole is a frame of reference, within which an author can actively position himself. Although the reference is to the topos itself, not to any specific text or author, there is still room for intertextual dialogue. A deviation from a commonplace trait in a tradition is conspicuous and meaningful, as is new inventions that do not build on predecessors. A topos would then be «an intertextual tradition as a collectivity, to which the individual contexts and connotations of individual prior instances are firmly subordinate».[122]

The Golden Age was one of classical literature's most frequently applied themes, and Seneca's version is probably informed by more than just the few texts we can produce trustworthy evidence for. It is in accordance with this notion that Segal promotes a

---

[120] This discussion is based on the ideas of Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[121] Thomas, "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", 195 – 8. Even when he here is describing a passage of heavy intertextual dialogue, Thomas is naming a specific text referred to in the case of every alleged reference.
[122] Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext,* 34.

comparison with the Fourth *Eclogue,* not because Seneca refers to this text, but because it is a good sample of the standard topos of the Golden Age.[123]

With these objections in mind, is it possible to say that the *fraga,* in Thomas' typology, is a Single reference? I believe it is, mainly because there are so many other references to Ovid, especially in the middle and last part of the speech. Moreover, there are few verifiable references in the speech to other possible sources, apart from the Virgilian elements we shall investigate below. There is little in style, expression or choice of words which could come from Lucretius or Tibullus for example, who both have typical and famous Golden Age renderings.[124] The pervading presence of Ovid in the text indicates that Seneca in fact chose to base his Golden Age description almost solely on Ovid. Deviation from the myth is a conscious divergence not only from the topos but from a particular Ovidian text. The reason for this might be that Single references allow Seneca to make a commentary on his own text, by hinting to us that we should look to the Ovidian version.

Leaving strawberries aside, let us turn to lines 517 – 8, where Hippolytus expresses a desire to flee the world of kingly luxuries, *regios luxus procul est impetus fugisse.* The Henrys, although they do not offer any interpretation of this, have pointed out that he uses the same construction as Ovid's Phaedra in *Heroides* IV, when she expresses a desire to go into the wild after Hippolytus, *Est mihi per saevas impetus ire feras,* (*Heroides* IV.38).[125] It is important to note, as the Henrys have done, that Seneca gives his Hippolytus the word *fugio* to describe his withdrawal from civilised life, the word is used throughout the play to describe Hippolytus' attitudes.[126] Flight, headlong from the luxuries his royal station demands, is something very different from the philosophical withdrawal advocated in so many of Senecas prose works. Although his opinion on the how, where and when is shifting, Seneca is consistent on the point that the withdrawal from any position should be gradual and carefully deliberated.[127] The use of *impetus est*, in such a contrast to Seneca's own views, can therefore be read as Seneca's comment on the nature of Hippolytus' idealism. By using a term implying a violent emotion, a term which Ovid previously used to describe the irrational and impetuous

---

[123] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 85 – 86. It is also the premise for Hugo F. Bauzá, "El tema de la edad de oro en *Fedra* de Seneca", *Dionisio* 52 (1981), 55 – 66.

[124] Cf. Coffey and Mayer's list of borrowings, *Seneca*: Phaedra, 200 – 1.

[125] Henry & Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll", 234.

[126] D & E Henry, *The Mask of Power*, 149 - 51.

[127] Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, chapter 10, "The Philosopher on Political Participation", 315 - 366. In this chapter she tracks a development in Seneca's stance by going through the dialogues and letters on the subject.

nature of Phaedra's love, Seneca makes Hippolytus reveal that his ideal of a perfect life away from the city is not the result of a deliberation but rather the embrace of an impulse to flee.

In *De Ira* II. 4, Seneca explains how an emotion roots itself in the human mind. The first movement (*primus motus*) is involuntary and can befall any man, even the wise. The second movement is an act of decision, not unruly (*alter cum uoluntate non contumaci*), where a category is given to the initial impulse. It is in confrontation with the second movement the Stoic mind is needed to determine whether the emotion is valid or not,[128] (usually, it is not). The third movement follows if reason does not prevail at the second stage and is unmanageable from the start (*tertius motus est iam inpotens*) and thus to give it rational trappings will do no more than bring petrol to the fire. Hippolytus is here acting on an initial impulse to flee, he has accepted it and the third phase is to construct a Golden Age fantasy to justify it. What makes it Pathological Idealism and not just simple flight is the complexity of this construct: The Golden Age of Hippolytus is an ingenious attempt to redefine what is natural. But by using Ovid's expression from *Heroides* IV.38, Seneca can point out that Hippolytus' impulse is in nature no different from Phaedra's. The rationalisation of an impulse is doomed to be flawed, since it is based on unsound judgement in the first place, that of ascribing value to an emotion.

Littlewood, in his comment on the Henrys' interpretation of the reference, claims that its function is to show the audience that Phaedra is hunting him. The "important point is that we can hear Phaedra in the background pursuing wild beasts, but Hippolytus can't." His ignorance of the larger forces at play makes Hippolytus an "ironic victim."[129] In contrast, I would argue that the use of *impetus est* reveal that Hippolytus' idealism is conscious and chosen, what he is ignorant of is that his impulse is in theory the same as Phaedra's. Although Phaedra's unlawful love has not yet been unveiled, his rational choice, what Seneca in *De Ira* named the second movement (*alter motus*), was the willing act of embracing the impulse to flee. Thus, the reference is more complex than a hint to Phaedra's desire; it shows that Hippolytus is knowingly creating an ideal, but he is unaware that his impulse to do so is just as erroneous as Phaedra's passion.

The complexity of this reference, and the references *maria* (532), *novercae* (558), and *labor* (504) which will be discussed below, could be taken as an implicit argument against the premise for the *exempla*-approach mentioned above (2.1). The Pathological Idealism of

---

[128] E.g. Emotion: I have been wronged. False conclusion: I must be avenged.
[129] Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy,* 277.

Hippolytus is a decent into illusion with many steps, and these are not shown in such a direct and striking manner as to invite an immediate emotional response. But I find it quite possible that Pathological Idealism, as an important abstract in the play, instead complements the *exempla*-approach, since the negative *exempla* usually are the main protagonists in Senecan drama. While the negative *exemplum* of Phaedra's *furor* is immediately felt, the Pathological Idealism in Hippolytus does not detract from its impact, but adds an interesting counterpart. Hippolytus' idealism, which was meant to be the antidote to women and urban life, has the opposite effect of making him a more vulnerable victim. Combined with the negative *exemplum* of Phaedra's phantasmagoria it shows that both emotions, the unlawful desire and the impulse to flee, are dangerous. The difference between the two is that Phaedra embraces her passion, while Hippolytus tries to rationalise it. Hopefully, this shows that Seneca was able to use more than one form of characterisation, thus proving Eliot wrong.[130]

That Hippolytus is an intricate character is conveyed by the fact that he seems to feel somewhat uneasy about his flight; there is an indication for this in line 521. The Henrys question why Hippolytus seems uncomfortable with his dreamt up circumstances in this line where the sleeper twists safe members on a hard bed, *Secura duro membra versantem toro*, since sleeplessness should not be a problem for the forest-dweller.[131] Many others have found this problematic, and *versantem* was not accepted by Zwierlein, who used *laxantem* in the OCT edition.[132] In the MSS, E has *versantem* and A, usually more corrupt, has *versantur*. John G. Fitch, in his volume of critical notes to the text of Seneca's tragedies, refers to the arguments of Axelson and Zwierlein, who both think "*versare* belong in description of troubled sleep, i.e. the opposite to that being described here."[133] Against this I think the Henrys are right in following E, since *versantem* complement the many hints in the speech that his chosen huntsman's life is not all he wants it to be. The interpretation of the text's references shows that there is no need of a conjecture.

The first Ovidian phrase rare and unique enough to be a self-evident Single reference is found in lines 523 - 4. The expression labyrinth home (*Multiplici domo,* 523 – 4) appears only in one other place, in *Met.* VIII.158.[134] Ovid relates that king Minos, upon returning

---

[130] Cf. p. 4.
[131] Henry & Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll", 234 – 5: "Why does Hippolytus find the hard bed painful if his body is healthy and exhausted and his mind free from anxiety?"
[132] Coffey & Mayer has *versantem,* but in the commentary they condemn it as an ill-chosen word: *Seneca: Phaedra,* 138.
[133] Fitch, *Anneana Tragica: Notes on the Text of Seneca's Tragedies*, 117. In the same comment he argues that *versantem* came in through a gloss.
[134] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 139.

victorious to Crete, was made aware of his wife's monster offspring and sought to hide it in the labyrinth (*multiplex domus*), seeking to cover the shame of his house. Seneca's Hippolytus speaks of a frightened (*timens*, 523) man who fearfully hides himself in his labyrinth home (*seque multiplici timens domo recondit*, 523 - 4). The Single reference to *Met.* VIII.158 connects Hippolytus' opinion of urban life to the story of the Minotaur and Phaedra's shameful house.[135] In addition, the word *multiplex* has the meaning that something is multifarious or complex,[136] which is suggestive of Hippolytus' difficult feelings for his own home. The stark contrast to this is his idealised man, who is pure and simple enough to live with heaven as witness (*teste caelo vivit*, 525). By applying the expression from the *Metamorphoses,* Seneca is able to link Hippolytus' fear of *regii luxus* and the complexity of urban life with his stepmother, although the surface meaning of the lines is that ideal man does not withdraw into lavish houses. Without realising it, Seneca's Hippolytus has connected his two basic fears through a Single reference.

The use of *impetus est* and *mutiplex domus* makes it much more likely that also *fraga* should be a Single reference to Ovid. The three give us the basic three components of Hippolytus' Pathological Idealism: The irrational passion to flee, no different from Phaedra's passion, is revealed by *impetus est fugisse*. *Fraga* denotes the construct of an ideal sylvan Golden Age upon a typical template, namely, the Golden Age passage of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The object of his fear, the labyrinth complex of civilised life, including the palatial intrigues of his stepmother, is buried in the peculiar expression *mutipliex domus*. It is interesting to note that Hippolytus is conscious of his constructed idealism, but ignorant of its likeness to Phaedra's passion, probably because he at this stage has not yet encountered his step-mother and discovered her feelings. But the references are crafted such that they reveal both his knowledge of his own project, and his ignorance of Phaedra's.

These three references at the end of the first part of the speech give the impression that Hippolytus is constructing a fantasy that is strained, shown by the fact that he one who lives the ideal life is still twisting in his sleep (521). The strain becomes more evident when we in 3.4.2 shall look at how the first part of the speech clashes with the proper Golden Age presented in the middle part.

---

[135] Phaedra is daughter of Pasiphaë and king Minos; her mother begot the Minotaur after being impregnated by a bull.
[136] OLD s. v. *Multiplex,* 5 and 6.

3.3.3 Template Reading – Emulation and Divergence (525 - 539)

Whereas the first part has few references that point to Ovid, there is from 527 and onwards to the end of the speech a continuing presence of Ovidian influence. Seneca engages his predecessor in a game where he rewrites and copies, even corrects, the Golden Age template laid out in the *Metamorphoses* and *Amores*. He does this in both the first and third part of the speech as well, but since the most important references are those that can tell us something about his Pathological Idealism, it is only here in the middle that I have discussed these types of references, so as to give an example of how Seneca engages in literary competition with his predecessor. As mentioned above, the list of things that did *not* exist in the Golden Age follows the sequence of *Met*. 1.94 – 102 and *Amores* III.8.42 – 48.

For the boundaries mentioned in 528-9, Ovid uses the same phrase with very little variation, *nullo signabat/signavit humum limite mensor* (*Met*. I.135 – 6; *Amores* III.8.42),[137] no surveyor divided land with the borderline. Seneca brings in *campus* and introduces a new subject for the sentence with the *sacer arbiter lapis*. The tendency to make changes and embellish Ovid's version is prevalent throughout this middle part of the speech. A good example is the lines regarding defences around cities.

> *Non vasto aggere*
> *crebraque turre cinxerant urbes latus.*   (*Phaed*. 531 - 2)
>   Cities did not surround
> their sides with great ramparts and numerous towers;

> *Nondum praecipites cingebant oppida fossae*   (*Met*. I.97)
> Not yet were towns surrounded by steep trenches.

> *Quo tibi, turritis incingere moenibus urbes?*   (*Amores*. III.8.47)
> What good did it do you, to wrap cities in towered walls?

Seneca uses Ovid's two lines to create his own version. They all share the same verb, (*in*)*cingo,* conveying that the cities after the Golden Age began to surround themselves with defences. But instead of the deep trenches from the *Metamorphoses* or towered walls in the *Amores*, Seneca's version offers a rampart (*agger*) and numerous towers (*crebra turris*).[138]

---

[137] *Cautus humum longo signavit limite mensor* (*Met*.) and *signabat nullo limite mensor humum* (*Am.*) The line from the *Metamorphoses* is outside the Golden Age template. I included it to show that there is much direct borrowing from *Amores* III.8. in the *Metamorphoses*.

[138] It is possible that Seneca with the word *agger* is making a form of Correction, in Thomas' terms, to Ovid. *Agger* is used to describe one of the three defences which marked the *Pomerium* that Servius Tullius built around Rome (OLD s. v. *Agger*, 2c). In Livy, whom Seneca had read (Cf. *Epist*.C.9), there is a description of these: *Aggere et fossis et muro circumdat urbem,* he surrounded the city with ramparts, trenches and walls (Liv.I.44.3). Thus, when Seneca had to find a word for the first defences of man, he might have thought it apt to use the one of the three original around Rome that was not already mentioned by Ovid.

This is another instance of Seneca's Hippolytus conflating Ovidian passages, yet keeping the same basic meaning of the passages referred to.

One might expect Seneca to do the same thing in the lines on seafaring (531 - 2), a topos which has a long history in Golden Age mythology and also a prominent place in Roman literary imagination. Ever since Catullus 64 there was a strong tradition of alluding to and emulating one's predecessors when conjuring up the image of the first voyage,[139] using the topos as an opportunity for making Corrections and Conflations. Ovid's versions are in much of the same vein. The three lines concerning this theme in the *Metamorphoses* have been used as evidence for Ovid's conscious rewriting of a long poetic tradition, fusing it with the *Metamorphoses'* dichotomy of chaos and cosmic order.[140] Line 43 of the *Amores* III.8. seems to casually refer to Virgil's *Geor*. II.503.

> *Nondum caesa suis, peregrinum ut viseret orbem,*
> *montibus in liquidas pinus descenderat undas,*
> *nullaque mortales praeter sua litora norant.* (*Met*. I.94 - 6)
> Not yet had the cut pine descended into flowing waves
> from its mountains to visit foreign lands,
> and mortals knew no coasts except their own.

> *Non freta demisso verrebant eruta remo*
> *ultima mortali tum via litus erat* (*Amor*. III.8.43 - 4)
> They did not sweep the seas disturbed by the dip of the oar.
> The shore was then the end of the road for mortal man.

Seneca knew the tradition, because he enters and adds to it in his *Medea* (301 – 79, 579 - 669).[141] But in the speech of Hippolytus, where we might expect a grand *expolitio*, very few words are used to sum up the topic.

> *Nondum secabant credulae pontum rates.*
> *sua quisque norat maria.* (*Phaed*. 531-2)
> Not yet did credulous vessels shear through the ocean.
> Each man knew only his own seas

There seems to be nothing in 531 that could be read as a Multiple reference, apart from the associated topic, contrary to what one might expect.[142] The familiar tradition of the first voyage as a *locus communis*, where Virgil and Ovid both followed the threads laid out by

---

[139] Thomas, "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference (Poem 64.1-18)", *The American Journal of Philology* 103, No. 2 (summer, 1982), 144-164.

[140] Stephen Wheeler, *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's* Metamorphoses (Thübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 24.

[141] Boyle, *Tragic Seneca,* 126 - 8. Also compare *Med.* 301 – 20 to *Georg*. I.136 – 8.

[142] The expression *pontum secare* appears in *Aen*. IX.404, in a description of the Nereids, but nothing suggests that it should be read as a reference.

Catullus 64,[143] makes us anticipate that Seneca will do the same. The Ovidian template is within the tradition; Seneca's Hippolytus, on the other hand, shies away from it in line 531.

Stranger still, an unexpected twist in 532 attracts attention. In both the *Amores* and *Metamorphoses* Ovid uses the image of the shore (*litus*) being man's natural boundary. In the *Amores* Ovid even goes so far as to say it is the end of the road, *ultima via mortali* (*Am.* III.8.47). It is therefore interesting that Seneca has chosen to use *maria* in 532, especially since he selected *litus* in a passage describing the same theme in his *Medea*: *Sua quisque piger litora tangens*, each man dully only grasped his own shores (*Medea* 331). Why *maria*?[144]

Granted we accept that *maria* in 532 is not there for mere metric convenience,[145] it is worthwhile to discern the reasoning behind the use of the word. It must be emphasised that *maria* is not just a break with Ovid, it is a definite sidestep from the entire Golden Age tradition. Seafaring came in The Age of Heroes in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (156); the lack of it in the Golden Age is mentioned in Aratus' *Phaenomena* (111). In addition to Catullus, Virgil, and Ovid, other notables in Roman literature such as Horace (*Odes* I.1), and Tibullus (I.3.37) follow the convention. There are in fact two topoi that develop around this theme. The first is the lack of seafaring in the Golden Age; the other is of tree-felling and the first ship (the Argo). These two are intertwined in much of the Roman tradition on the Golden Age.[146] Likewise, in Seneca's *Medea*, the second chorus uses both to describe how seafaring was a transgression of natural law:

> *Bene dissaepti foedera mundi*
> *traxit in unum Thessala pinus*
> *iussitque pati uerbera pontum*
> *partemque metus fieri nostri*
>   *mare sepositum.*   (*Med.* 335 - 9)
> The Thessalian pine made one the
> lands well separated by nature's law,
> prescribed the deep to suffer blows
> and the secluded sea to become
>   a part of our fear.

In the *Medea,* Seneca applies the traditional idea of seafaring as transgression, intertwines it with the topos of the building and voyage of the Argo, and agrees with Ovid that the border is

---

[143] Thomas, "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference", 160 – 163.
[144] Jakobi's suggestion that it should be taken as *litus* seems highly implausible. *Der Einfluss Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca,* 76: "*Maria* ist an dieser Stelle als *extremum mare*, fast gleichbedeutend zu dem *litus* Ovids aufzufassen."
[145] The iambic trimeter was used by Seneca in all his tragedies, he knew it and its arrangement well and so it is probable that he could have formed a line to include *litus* if it was needed.
[146] Cf. Wheeler, *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's* Metamorphoses, 24. n. 59.

no further than the shore (*Medea* 331). What might then be the reason why the two lines of *Phaed.* 531 – 2 break so clearly with these established conventions?

The use of the word *mare* varies too much in the play to attach any specific meaning to it. However, it is linked to Phaedra, whose father controls the sea with his wide influence, *lato maria qui regno premit* (149).[147] She also claims in two instances that she would follow Hippolytus everywhere, even across the sea (*maria,* 241; *per mare,* 700 - 1). The only time Hippolytus speaks the word is when he claims that no water can purify him from the taint of Phaedra's love (715 - 18).

The lines 531 – 2 are, in my view, an example of the crafty aspect of Hippolytus' Pathological Idealism. Hippolytus has a need to twist the Golden Age myth in order to make his version into a general argument against women. What he is saying in these two lines is that Golden Age man *did* know how to travel the seas, *maria* (531). To Hippolytus, sailing is not the transgression, this is moved further out. He places the threshold in Colchis, across the *Pontus* (531), here meaning the Black Sea.[148] It first seems as if the Argo again gets the dubious honour of breaking the natural order, but I believe he is even more specific. The result of Jason's quest to Colchis was that the Golden Fleece and Medea were brought back to Greece. She is at the end of the speech put forth as the dire epitome of womanhood (563 - 4). By the mentioning of her name, the audience, who perhaps thought *maria* was an ill-advised choice of words, would understand why Hippolytus placed the limits for mankind further out. Her status as the worst of women combined with the use of *maria* indicates that it was not sea-travel, but the wicked witch from Colchis that first broke nature's law. It is interesting to note that Seneca's Hippolytus thus only use an element of one of the two topoi that are usually combined. It is Medea's return on the Argo that marks the lapse. His wish to demonise Medea is combined with a need not to incriminate his own family. His father Theseus famously sailed to Crete in order to kill the Minotaur and in some accounts he is considered as one of the Argonauts.[149] By shifting the transgression from seafaring to Medea, Hippolytus manages to include his misogynism in the Golden Age template, without directly incriminating his family.

Hippolytus' Pathological Idealism is thus shown to be a careful construction, since some things, such as the exploits of his father, fits in, and what he fears, civilisation and

---

[147] Segal, *Language and Desire*, chapter two, "Imagery and the Landscape of Desire", 29 - 59. Here he makes a comprehensive analysis of the characterisation of Hippolytus and Phaedra. They symbolically inhabit two worlds, the forest and the sea.

[148] OLD s. v. *Pontus.²*

[149] Although Apollonius of Rhodes states in *Argonautica* I.85 that he still was in the underworld with Peirithous.

womanhood, is locked out. But such twisting of the Golden Age myth is quickly discovered by the audience, especially when blatant divergences from the myth are made, such as the *maria* of 532.

Central to all Golden Age mythologies is the idea that nature provided sustenance without need for the plough or other tools and skills of agriculture. Lines 535 – 8 of the *Phaedra* are no exception, again embellishing on the Ovidian template, in this case *Met*. I.101 -2 and *Amores* III.8.41.[150] But, as will be shown when we turn to Virgil (3.4.3), this passage from the *Phaedra* has a more important function than just to supply material for a game of poetic invention.

Ending this middle part and the description of the Golden Age we find the claim in lines 538 – 9 that early man had his wealth (*opes*) and housing (*domus*) provided by the forest and the caves. Coffey and Mayer note that there is an almost awkward repetition of the adjective *nativus* in these lines, *nativas opes* and *nativas domos*.[151] They believe it might "be an allusion to the presence in Roman gardens of numerous imported fruit trees."[152] If the pattern of a competitive dialogue with Ovid's texts is to be followed here, another possibility is more likely. What has to be noticed is that Ovid placed the use of caves as housing in the *silver* age, *tum primum subiere domus*; *domus antra fuerunt,* then did they enter houses; the houses were caves (*Met*. I.121). Seneca, on the other hand, is in *Ep*. XC.30 convinced caves were the natural homes of Golden Age man, and similarly, his Hippolytus places it in the Golden Age. This can explain the repetition of *nativas*; it is what Richard Thomas calls a Correction, a reference which intends to put the record straight. Repeating the word natural (*nativus*) is a way for Seneca of underlining that here, at the end of the list borrowed from two Ovidian texts, something is added to the Golden Age myth which, in Seneca's view, Ovid misplaced in the Silver Age. It also helps underlining Hippolytus' argument against the nurse's charges. By repeating that this Golden Age existence was the most natural, he can imply that then naturalness propagated by the nurse is in fact a perversion.

The use of the Ovidian template in the middle passage allows Seneca to indulge in competitive references, such as Correction and Conflation. More importantly, it makes it possible to show, through a divergence from the template, that Hippolytus is adapting the model. Thus, Seneca can show us that Hippolytus' idealism is not just blind borrowing, but a consciously crafted idealism. Combined with the Ovidian references from the first part of the

---

[150] The earth providing *per se* in both the *Phaed*. and *Met*. is a purely Casual reference, in Thomas' typology.
[151] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 140. "The chime of *nativas* seems intentional but pointless."
[152] Ibid.

speech, Pathological Idealism has now been further defined. It is a construct, which although it is based on an impulse to flee, is modelled on a specific template and Hippolytus is quite ready to change this template to suit his argument. This allows Seneca's Hippolytus to effectively use the Golden Age as an answer to the nurse, since the Golden Age of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a world of purity and innocence. Hippolytus, by making his own Golden Age ideal, seeks to be innocent by association.

3.3.4 Frailty, Thy Name is Woman – Decline of the Golden Age (540 - 564).

The final part of the speech describes the decline of the Golden Age and the emergence of sin, instigated by avarice (*lucri furor,* 540), rage (*ira,* 541) and desire (*libido*, 543).[153] In Hippolytus' list of crimes at 553 – 8, there is a clear template in the lines of *Met*. I.144 – 8:[154]

<div style="margin-left:2em">

tum scelera dempto fine per cunctas domos
iere, nullum caruit exemplo nefas:
a fratre frater, dextera gnati parens
cecidit, maritus coniugis ferro iacet
perimuntque fetus impiae matres suos;
taceo nouercas: mitius nil sunt feris.[155]   (*Phaed*. 553 - 8)
Then crimes without end went through all homes,
no sin lacked an example to follow:
Brother were felled by brother, a parent
by a child's hand, a husband lies dead by a spouse's iron
and impious mothers strangle their own infants;
I shall not speak of step-mothers – they are in no respect milder than beasts.

Vivitur ex rapto: non hospes ab hospite tutus,
non socer a genero, fratrum quoque gratia rara est;
inminet exitio vir coniugis, illa mariti,
lurida terribiles miscent aconita novercae,
filius ante diem patrios inquirit in annos: (*Met*. I.144 - 8)
Livelihood is based on plunder: a guest is not safe from his host,
a father-in-law not safe from his son-in-law, even brotherly love is rare.
A man desires the death of his wife, and she, that of her husband.
Gruesome step-mothers mix ghastly poisons,
a son prematurely make inquiries regarding his father's future.

</div>

The reference seems to be nothing more than the typical embellished Ovidian phrase, in the vein of most of the references in the middle part of the speech. The paraphrase of *Met*. I.144 –

---

[153] In lines 540 - 554 there are several occurrences of Conflations and Casual references which are in the same vein as those mentioned in 3.3.3. These will not be presented in order to give the more interesting references a thorough discussion. Cf. Coffey & Mayer's list, *Seneca:* Phaedra*,* 201; and Jakobi, *Der Einfluss Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca,* 76 – 77.

[154] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 141, notes that Ovid's version is again based on Catullus 64.399 – 404. An interesting point is that Seneca quotes these same lines from the *Metamorphoses* in *De Ira II*.9.

[155] EA has *mitius nil est feris* which has caused some difficulty among translators and commentators. Coffey & Mayer believes it to be corrupt. Michael Hendry has conjectured *sunt* instead of *est*, which I find to be the most sensible suggestion so far. "Is Nothing Gentler Than Wild Beasts? Seneca, *Phaedra* 558",
The Classical Quarterly 48, No. 2 (1998), 577-580. See also Fitch, *Anneana Tragica: Notes on the Text of Seneca's Tragedies*, 118.

8 is such that an audience with knowledge the *Metamorphoses* would probably recognise the vivid account of the dissolution of normal family relations through fratricide, filicide, mariticide and patricide. Even though the passage in the *Phaedra* is rather similar to the Ovidian model, it is interesting to note, as Segal has done, that in Hippolytus' version, the only active murder is committed by mothers who destroy their offspring (557), whereas brothers fall at the hand of their killer and the husband lies slain by the sword of a wife.[156]

In the *Metamorphoses*, the list of evils is followed by a scene where Piety lays vanquished, *pietas victa iacet,* and the Virgin Astrea, goddess of justice, leaves the earth (*Met.* I.149 - 50). Seneca's Hippolytus follows the Ovidian template up until this point, but then suddenly diverges, as with the seafaring in 531 - 2. The young prince veers off into a rant on women, in his view the source of all evil.

Instead of Ovid's pathetic lament for crushed piety and the flight of justice, Seneca's Hippolytus suddenly exclaims that he will not mention step-mothers, *taceo novercas;* the abruptness of the *apophasis* heralds that Hippolytus is yet again departing from the Ovidian template. The angry outburst that follows, *mitius nil sunt feris*, is probably prompted by the mention of *novercae*, a word which to Hippolytus would resonate on two levels. Firstly, there is his own *noverca*, Phaedra, whose unlawful love he is not yet aware of. Boyle believes it is the thought of her that drives him into misogynist frenzy. [157]

However, a sudden outburst from nowhere works poorly dramatically, so we might read this as form of *anagnorisis*, i.e. that Hippolytus here finally understands that Phaedra is in love. It is possible that at this exact moment on the stage, Hippolytus has the best intentions for not speaking of *novercae* in a list describing the violent dissolution of family relations, wishing not to insult his step-mother in front of her servant. But when going through the different atrocities possible in family relations, he would inevitably come to the word *novercae*, whereupon he tactfully decides to hold his tongue, *taceo novercas*. As he speaks these word he would, on the stage, be looking at the nurse, and she might at this point become particularly attentive, since it is for his step-mother she is trying to soften the hardness of Hippolytus' misogyny. In this dramatic situation, Hippolytus realises that the nurse's speech (435 - 82) actually was a solicitation for Phaedra, resulting in the angry outburst beginning with *mitius nil sunt feris*. Such a reading is founded on the premise that the play was produced on stage. Since I evaded that question in the introduction, it here carries no more merit than

---

[156] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 91.
[157] Boyle, "A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*", 1309.

providing a possible solution to the abrupt shift from Ovidian template to misogynist rant in 558.[158] Regardless of whether there is a moment of *anagnorisis* or not, I find that the line shows Hippolytus as genuinely trying to avoid insult, but suddenly has a change of mind and starts the condemnation of women in general. The speech has so far been developing a line of argument where the ideal and innocent Golden Age is set as the opposite to the nurse's idea of what is natural. He has been careful not to insult and the shift is so abrupt that I find there must be something, either externally or internally, that makes him suddenly burst out in anger. It could be the repressed hatred mentioned by Boyle or Segal's notion of repressed desire, but I believe a moment of *anagnorisis* to be the most appropriate explanation.

On a second level, the intention of not mentioning step-mothers can be read as a Single reference to a passage in *Heroides* IV, where Phaedra tries to explain to Hippolytus that *noverca* is but an empty name:

> *Nec, quia privigno videar coitura noverca,*
> *terruerint animos nomina vana tuos.*
> *ista vetus pietas, aevo moritura futuro,*
> *rustica Saturno regna tenente fuit.*
> *Iuppiter esse pium statuit, quodcumque iuvaret,*
> *et fas omne facit fratre marita soror.*   (*Her*. IV.129 - 34)
> Do not, since I seem a stepmother wishing to bed her stepson,
>   Allow empty names to frighten your soul
> That old-fashioned piety of yours is doomed to perish with the new age
>   It was rustic even when Saturn held sway
> Jupiter made it so that whatever might please were to be pious
>   All is allowed when sister was made wife by brother

The lines 129 – 34 of *Heroides* IV are, I believe, the place from where Seneca draws the inspiration to let Hippolytus develop the fantasy world of the Golden Age.[159] In fact, Hippolytus' answer to the nurse is just as much an answer to this charge from Ovid's epistolary Phaedra. She writes in her letter that his notion of piety is so old-fashioned that it seems to hail from the mythical age of Saturn. The reply from Seneca's Hippolytus is to accept this and to create an ideal from it. In *Phaed*. 558 he does not want to speak the word, *taceo novercas*, but cannot control himself and bursts out with a comparison with wild beasts. Evidently, he is not willing, as Phaedra in Ovid's *Heroides* IV encourages, to recognise *noverca* as nothing but an empty name, *nomen vanum*. That Seneca found his inspiration for

---

[158] If this reading is correct, then Hippolytus in lines 585 - 644 would be acting innocent in order to lure *Phaedra* into revealing her intentions. This is, in my view, a better reading than the current one where he seems naïve, bordering on dim-witted.

[159] Euripides' *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* has a brief mention of metallic races in his angry outburst (620 - 4) which is inspired from the Hesiodic myth of metallic races (*Works and Days*. II.109 - 20), but the play contains nothing like Hippolytus' Golden Age reverie in Seneca's version.

the Golden Age fantasy in *Heroides* IV is in accordance with the findings of Tarrant, who holds that this letter is an important source for the characterisation of Phaedra.[160] Since Seneca used the letter to find ideas for his main protagonist, it is not unlikely that he discovered the charge of Golden Age idealism put forth by Ovid's Phaedra. However, expanding this concept into the Pathological Idealism held by Hippolytus is Seneca's own invention. The reference to *Heroides* IV.129 – 34 can be read in conjunction with the reference to *impetus est* (*Heroides* IV.38). *Taceo novercas* show us that Hippolytus' response is to take the absolute opposite position to Phaedra's argument in the letter, and thereby countering her immoral lust with moral extremism. Ovid's Phaedra argues that all propriety should be set aside; *noverca* is a *nomen vanum*. Hippolytus will not speak of it, *taceo novercas*. As we observed in the discussion concerning *impetus est* above, the Stoics found the passion of love and the desire of flight to be equally damnable, and so it is too with this other dichotomy. However, Phaedra is able to keep her head and argue convincingly, both in *Heroides* IV and in the *Phaedra* she is quite conscious of the madness gripping her, even offering suicide as a preferred alternative to disgrace, *morte praevertam nefas*, I shall forestall ignominy through death (*Phaed*. 254). Hippolytus, on the other hand, loses his temper and veers off into the rant on women. Consequently, it is clear that the embraced passion of Phaedra is a much stronger force than the constructed idealism of Hippolytus.

Seneca's Hippolytus is tortured because he is torn between what can be said and what cannot be said, and although he tries to contain himself he is not able to avoid spilling out both his passion to flee (*impetus est fugisse*, 517 - 8) and his hatred for women. After blurting out that step-mothers are no worse than animals, the invective against women is unleashed:

> *Sed dux malorum femina: haec scelerum artifex*
> *obsedit animos, huius incestae stupris*
> *fumant tot urbes, bella tot gentes gerunt*
> *et uersa ab imo regna tot populos premunt.*
> *sileantur aliae: sola coniunx Aegei,*
> *Medea, reddet feminas dirum genus.*　　　　　　　　　　(*Phaed*. 559 - 564)
> But chief of all wickedness is woman: This contriver of crimes
> besets minds. So many cities burn because of
> her foul adulteries, so many nations go to war,
> realms are tottered to crush so many peoples.
> Though nothing be said of the others, Aegeus' wife alone,
> Medea, will prove that women are an accursed race.

The lines are seething with hatred; women are the reason for the burning of cities, for wars waged and for the disastrous changings of fortune. He ends with a single example on the

---

[160] Cf. n. 116.

corruption of womanhood, Medea, Aegeus wife. She can alone provide evidence for the entire *dirum genus* of her sex. Coffey and Mayer ingeniously explain the mention of Medea as a link to Theseus, whom she attempted to poison.[161] Neither Boyle nor the Henrys give any explanation. Segal's comment on the lines 563 – 4, emphasies Hippolytus' silence, *sileantur aliae*:

> His emphasis on his silence only points up to the things he does not say. He cannot put into words the crimes that touch him most closely and in fact mark the real end of his Golden Age, the incestuous desire of a sexual mother and the murderous anger of a wrathful father.[162]

But Hippolytus is not silent; he merely finds that mentioning Medea conveys all he needs to say. I believe, as argued above, that the mention of Medea at the end of this speech is neither a Casual reference nor an evasion from mentioning Phaedra, in fact it is the final piece needed to understand what kind of adoption Hippolytus is making of the Golden Age myth. By allowing for sailing, but condemning Medea, he makes her coming to Greece the true transgression that broke the Golden Age. Thereby he does not implicate his family, and can include his misogyny in his Golden Age.

In summary, we can see that references to Ovid's works come in three different forms in this speech. Firstly, there is the Casual reference, where an Ovidian word or expression is picked up and applied in a similar context, (e.g. *per se,* 537). Secondly, there is the whole Ovidian template for a Golden Age, a Conflation in Thomas' terms, so prevalent at the middle and final part of the speech, where Seneca engages in intertextual dialogue, usually by embellishing or altering the motif of his predecessor. But more important are the divergences from the template, such as the combination of *maria* with the mention of Medea. Lastly, we have the Single references that can be linked to the *Heroides* IV, such as *taceo novercas* and *impetus est,* All the Ovidian references help us understand the nature of Pathological Idealism. It is sparked by emotion, and takes the form of an ideological construct, a vision of how the world should have been, and Hippolytus is conscious enough of it to fashion a new form of piety for himself.

---

[161] Coffey & Mayer*, Seneca:* Phaedra, 142.

[162] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 93. This would imply that Hippolytus already knows of Phaedra's love, of which none has yet told him. Such an interpretation supports the proposition that there is an *anagnorisis* taking place at 558.

3.4.1 Virgil

It is well attested that Seneca both knew Virgil's works and often looked to him for inspiration.[163] Segal cites Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue*, when arguing that Hippolytus diverges from the Golden Age topos.[164] Segal's aim is to show a difference between Hippolytus' version and the Golden Age tradition rather than to detect a reference to a particular text, so for his argument's sake any other passage would have been just as good.[165] But there are some Single references to Virgil in the text, not to the Fourth *Eclogue*, however, and they are important because they convey an ideal that Hippolytus is trying to associate with.

In the case of Virgil's *Georgics* I.121ff., Thomas' first condition for references is satisfied by *Ep*. XC to Lucilius.[166] In this letter, discussing whether man in the Golden Age knew wisdom, Seneca cites several lines from *Geor*. I.121ff.[167] The fact that it is to this passage from Virgil that Seneca turns when he needs material to discuss the Golden Age, makes it reasonable to assume that he would do so in the Golden Age speech as well.[168]

In the second book of the *Georgics,* there is a well-known praise of the country life that reveres the woodland gods (493 - 4), later in the text equaled to the Golden Age of Saturn (538). It has a list (495 – 512) describing what cares the country-dweller is free from, with language that resembles the description of ideal man in the first part of Hippolytus' speech. The occurrences of similar similes between *Geor*. II.493 – 515 and *Phaed*. 483 - 525 support the claim that Seneca here is making a reference.[169] Furthermore, Coffey and Mayer see a stylistic similarity.[170] In fact, I believe that *Geor*. II.493 – 512 provide Seneca's Hippolytus with a template for expressing his ideal of a hunter's life in *Phaed*. 483 – 525; he only needs to substitute the *agricola* of Virgil with himself. However, I find it unnecessary to discuss in detail the parallels in *Phaed*. 483 - 525 to *Geor*. II.493 – 515, since they mostly have the same function as the Corrections and Causal references to Ovid in the middle part of the speech. Instead, 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 focus on two references, *labor* (*Phaed*. 504) and *poscentes nihil*

---

[163] Seneca quotes Virgil over a hundred times in his prose works, often referring to him as *noster Vergilius*. Elaine Fantham has argued that Virgil's Dido was important in the characterisation of Seneca's Phaedra in "Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines".

[164] Segal, *Language and Desire,* 85

[165] The Golden Age passages of Virgil are the Fourth *Eclogue*, *Geor*. I.121ff., *Geor*. II.493ff., and *Aen*. VIII. 314- 27. Segal does mention the Second *Georgic*. Cf. n. 81.

[166] For Thomas' two conditions, cf. p. 22.

[167] *Georg*. I.144, cited in *Ep*. XC.9; *Georg*. I.139-40, cited in. *Ep*. XC.11; *Georg*. I.125 - 9, cited in. *Ep*. XC.37.

[168] The letters to Lucilius come late in Seneca's life, so *Ep*. XC does probably not predate the *Phaedra*, but the important point is that the citations show that Seneca had read Virgil closely.

[169] Comp. *Phaed*. 484 - 5 to *Georg*. II.493 - 4; *Phaed*. 488 – 90 to *Georg*. II.495 and 498 - 9; *Phaed*. 515 – 6 to *Geor*. II.500; *Phaed*. 517-8 to *Georg*. II.504; *Phaed*. 518 – 521 to *Georg*. II.506.

[170] "*Non illum* echoes the *illum non* with which Virgil began his praises of country life at *Geor*. 2.495". Mayer & Coffey, *Seneca* Phaedra, 135.

(537). In 3.4.2 I will try to answer why Seneca's Hippolytus is using Virgil's image of man after the fall from the Golden Age, an image he gets from *Geor.* I.121ff. and II.493 - 515. I have placed this discussion at the end of my thesis since I believe that my most important observation is that Hippolytus reaches out to Virgil's postlapsarian man because he understands the irreconcilability of his own life with the innocent Golden Age of Ovid. This is easier to explain this after having gone through the Ovidian references in the speech. By appealing to Virgil's heuristic man Seneca's Hippolytus attempts to bridge the divide between his two ideals. But, as Seneca hints at with his reference to *Geor.* I.124, the *labor* in *Phaed.* 504, Virgil's own presentation of the heuristic ideal is at best ambiguous. Finally, in 3.4.3 we shall have a brief look at the reference *poscentes nihil* in *Phaed.* 537, referring to *Geor.* I.129. I propose that Seneca uses it to show us what the central difference is between Hippolytus' ideal and Ovid's Golden Age.

3.4.2 *Labor improbus?* (501 – 4)

In the following I will try to explain how and why Seneca's Hippolytus draws on a Virgilian ideal. To frame the discussion it is necessary first to devote some pages to the lines 501 – 4 and their divergence from the Ovidian template.[171] These lines are central to the first part of the speech and crucial in revealing the nature of Hippolytus' Pathological Idealism:

> *Sed rure uacuo potitur et aperto aethere*
> *innocuus errat. callidas tantum feris*
> *struxisse fraudes nouit et fessus graui*
> *labore niueo corpus Iliso fouet*   (*Phaed.* 501 - 4)
> But he masters the empty countryside, and wanders
> innocently in open air. He knows to construct
> sly traps only for wild animals and tired from heavy
> labour, he soothes his body in snowy Ilissos

Already from the opening monologue, it is shown that the wild and the forests are a source of self-identification for Hippolytus.[172] Indeed, the first words of the play establish his direction: *Ite umbrosas cingite silvas*, go, surround the shaded forests (*Phaed.* 1). But, as is foreshadowed in the verb *cingo* in this sentence, Hippolytus' description of ideal life situated in the forest also implies a control of nature. Boyle argues that "Hippolytus' fantasy about his

---

[171] They are discussed here because divergence from the Ovidian template in the first part of the speech cannot be read as a form of reference to Ovid. But the comparison is necessary to make in order that we understand why Seneca refers to Virgil in line 504.

[172] Segal, *Language and Desire*, chapter 3, "The Forest World", 60 – 76, examines the forest world of Hippolytus. The opening monologue has drawn a lot of scholarly attention. Cf. Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan*, chapter 5, "Phaedra: *Intertextuality and Innocence*", 259 - 301; Monika M. Stähli-Peter, *Die Arie des Hippolytus: Kommentar zur Eingangsmonodie in der* Phaedra *des Seneca* (Zürich: Juris, 1974).

own innocence [...] is contradicted by his own aggression, desire for dominance, urge for slaughter, exhibited in the hunting instructions and divine address of the play's initial scene."[173] The wish for control in the opening monologue is, in my opinion, accentuated in lines 501 – 4, which begins with a strong assertion: *rure uacuo potitur*, he masters the empty countryside (501).

The verb here specifies that he not only inhabits, but also dominates his surroundings. *Potior* means to make oneself master or obtaining control of something and has implications of violent capture.[174] The *rus vacuum* is suggestive, as Segal puts it, of "desolation, rather than peace."[175] This is in contradiction to the wish to be *innocuus* (502), meaning both to cause no harm and be unharmed;[176] the *rure vacuo potitur* seems to imply a control by force, in the vein of his subjection of the Athenian countryside in the opening monologue (1 - 84).

If Hippolytus wants the *ritus* of his ideal life (484) to correspond with the *ritus* of the Golden Age (526), this control of nature is problematic. The hunter is not a part of Ovid's version of the Golden Age, but it is evidently an important part of Hippolytus' vision of sylvan life.[177] In contrast, Ovid states that peoples in the Golden Age enjoyed soft leisure in safety, *mollia securae peragebant otia gentes* (*Met*. I.100). The controlling *potitur* in Hippolytus' speech makes it clear that the gentle *otium* enjoyed in Ovid's Golden Age has no place in Hippolytus' image of a hard primitive existence, an interesting divergence from the Ovidian template.

In the 1930s, Lovejoy and Boas did a study on variations of the Golden Age tradition,[178] in which they discerned between two versions of primitivism, both in opposition to civilised life and culture. These they labelled soft and hard primitivism, the soft being the life of ease such as Ovid's Golden Age, the other a situation where man had to fight for survival in a hostile world, but through this struggle kept his virtue intact.[179] Proponents of the

---

[173] Boyle, "A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*", 1306 – 7.
[174] OLD s. v. *Potior,* 1, 2, and 5.
[175] Segal, *Language and Desire,* 85.
[176] OLD s. v. *Innocuus*, 1 and 3.
[177] As mentioned above, Littlewood's main point, influenced by Segal, is that the language Hippolytus uses to describe his hunting life is that of the erotic hunt in Ovidian elegy: Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy,* 274.
[178] Arthur Lovejoy & George Boas*, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1935 (repr. 1997). Their thorough study is by now somewhat outdated, but the definitions of soft and hard primitivism is still widely used: E.g. Stephen Horigan, *Nature and Culture in Western Discourses* (London: Routledge, 1988), 52; Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire,* 466 – 8. Nussbaum uses soft and hard primitivism when discussing Seneca's *Medea* and its second choral ode.
[179] In addition they operate with a division of chronological and cultural primitivism, which is of no consequence here since all Golden Age myths are versions of the former. Lovejoy & Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas*, 1 – 11.

latter view are Lucretius (*De rerum*. V. 925 - 1010) and Juvenal (e.g. *Satire* VI 1 - 24).[180] The two kinds of primitivism share the idea that there was a time when man lived in accordance with nature, usually described by listing things mankind lacked in early existence.[181]

Golden Age mythologies are almost always soft primitivism, but the traditional Stoic view that the life of certain savage peoples was in truth *secundum naturam* gave their ideal the marks of hard primitivism. "Between the spirit of such a hard primitivism and the idyll of the Golden Age there is manifestly a profound opposition."[182] In Hippolytus' speech such a profound opposition is quite visible. He uses Ovid's template with most of the elements of soft Golden Age myths in *Phaed*. 528 – 538, but wishes in 501 - 4 to roam and dominate the countryside, quite different from the relaxed *gentia* described by Ovid.

Hippolytus claims that in ideal life man roams harmless and unharmed (*innocuus errat*, 502), but it is quite evident that Hippolytus is not *innocuus* to his surroundings.[183] The need for mastery has been presented, but the passage immediately following his claim of harmlessness widens the discrepancy. In 502 – 3, he speaks of constructing sly traps for wild animals, thus breaking with two typical traits of soft Golden Age primitivism. Firstly, there is usually some form of union or pact between man and nature.[184] Secondly, primeval man did not gain knowledge of skills or crafts before his fall.[185]

In *Phaed*. 502 – 3 it seems that Hippolytus is somewhat aware that he is breaking with these conventions, since he needs to add *tantum feris* to modify the fact that his ideal life include trapping.[186] The *callidae fraudes* are in direct opposition to the immediately preceding lines, where man roamed *innocuus*, so why are they there? Hippolytus needs to include the snares, since they are a part of his own huntsman's life, as seen in the opening monologue where he orders some of his men to prepare smooth-wrought snares (*teretes laquei*, 46). Segal has elegantly observed that there is a harsh irony in the fact that the *laqueus* ensnares him, when the sea bull scares his horses (*Phaed*. 1056). [187] I think the *callidae fraudes* enhances this irony. He tries to belittle his break with the soft Golden Age by adding *tantum feris*, thus

---

[180] Ibid., 70 – 73. On hard primitivism in Juvenal
[181] Ibid., 12 – 13.
[182] Ibid., 11.
[183] Segal, *Language of Desire*, 85; Boyle, "A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*", 1306 – 7.
[184] Lovejoy & Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas,* 12 -13 and 34 – 6. Cf. *Met*. XV.97 – 142 for Golden Age vegetarianism .
[185] Hesiod's early man had no need for crafts: *Works and days* 110 – 120, Virgil makes in very clear that it is in the age of Jupiter that skills are invented (*Tum variae venere artes, Geor*. I.145). Seneca's argument in *Ep*. XC.24 implies that all *artes* are postlapsarian.
[186] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 85.
[187] Segal, *Language and Desire*, 97. Also Davis, *"Vindicat Omnes Natura Sibi:* A Reading of Seneca's *Phaedra*", 117.

implying that these sly traps are not for humans and therefore not to be reckoned as the *fraudes*, tricks, that came into the world in the Iron Age.[188]

As a whole, lines 501 – 504 are the most intertextually charged lines in the whole speech; I would venture to say they are the key lines in the first part. The audience's awareness has been awakened by the dominating *potitur* (501). Following this, the word *tantum* before *feris* (502 - 3) shows that Hippolytus explicitly knows that he is at odds with the soft Golden Age he is about to extoll in 525 -39. But if the *callidae fraudes* tries to bend the rules with *tantum feris*, we find in lines 503 – 504 a manifest break with them: *Fessus graui labore niueo corpus Iliso fouet,* Tired from heavy labour he soothes his body in snowy Ilisos. The occurrence of the river Ilisos is what Richard Thomas would term a Self-reference; the river has been mentioned once before in the play.

> *Ubi per graciles levis Ilisos*
> *Labitur agros piger et steriles*
> *Amne maligno radit harenas*   (*Phaed.* 13 - 15)
> Where scanty Ilissos slothful slips
> Through meager fields and scrapes
> Fruitless sands with a malign stream

Again, Seneca ties the speech to Hippolytus' opening monologue, making it evident that he is describing his ideal of himself. The *locus amoenus* began as an attempt at an abstract notion of an ideal life, but Hippolytus quickly ends up talking about what he knows and identifies with, mastering the countryside, setting traps, washing his body in the Ilisos. But there might be a further point as to why Seneca's Hippolytus invokes the lines from *Phaed.* 13 – 15 in this setting. He describes the river as scanty (*levis*) and slothful (*piger*), the landscape there is the most barren of the different tracts of land he describes in the first half of the monologue, with its meager fields (*graciles agri*) and fruitless sands (*steriles harenae*). By claiming that ideal man soothes his body in its snowy waters, in an unfertile and hostile area, he is veering towards an uncompromisingly hard primitivism where man must live on his own wit and skill, in stark contrast to the soft primitivism of Ovid.

Surprisingly, Hippolytus uses the conspicuous word *labor* to describe ideal man's toil. In the *Phaedra*, the word *labor* occurs in eight other places in the play, and in none of these does it have a positive connotation.[189] It is used for a heavy task or duty, and in relation to Theseus' exploits, who on his return refers to his ambiguous deed (*ambiguus labor,* 840 -

---

[188] *Fugere pudor verumque fidesque;/in quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolusque/insidiaeque et vis et amor sceleratus habendi*, Modesty, truth, and fidelity fled;/in their place came tricks, schemes and snares, also might and the criminal love for gain. (*Met.* I.129 - 31).
[189] *Phaed.*181 - 3; 272 – 3; 790 – 4; 840 – 1; 847 – 9; 1066 – 7; 1109 – 10; 1229 – 31.

1) recently committed in the underworld. In the messenger speech (1000ff.), it is said that Hippolytus valiantly claimed that it was his paternal endeavour to kill bulls (*paternus labor*, 1066 - 7), before he is killed by the bull from the sea. Thus, the word *labor* is in the *Phaedra* applied to duty and great heroic deeds, but deeds that are also part of the endless cycle of violence that pervades the tragic world of Seneca.[190] It is therefore not likely that the seemingly positive use of the word in 503 - 4 is just a confluence of language.

So why does *labor* occur in this line? That labor followed the Golden Age as a punishment is established in the tradition,[191] but in Virgil's First *Georgic* there is a perhaps more positive use of the word *labor.*

> *Labor omnia vicit*
> *Improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.*   (*Geor.* I.145-6)
> Toil conquered all,
> insatiable toil, and need that compels in hard times.

The passage is known for its ambiguity, leaving the negatively charged adjective to spring up in the second line. *Labor* is definitely not a part of the Golden Age, and clearly forced upon man after the blissful reign of Saturn. And yet, it is also something Jupiter enforces because he does not bear that man should fall into sloth.

> *Pater ipse colendi*
> *haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem*
> *mouit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda*
> *nec torpere graui passus sua regna ueterno.*   (*Geor.* I.121-4)
> The Father himself did not will
> that the road to cultivation should be easy. He was the first
> to stir the fields through skill, thus sharpening mortal hearts
> through cares, not tolerating his reign to be numbed by heavy torpor.

The scholarly discussion on the correct meaning of *Geor.* I.145 fills many volumes, but it is not necessary for this thesis to give a final answer to that question. The focus here is whether, and if so, why, Seneca is referring to Virgil in Hippolytus' speech.

I believe this is a Single reference to *Geor.* I.145, and it is noticeable because the character of Hippolytus, who masters the countryside but wanders innocently (501 - 2), has the same heuristic quality as that of Virgil's postlapsarian man working to survive in a hostile nature (*Geor.* I.121ff.).[192] The sly traps for wild animals (*feris*, 503 - 504) echo *tum laqueis*

---

[190] Cf. Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama,* chapter 5, "*Fata se vertunt retro",* 177 - 220.

[191] In *Met.* I.273 and 415-6 *labor* is seen as a punishment on man in the iron and stone race.

[192] That the *labor improbus* is still discussed does not overshadow the fact that there are heuristic qualities to Virgil's idea of a farmer or the first men in *Geor.* I.121ff. Cf. Richard Jenkyns, "*Labor Improbus*", *The Classical Quarterly* 43, No. 1 (1993), 243-248.

captare feras (*inventum*), then it was discovered how to capture wild animals by snares (*Geor.* I.139 - 40). The divergences from Ovidian template are in concurrence with the Virgilian. Therefore, when he uses the word *labor*, it is the positive and imposing *labor* in *Geor.* I.145 that springs to mind. In addition, as mentioned above, there are many similarities in the descriptions of ideal life in the first part of the speech to the descriptions of country life in *Geor.* II.493 – 515, and this life of the *agricola* is above all dominated by *labor*: *hinc anni labor, hinc patriam paruosque nepotes/ sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuuencos,* From this [ploughing] comes his year's toil, from this he supports his homeland and his little grandsons, from this he supports the herds of cattle and worthy steers. (*Geor.* II.514 - 5).

From this discussion we can conclude that Virgil's portrayal in *Geor.* I.121ff. and II.493 – 512 of mankind's experience in the struggle with nature is used in Seneca's characterisation of Hippolytus. Hippolytus' need to assert himself as the free and roaming hunter is indeed much more like the postlapsarian man in the *Georgics* than the *otiosi gentes* of Ovid's Golden Age. But why then is Seneca's Hippolytus using the Ovidian template? Because, as Boyle has pointed out, Hippolytus has not recognised "the violence, amorality and power" of *natura* in the play.[193] Therefore, he clings to the soft primitivism of Ovid, where there is harmony between man and nature, and more importantly, Ovid's Golden Age contains the possibility innocence. He desperately tries to fuse the two different forms of primitivism by reaching for the Ovidian template and equating it with the hard primitivism of Virgil.[194] Hippolytus' idealism, a wish to return to the natural state, is pathological because it refuses to recognise that the two forms of primitivism are incompatible. His Pathological Idealism, as we have seen in the references to Ovid, adapts and changes the original template in order to sort out other incongruities, but the gap between soft and hard primitivism is left open and ambiguous. I find that this perhaps is the best argument for the appropriateness of the term. To immerse in a fantasy, even one that cannot be realised, I would gladly name idealism, idyll or illusion. But to flee into an ideal which needs adaption and reconstruction for it to function and simultaneously attempt to hold two opposing ideals at the same time, deserves to be diagnosed as pathological.

In fact, the ambiguity of Hippolytus' project has a resonance in the description of postlapsarian man in *Geor.* I.125 – 6; even though there is a positive note to *labor*, it is still

---

[193] Boyle, "In Nature's Bonds", 1306. Quoted at p. 17.
[194] It might be argued that Virgil does the same by comparing the life of the farmer to life in Saturn's reign (*Geor.* II.538). A clever solution to this seeming incongruity can be found in Johannes J. L. Smolenaars' "Labour in the Golden Age: A Unifying Theme in Vergil's Poems", *Mnemosyne* 40, Fasc. 3/4 (1987), 396 - 7.

qualified by the negative *improbus*. Interestingly, Monica Gale claims in the study *Virgil on the Nature of Things* that the reason for Virgil's ambiguity is the use of conflicting Golden Age versions:

> The aetiological digression as a whole is in dialogue with a number of intertexts (Hesiod, Aratus, Lucretius), some of whose views are explicitly contradicted, while others are simply juxtaposed. Virgil ultimately leaves it unclear in this passage whether we are to see *labor* as punishment or virtue, the idleness of the Golden Age as a lost ideal or a danger fortunately escaped [...].[195]

Her point can be used to explain what meaning we should infer from Seneca's reference to Virgil's *labor improbus* (*Geor.* I.145).

I believe Seneca wants to remind us that, just as there is a heroic note to the toil of man in *Geor.* 121ff., there is dignity in Hippolytus' futile stance against nature. He is, after all, "a noble character who confronts, and ultimately is overwhelmed by, the central stream of evil."[196] He truly wishes to live an innocent life. Only, instead of grappling with the realities of his station and position, by birth a prince of Athens, he develops an ideal into which he flees. His Pathological Idealism needs to reinterpret not only the realities from which he flees, but also the myths he flees into, inevitably leading to some very confused notions. Similarly, it is confusing to come to grips with whether we should read the *labor improbus* in Virgil's First *Georgic* as man's punishment or a mark of nobility. Virgil achieves this by Conflation of different intertexts of the Golden Age tradition. Seneca is, by importing the Virgilian *labor,* showing us that he is attempting to do the same with the character of Hippolytus.

Hippolytus wants to live a life that is natural, but cannot understand what natural is. The choral odes in the play are the ones that give the most correct picture of nature,[197] ambiguous and treacherous, filled with conflicting forces, but also a constant "framework for the structure of things, *rerum natura*".[198] The best example is the third choral ode (959 - 988), which bewails that nature and Jupiter, holding everything in their sway, do not care for punishing the wicked or rewarding the good (972 - 7).

To live according to nature, *secundum naturam vivere*, is a basic tenet of Stoic ethics, but it does not involve changing nature. The folly of such an exercise is exemplified in the famous simile of Zeno: "Man is like a dog tied to a cart and compelled to go wherever it

---

[195] Monica Gale, *Virgil on the Nature of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 162.
[196] Herington, "Senecan Drama", 450.
[197] *Phaed*. 274 – 357; 736 – 823; 959 – 988; 1123- 1153.
[198] Boyle, "A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*", 1289 -1304. I agree with Boyle in this, the Henrys' idea that the choral odes represent an idyllic vein in the play is not convincing. cf. Henry & Walker, "Phantasmagoria and Idyll". In addition, Littlewoods' insistence that desire is a principle of literature does not, in my view, value the significance of the impersonal and terrible *natura* of the play. Cf. n. 91.

50

goes."[199] It is only philosophy that will help man to learn how to discern between what is important and what is not. Part of Hippolytus' tactic of fleeing from realities has much of the same goal as a good Stoic would set for himself; hard primitivism was after all favoured by the Stoics.[200] But not to recognise what nature is, or to flee yourself to realise an ideal is devastatingly wrong. I find that Segal's emphasis on latent sexualities in Hippolytus is a side-track away from a more fundamental question that Seneca struggles with in many of his works, namely, whether one should accept one's situation in life, or to flee towards contemplation in safe refuge. This question provides a link between Hippolytus' difficulties with accepting the nurse's argument, cultivating the company of his fellow citizens (*Phaed.* 482), and the Dilemma of Political Participation. In Stoic terms, a wise man could withdraw from his station after careful deliberation, but not flee from responsibility.[201]

Not only that, but to pine for an ideal, such as the Golden Age, is definitely a mistake, since Golden Age men were not able to be good themselves. This is an argument found in *Ep.* XC.36 - 7, where Seneca claims that a soft primitivist life made men happy and made them live happy lives, but the lack of adversity and toil did not make men good. It is the resilience of the human being in adverse circumstance that instills moral virtue, through the path of philosophy. Soft primitivist Golden Age man did not need philosophy, for life was happy and good by nature. It was toil and harsher surroundings that developed the necessity of philosophy as remedy, showing man the path from blissful ignorance to virtue.

The mistakes made by Hippolytus are double. First, he wrongly associates elements of his own hard primitivist life with the soft Ovidian Golden Age. Secondly, he believes that this association will make his flight from civilisation praiseworthy, when in fact the best description of the Golden Age is blissful ignorance. Ignorance, of realities and the world we live in, is in itself dangerous. But an ignorance that has guarded itself by inventing a Golden Age reverie so as to counter rational argument laid out by the nurse (435ff.) is even worse. By this I hope to have shown that it is possible to make a political reading of the play, since it explores passivising idealism, an aspect of the Dilemma of Political Participation, without being a conspiratory commentary on contemporary Imperial politics.

---

[199] SVF II. 975.
[200] Lovejoy & Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas*, chapter 10, "Stoic Primitivism", 260 - 286.
[201] Cf. n. 127.

Finally, a subtle irony can be detected in the expression *innocuus errat* (502), which immediately precedes the lines on traps and labour. *Errare*, to wander, also has the meanings to wander astray, be in doubt, act in error or stray from the path of virtue.[202] Hippolytus, whose faults the audience can recognise by the references Seneca puts in his mouth, is here explicitly saying the truth without knowing it. He has chosen to flee into idealism, carefully constructed so as to portray a harmonious symbiosis of man and nature, but with momentous internal flaws that he is aware of, but cannot manage to mend. His intentions are good; he wants to live a virtuous life (*Phaed.* 487), but without confronting civilisation or women. To flee as he does might take him away from direct contact with sin, but the form of his flight, the construction of a Pathological Idealism makes him blind to reality. With *innocuus errat* he thinks he is saying that ideal man wanders neither causing nor suffering harm, only the audience understands the double meaning: Hippolytus is erring because of his desire for a complete innocence.

3.4.3 *Poscentes nihil* (537)

At the end, I would like to draw attention to the reference that was bypassed in the *locus communis* on agriculture in 3.3.3. As shown above, this part of the speech follows an Ovidian template; the corresponding passages for these lines are *Met.* 101 – 2 and *Amor.* III.8.41.

> *Iussa nec dominum pati*
> *iuncto ferebat terra seruitium boue:*
> *sed arua per se feta poscentes nihil*
> *pauere gentes* (*Phaed.* 535 - 8)
> The soil did not, commanded
> to obey a master, endure serfdom under the yoked ox. But
> fields fruitful by themselves fed peoples
> who demanded nothing

There is here a reference to Virgil in the *poscentes nihil*, echoing *nullo poscente* from the Golden Age description in the First *Georgic*.

> *Ante Iouem, nulli subigebant arua coloni:*
> *ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum*
> *fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus*
> *omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.* (*Georg.* I.125 –9)[203]
> Before Jove, no farmers subjugated the land.
> It was not even lawful to mark or divide the field by border.
> Mankind shared their goods, and the earth herself
> produced everything more freely, since no one demanded it.

---

[202] OLD s. v. *Erro*, 3, 4, 5, and 6.
[203] Thus passage is quoted in *Ep.* XC.37

It is tempting to brush this off as a Casual reference. After all, the meaning of *nullo poscente* fits nicely into any Golden Age narrative. Coffey and Mayer seem to take this view, saying it transmutes the Virgilian expression.[204] But following Richard Thomas' advice to look at the context of a possible reference we find that the seemingly casual *poscentes nihil* can be interpreted further. There are two levels of context which draws our attention. Firstly, the role played by agriculture in *Georg*.I.121ff. Secondly, the immediate context of the Virgilian expression referred to.

Lines I.125 – 9 define agriculture as coming after the Golden Age, implying within 125 – 126 that it is a form of command or subjugation of the soil, thereby giving it an ethical association, similar to the associations connected to seafaring in the *Georgics*.[205] The ethical connotation is that they both are effects of man's struggle to control his surroundings. They are the product of *labor improbus* from *Geor*. 145 – 6, discussed above. When Hippolytus uses *labor* in 504 he inadvertently makes a reference which cements the view that his constructed idealism is false. Looking at the immediate context of the Virgilian passage will reveal that *poscentes nihil* fulfills the same function.

Lines 535 - 8 from the *Phaedra* and 125 –9 from the First *Georgic* share the same meaning; Golden Age man did not subdue the soil, but lived on nature's bounty, which was freely given. There is only a subtle difference between them, but it is a difference which slightly changes the meaning of the expression. In the *Georgics*, the earth, *tellus*, is the subject, providing everything more freely, because no one demanded it. The sentence preceding claims that mankind shared their goods, *in medium quaerebant,* denoting the lack of avarice. The *nullo poscente* should then be read as a causal double ablative, since the adjective, *liberius*, indicates that *nullo poscente* is the reason why the earth was so much more generous with her gifts.

Hippolytus, on the other hand, just states that man did not ask for the gifts of the field. This has neither the general nor causal implications of Virgil's use of the phrase and is convenient for Seneca's Hippolytus because he, as we have seen in the whole first part of the speech, does indeed have demands to nature. Firstly, it must provide him with prey, the traps of 502 -3 are sure signs that Hippolytus expects there to be a wildlife he can hunt. Secondly, and vital in this context, he demands that nature should be his innocent refuge from civilisation and women. Virgil says that because early man demanded nothing, nature was

---

[204] Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 140.
[205] Thomas, "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference", 177.

happy to give everything. Hippolytus has demands, and this is why Seneca rephrases the reference. Similar to the *maria* in 532, the *poscentes nihil* is a rewriting caused by the conflict between Hippolytus and his professed ideals.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary

Hippolytus' Golden Age speech, his defence against the charge that his life is unnatural, is Seneca's opportunity to provide a commentary on the prince's illusion. The commentary is made through poetic references, utilising words already provided by preceding authors, *verba parata*, to form a new face, *nova facies*, in this case the true face of Hippolytus.

Ovid and Virgil are the two authors who have a marked presence in this passage, a fact acknowledged by most commentaries. But interestingly, no one has found reason to interpret these references as anything but simple borrowing, what Thomas would call Casual references. This is an underestimation which fails to appreciate that intertextual passages in Seneca, such as *Phaedra* 483 – 564, deserve a more thorough study. This thesis has been an attempt to demonstrate that they do, by applying a close reading of the speech to examine whether the references take on other functions than just adding some shade and blush to the *nova facies*.

The results yielded are strong indications that Seneca uses poetic references to comment on a fundamental part of Hippolytus character, his Pathological Idealism. This is a remarkable mix of the rational and irrational. It is irrational, in Stoic terms, because it assigns moral value to an emotive response, in this context the impulse to flee urban life. The fine line between an impulse to flee and a decision to withdraw is a question which troubled Seneca all through his Imperial career, and thus it is all the more interesting to find the impulse in a victim in one of his tragedies. Furthermore, the impulse takes on a rational cloak, thereby earning the definition of Pathological Idealism, characterised through the development of a complex fantasy world, the Golden Age, which is used to lend credence to his passions.

The web spun by Hippolytus has two negative aspects which are highlighted by the references in this speech. The first, that the construct is impossible to realise, is revealed through the references to Virgil's *Georgics*. The use of *labor*, pointing to the heuristic ideal in the *Georgics*, makes his whole project of sylvan life appear as a contradiction to the soft and innocent Ovidian Golden Age he dreams of. The ambiguity of Virgil's *labor* is similar to the ambiguity of Hippolytus' project. The borrowing of *nullo poscente* also turns on him, since

54

the Virgilian context of the expression emphasises the fact that nature should not be forced to comply with human needs, the *natura* of the play is nothing like the idea of naturalness that Hippolytus tries to construct through fusing soft and hard primitivism.

The Ovidian references do not have this ambiguity, but are important because they establish the template tradition with which Hippolytus wants to fuse his own ideals. They also provide the audience with hints to the true cause for his flight, the impulse (*impetus est,* 518) to flee civilisation and womanhood (*multiplex domus*, 524 - 5), and the extremity of his opposition to the arguments of the nurse and Ovid's epistolary Phaedra (*taceo novercas*, 558). In addition, they show that Hippolytus is consciously reworking the Ovidian Golden Age to make it fit his own needs (*maria*, 531; *Medea*, 564).

What I find interesting is that Seneca through his references also manages to show us *how* this Pathological Idealism is constructed, thereby making Hippolytus an *exemplum*, not of mad and raging passion, but the danger of nurturing utopian dreams in any form.

Which brings us to the second negative aspect, how essentially weak and passive this Pathological Idealism leaves Hippolytus. Albeit he is quick to show force in anger (704 - 91) or heroic when meeting the bull from the sea (1066 - 7), his fantasy has rendered him a prey to every other character in the play, Phaedra, the nurse and his father. By opting for flight into this fantasy, he rejects the possibilities of more sober and reasonable strategies for coping with the situation he is in.

Finally, the Ovidian template and the farmer's life in *Geor*. II.493 – 515 offer Seneca a wide array of themes and *verba parata* to engage in playful intertextual homage. Through the examples of Conflation and Correction in 3.3.3 I hope to have given the reader a taste of this.

4.2. Broader Implications and Agenda for Future Research

In conclusion, I believe this thesis has the following three broader implications worth mentioning. Seneca is a better writer than some critics claim. The Pathological Idealism of Hippolytus might be found in other secondary characters in Senecan drama and, if this is true, it would be interesting to systematically compare the view found on abstention from society in the tragedies to that found in his prose works.

My first implication is that Seneca's use of references in this speech shows a much more advanced literary mind that he is usually credited with.[206] The portrayal of a fantasy

---

[206] It is telling that the most recent commentary gives him the dubious honour of having a "flawed greatness": Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca:* Phaedra, 29.

almost consistent, but with flaws that are revealed when the texts referred to are known, is done with a subtlety and a poetical sensibility for what can be intuited. The references are crafted in such a manner that one does not need a detailed knowledge of Virgil or Ovid to notice where there is a divergence or an emphasis. The mere appearance of the word *labor* in an ideal life modeled on the Golden Age myth would make an audience attentive; the divergent *maria* is difficult to interpret until the mentioning of Medea at the end of the speech. These are not only fascinating and complex references for those in the know, they also give an audience unfamiliar with Ovid or Virgil a feeling that something is very wrong with the Golden Age of Hippolytus. However, the fact that Seneca is able at times to pull this off does not at all make him a writer on par with his greater Augustan predecessors. In many other passages we find his famed tendencies towards over-embellished rhetorical figures, endless lists of horrors, and very thin plotlines. This is not surprising, I think it leads us to accept that Seneca probably was first and foremost a statesman and secondly a philosopher, placing his literary endeavors last in priority.

But in his literature, he is serious about conveying something important to him, which brings us to the second implication. The character of Hippolytus is not unique in the Senecan tragic universe; in fact many of the tragedies have secondary characters or victims who resemble him. The Pathological Idealism found in him can be seen as one of the conflicting abstracts presented by the Henrys. It is worthwhile to speculate whether the characterisation of Jason, Thyestes or Agamemnon is similar enough to that of Hippolytus to justify such a notion.

Finally, if there is indeed enough evidence to establish that Senecan tragedy has Pathological Idealism and an inherent critique of it as one of its fundamental traits, it might pave the way for an interesting comparison. In terms of political theory the attack on Pathological Idealism could be described as a form of pragmatism with a deep disdain for utopian notions. By undressing the fantasies as both passivising and inherently flawed, the tragedies could provide a key to one of the most difficult topics in Seneca's prose works, namely his views on political abstention. His somewhat incoherent stance on this subject might become clearer if it would prove possible to find in his tragedies a condemnation of the impulse towards irrational flight from civilisation and society.

Bibliography

Editions, Commentaries, Translations and Reference Works

Anderson, William. Ed. *Ovid's* Metamorphoses*: Books 1 – 5. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Introduction, text, and commentary.

Arnim, Hans von. Ed. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta I - IV*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-1924. Reprinted in Stuttgart: 1978 - 9.

Barrett, W. Spencer. Ed. *Euripides*: Hippolytos. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. Introduction, critical text, and commentary.

Boyle, Anthony J. Ed. *Seneca's* Phaedra. Leeds: Francis Cairns Publications, 1987. Reprinted in 1992. Introduction, text, and commentary.

Coffey, Michael and Mayer, Roland. Edd. *Seneca:* Phaedra*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Introduction, text, and commentary.

Conte, Gian B. *Latin Literature: A History.* Trans. Joseph B. Solodow. Revised by Glenn B. Most and Don Fowler. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987. Reprinted in 1999.

Costa, Charles D. N. Ed. *Seneca: 17 Letters*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1988. Introduction, text, translation, and commentary.

Dörrie, Heinrich. Ed. P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971. Critical text.

Fitch, John G. Anneana Tragica*: Notes on the Text of Seneca's Tragedies.* Boston: Brill, 2004.

Halliwell, Stephen. Ed. *The* Poetics *of Aristotle.* London: Duckworth, 1987. Introduction, text, translation, and commentary.

Munari, Franco. Ed. P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores. 5th edition. Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970. Introduction, text, critical text, and commentary.

Stähli-Peter, Monika M. *Die Arie des Hippolytus: Kommentar zur Eingangsmonodie in der* Phaedra *des Seneca.* Zürich: Juris, 1974. Commentary.

Tarrant, Richard J. Ed. *Seneca:* Agamemnon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976. Introduction, text, and commentary.

Thomas, Richard F. Ed. *Virgil*: Georgics *I - II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Introduction, text, and commentary.

Zwierlein, Otto. Ed. *Annaei Senecae: Tragoediae*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. Critical text.

Oxford Classical Dictionary. Edd. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth. Revised 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Oxford Latin Dictionary. Ed. P.G.W. Glare. 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012.

Secondary Literature

Bauzá, Hugo F. "El tema de la edad de oro en *Fedra* de Seneca". *Dionisio* 52 (1981): 55 – 66.

Bishop, J. David. *Seneca's Daggered Stylus: Political Code in the Tragedies*. Köningstein: Anton Hain, 1985.

Boyle, Anthony J. "In Nature's Bonds: A Study of Seneca's *Phaedra*'". In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.32.2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985: 1284 - 1347.

- *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*. London: Routledge, 1997.

- *Roman Tragedy*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Braden, Gordon. *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*: *Anger's Privilege*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Brunt, Peter A. "Stoicism and the Principate". *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43, (1975): 7 - 35.

Calder III, William M. "Seneca: Tragedian of Imperial Rome". *The Classical Journal* 72 (1976).

Canter, Howard V. *Rhetorical Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1925.

Davis, Peter J. *"Vindicat Omnes Natura Sibi:* A Reading of Seneca's *Phaedra"*. In ed. Anthony J. Boyle. *Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama,* 114 – 127. Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1983.

Dingel, Joachim. *Seneca und die Dichtung*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1974.

Eliot, Thomas S. "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation". *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1951: 51 – 88.

Fantham, Elaine. "Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines". *Greece & Rome* 22, No. 1 (Apr., 1975): 1 – 10.

Fears, J. Rufus. "Nero as the Vice Regent of the Gods in Seneca's *De Clementia*". *Hermes* 103 (1975): 486 - 496.

Fitch, John G. and McElduff, Siobhan. "Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama". *Mnemosyne* 55, Fasc. 1 (2002): 18 - 40.

Garner, Richard. *From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry.* London: Routledge, 1990.

Griffin, Miriam. *Seneca: a Philosopher in Politics.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. Reprinted in 2003.

- "Philosophy for Statesmen: Cicero and Seneca". In edd. Hans W. Schmidt and Peter Wülfing. *Gymnasium,* Beiheft 9, *Antikes Denken: Moderne Schule,* 133 - 150. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987.

Grimal, Pierre. *Sénèque ou la Conscience de l'Empire.* Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977.

Harrison, William M. Ed. *Seneca in Performance.* London: Duckworth, 2000.

Hendry, Michael. "Is Nothing Gentler Than Wild Beasts? Seneca, *Phaedra* 558". *The Classical Quarterly* 48, No. 2 (1998): 577 - 580.

Henry, Denis and Elisabeth (B. Walker). "Seneca's *Agamemnon*: Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom". *Classical Philology* 58 (1963): 1 – 10.

- "The Futility of Action: a Study of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*". *Classical Philology* 60 (1965): 11 – 22.

- "Phantasmagoria and Idyll: an Element of Seneca's *Phaedra*". *Greece & Rome* 13, No. 2 (Oct., 1966): 223 – 239.

- "Loss of Identity: *Medea superest*? A Study of Seneca's *Medea*". *Classical Philology* 62 (1967): 169 – 181.

- "The *Oedipus* of Seneca: an Imperial Tragedy". In ed. Anthony J. Boyle. *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama,* 128 – 139. Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1983.

- *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Rome.* Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd, 1985.

Herington, Cecil J. "Senecan Drama". *Arion* 5, No. 4 (winter, 1966): 422 - 471.

Herrmann, Léon. *Le théâtre de Sénèque.* Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924.

Hinds, Stephen. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Hine, Harry M. "Seneca, Stoicism, and the Problem of Moral Evil". In edd. Doreen Innes, Harry Hine, and Christopher Pelling. *Ethics and Rhetoric: Classical Essays for Donald Russell on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday,* 93 - 106. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

- "*Interpretatio Stoica* of Senecan Tragedy". In edd. Margarethe Billerbeck and Ernst A. Schmidt. *Sénèque le tragique, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 50, 173 – 220. Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 2004.

Horigan, Stephen. *Nature and Culture in Western Discourses*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Innwood, Brad. "Seneca in His Philosophical Milieu". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, *Greece in Rome: Influence, Integration, Resistance* (1995): 63 - 76.

Jacobi, Rainer. *Der Einfluss Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988.

Jenkyns, Richard. "*Labor Improbus*". *The Classical Quarterly* 43, No. 1 (1993): 243 - 248.

Kragelund, Patrick. "Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage ?" *Classica et Mediaevalia* 50 (1999): 235 - 247.

Leach, Eleanor W. "Neronian Pastoral and the World of Power". In ed. Anthony J. Boyle. *Ancient Pastoral: Ramus Essays on Greek and Roman Pastoral Poetry,* 142 – 4. Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1975.

Lefèvre, Eckard. "Die Politische Bedeutung der römischen Tragödie und Senecas *Oedipus*". *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 32.2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985: 1242 - 62.

Leo, Friedrich. *Tragoediae: Observationes Criticae*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1878. Reprinted in Berlin: Löwe-Druck, 1962.

Littlewood, Cedric A. J. *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

López, Vicente C. "Edad de oro, lugar ameno y vida feliz en *Fedra*, 483-564". *Cuadernos de filología clásica* 16 (1979): 155 - 76.

Lovejoy, Arthur and Boas, George. *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity.* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1935. Reprinted in 1997.

Marti, Berthe. "Seneca's Tragedies: A New Interpretation". *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 76 (1945): 216 – 245.

Mayer, Roland. "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca". In edd. Oliver Reverdin and Bernard Grange. *Sénèque et la prose latine, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 36, 141 - 169. Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1991.

- "*Personata Stoa*: Neostoicism and Senecan Tragedy". *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994): 151 - 174.

- *Seneca:* Phaedra. London: Duckworth, 2002.

Nussbaum, Martha. *The Therapy of Desire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Pasquali, Giorgio. "Arte Allusiva". *Italia che scrive* 25 (1942): 185 - 187.

Pratt, Norman T. "Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama". *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 94 (1963): 199 - 234.

- *Seneca's Drama.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

Regenbogen, Otto. "Schmerz und Tod in den Tragödien Senecas". *Vortrage der Bibliothek Warburg* 7 (1927 – 1928). Reprinted as monograph, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963.

Rhodes, Neil. "The Controversial Plot: Declamation and the Concept of the "Problem Play". *The Modern Language Review* 95, No. 3 (July, 2000): 609 - 622.

Rist, John M. *Stoic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Rosenmeyer, Thomas G. *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology.* Berkley: The University of California Press, 1989.

Ruch, Michel. "Phèdre romaine et Hippolyte romain". *L'information littéraire* 16 (1964): 200 – 7.

Schiesaro, Alessandro. *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Segal, Charles. "Dissonant Sympathy: Song, Orpheus and the Golden Age in Seneca's Tragedies". In ed. Anthony J. Boyle. *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama*, 229 – 256. Berwick, Victoria: Aureal Publications, 1983.

- *Language and Desire in Seneca's* Phaedra. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Sellars, John. *Stoicism*. Chesham: Acumen, 2006.

Skovgaard-Hansen, Michael. "The Fall of Phaethon". *Classica et Mediaevalia* 29 (1968): 92 – 123.

Smolenaars, Johannes J. L. "Labour in the Golden Age: A Unifying Theme in Vergil's Poems". *Mnemosyne* 40, Fasc. 3/4 (1987): 391 - 405.

Staley, Gregory A. *Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Sutton, Dana F. *Seneca on Stage*. Leiden: Brill, 1986.

Syme, Ronald. *Tacitus.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.

Tarrant, Richard J. "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82 (1978): 213-263.

- "The Younger Seneca: Tragedies". In edd. Leighton D. Reynolds and Peter K. Marshall. *Texts and Transmissions: A Survey of The Latin Classics,* 378 - 381. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

- "Greek and Roman in Seneca's Tragedies". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, *Greece in Rome: Influence, Integration, Resistance* (1995): 215 - 230.

Thomas, Richard F. "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference (Poem 64.1-18)". *The American Journal of Philology* 103, No. 2 (summer, 1982): 144 - 164.

- "Virgil's Georgics and the Art of Reference". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 90 (1986): 171 - 198.

Vander Waerdt, Paul A. "Politics and Philosophy in Stoicism". In ed. Julia Annas. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 9, 185 - 211. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Wheeler, Stephen. *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's* Metamorphoses. Thübingen: Gunter Narr, 2000.

Winston, Jessica. "Seneca in Early Elizabethan England". *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, No. 1 (spring, 2006): 29 – 58.

Zintzen, Clemens. *Analytisches Hypomnema zu Senecas* Phaedra. Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1960.

Zwierlein, Otto. *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas.* Meissenheim: Anton Hain, 1966.

Appendix: Texts and Translations

Georgics I. 121-149

> *Pater ipse colendi*
> *haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem*
> *mouit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda*
> *nec torpere graui passus sua regna ueterno.*
> *ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni:*   125
> *ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum*
> *fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus*
> *omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.*
> *Ille malum uirus serpentibus addidit atris*
> *praedarique lupos iussit pontumque moueri,*   130
> *mellaque decussit foliis ignemque remouit*
> *et passim riuis currentia uina repressit,*
> *ut uarias usus meditando extunderet artis*
> *paulatim, et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam,*
> *ut silicis uenis abstrusum excuderet ignem.*   135
> *tunc alnos primum fluuii sensere cauatas;*
> *nauita tum stellis numeros et nomina fecit*
> *Pleiadas, Hyadas, claramque Lycaonis Arcton.*
> *tum laqueis captare feras et fallere uisco*
> *inuentum et magnos canibus circumdare saltus;*   140
> *atque alius latum funda iam uerberat amnem*
> *alta petens, pelagoque alius trahit umida lina.*
> *tum ferri rigor atque argutae lammina serrae*
> *(nam primi cuneis scindebant fissile lignum),*
> *tum uariae uenere artes. labor omnia uicit*   145
> *improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.*
> *prima Ceres ferro mortalis uertere terram*
> *instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae*
> *deficerent siluae et uictum Dodona negaret.*

The father himself did not will that the road to cultivation should be easy. He was the first to stir the fields through skill, thus sharpening mortal hearts through cares, not tolerating his realms to be numbed by heavy torpor. Before Jove, no farmers subdued the land: It was not even lawful to mark or divide the field by border. Mankind shared their goods, and the earth herself bore everything more freely, since no one demanded it. He infused black serpents with evil venom, commanded wolves to prey, the sea to swell, shook honey from leaves, removed fire and restrained the wines which ran everywhere in streams, so that little by little, usage with aid of thought painstakingly could produce varied skills, search out the corn-blade with furrows and smite hidden fire from the veins of flint. Then first did the rivers feel the hollowed alders: then the sailor gave names and numbers to the stars, the Pleiades, Hyades and Lycaon's clear Arctos. Then it was discovered how to capture wild animals by snares, trick with bird-lime, and to surround the great woodlands with dogs. One man, searching the depths, whips the broad river with nets, another drags dripping lines across the deep sea. Then came iron's harshness and the blade of the singing saw (for early man cut fissile wood by wedges) then came various skills. Toil conquered all, insatiable toil and need that compels in hard times. Ceres first taught mortals to till the soil with iron, when hallowed forests failed to give acorns and arbutes and Dodona refused men food.

Georgics. **II. 493 - 515**

fortunatus et ille deos qui nouit agrestis
Panaque Siluanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.
illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum   495
flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,
aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,
non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille
aut doluit miserans inopem aut inuidit habenti.
quos rami fructus, quos ipsa uolentia rura   500
sponte tulere sua, carpsit, nec ferrea iura
insanumque forum aut populi tabularia uidit.
sollicitant alii remis freta caeca, ruuntque
in ferrum, penetrant aulas et limina regum;
hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penatis,   505
ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro;
condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro;
hic stupet attonitus rostris, hunc plausus hiantem
per cuneos geminatus enim plebisque patrumque
corripuit; gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum,   510
exsilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant
atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole iacentem.
agricola incuruo terram dimouit aratro:
hinc anni labor, hinc patriam paruosque nepotes
sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuuencos.   515

Fortunate is also he who knows the woodland gods, Pan, old Silvanus and the Dryads. He is not moved by the people's magistrates, the purple of kings, discord exciting treacherous brothers, the Dacians descending from a perfidious Danube, the affairs of Rome or doomed realms; he neither agonises from pity for the poor nor envies the rich. He gathers the fruit of the branch and what the fields themselves willingly provide of their own accord. He has seen no iron law, no insane forum nor the people's records.

     Some stir the unknown seas with oars, rush to the sword, and penetrate the courts and gates of kings. This one seeks to destroy the city and its wretched Penates in order to drink from jewelled cup and sleep on Tyrian purple; another conceals his treasures and broods over buried gold. This one stands astonished, stupefied by the podium, another stands gaping, carried away by the applause, echoed double from the seat rows of plebs and patricians. They take pleasure in being soaked in the blood of their brothers, exchange homes, their dear houses, for exile, and search for a homeland lying under a foreign sun.

     The farmer tills the soil with crooked plough. From this comes his year's toil, from this he supports his homeland and his little grandsons, from this he supports the herds of cattle and worthy steers.

Metamorphoses I.89 - 124

Aurea prima sata est aetas, quae vindice nullo,
sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque colebat.   90
poena metusque aberant, nec verba minantia fixo
aere legebantur, nec supplex turba timebat
iudicis ora sui, sed erant sine vindice tuti.
nondum caesa suis, peregrinum ut viseret orbem,
montibus in liquidas pinus descenderat undas,   95
nullaque mortales praeter sua litora norant;
nondum praecipites cingebant oppida fossae;
non tuba derecti, non aeris cornua flexi,
non galeae, non ensis erat: sine militis usu
mollia securae peragebant otia gentes.   100
ipsa quoque inmunis rastroque intacta nec ullis
saucia vomeribus per se dabat omnia tellus,
contentique cibis nullo cogente creatis
arbuteos fetus montanaque fraga legebant
cornaque et in duris haerentia mora rubetis   105
et quae deciderant patula Iovis arbore glandes.
ver erat aeternum, placidique tepentibus auris
mulcebant zephyri natos sine semine flores;
mox etiam fruges tellus inarata ferebat,
nec renovatus ager gravidis canebat aristis;   110
flumina iam lactis, iam flumina nectaris ibant,
flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.
Postquam Saturno tenebrosa in Tartara misso
sub Iove mundus erat, subiit argentea proles,
auro deterior, fulvo pretiosior aere.   115
Iuppiter antiqui contraxit tempora veris
perque hiemes aestusque et inaequalis autumnos
et breve ver spatiis exegit quattuor annum.
tum primum siccis aer fervoribus ustus
canduit, et ventis glacies adstricta pependit;   120
tum primum subiere domos; domus antra fuerunt
et densi frutices et vinctae cortice virgae.
semina tum primum longis Cerealia sulcis
obruta sunt, pressique iugo gemuere iuvenci.

Golden was the first age that came, which without protector and law observed right and honesty by own volition. Punishment and fear were absent; threatening words were not fixed in bronze to be read, no suppliant mob feared the judging visage, but they were safe without protectors. Not yet had the cut pine descended into flowing waves from its mountains to visit foreign lands, and mortals knew no coasts except their own. Not yet were towns surrounded by steep trenches. There was no straight trumpet, no horns of curved bronze, no helmets and no sword. Having no use for a soldier, peoples enjoyed soft leisure in safety. The earth, free from forced tribute, and untouched by hoe and unharmed by ploughshares, gave everything herself. Content with food produced without force, men picked arbute fruit and the mountains' wild strawberries, cherries, and mulberries clinging to robust bushes, and acorns fallen from the wide-reaching tree of Jove. There was eternal spring, and the mild Zephyr with warm winds touched gently flowers born without seed. Soon the untilled earth bore

harvest and the fields, unfallowed, grew white with heavy harvest. Now rivers of milk, rivers of nectar gushed forth, and yellow honey was distilled from fresh oak. After the earth had been subdued by Jove, when Saturn was sent to murky Tartarus, the Silver race, worse than the golden but more precious than tawny bronze, ascended. Jupiter contracted the time of ancient spring and through winters, summers, uneven autumns and a brief spring he divided the year in four seasons. Then first bronze in dry heat melted shined white, and the great glacier was born by wind; then did they enter houses; the houses were caves, dense bushels and branches bound by bark. Then first the grain of Ceres was hid in long furrows and the young steers groaned, pressed by the plough.

Metamorphoses **I.144 - 50**

vivitur ex rapto: non hospes ab hospite tutus,
non socer a genero, fratrum quoque gratia rara est;   145
inminet exitio vir coniugis, illa mariti,
lurida terribiles miscent aconita novercae,
filius ante diem patrios inquirit in annos:
victa iacet pietas, et virgo caede madentis
ultima caelestum terras Astraea reliquit.   150

Livelihood is based on plunder: a guest is not safe from his host, a father-in-law not safe from his son-in-law, even brotherly love is rare. A man desires the death of his wife, and she, that of her husband. Gruesome step-mothers mix ghastly poisons, a son prematurely make inquiries regarding his father's future: Piety lays vanquished and the Virgin Astrea was the last of the gods to leave the earth that was now soaked in blood.

Amores **III.8.41 – 48**

nec valido quisquam terram scindebat aratro,
   signabat nullo limite mensor humum;
non freta demisso verrebant eruta remo:
   ultima mortali tum via litus erat.
Contra te sollers, hominum natura, fuisti   145
   et nimium damnis ingeniosa tuis.
quo tibi, turritis incingere moenibus urbes?
   quo tibi, discordes addere in arma manus?

No one cut the earth with strong ploughshare, no surveyor divided the land with borderline. They did not sweep the seas disturbed by the dip of the oar. The shore was then the end of the road for mortal man. You, human nature, have been too clever for your own good and too ingenious in your deprivation. What good did it do you, to wrap cities in towered walls? What good, to place weapons in discordant hands?

Phaedra 483 - 564

Non alia magis est libera et uitio carens
ritusque melius uita quae priscos colat,
quam quae relictis moenibus siluas amat.   485
non illum auarae mentis inflammat furor
qui se dicauit montium insontem iugis,
non aura populi et uulgus infidum bonis,
non pestilens inuidia, non fragilis fauor;
non ille regno seruit aut regno imminens   490
uanos honores sequitur aut fluxas opes,
spei metusque liber, haud illum niger
edaxque liuor dente degeneri petit;
nec scelera populos inter atque urbes sata
nouit nec omnes conscius strepitus pauet   495
aut uerba fingit; mille non quaerit tegi
diues columnis nec trabes multo insolens
suffigit auro; non cruor largus pias
inundat aras, fruge nec sparsi sacra
centena niuei colla summittunt boues: 500
sed rure uacuo potitur et aperto aethere
innocuus errat. callidas tantum feris
struxisse fraudes nouit et fessus graui
labore niueo corpus Iliso fouet;
nunc ille ripam celeris Alphei legit,   505
nunc nemoris alti densa metatur loca,
ubi Lerna puro gelida perlucet uado,
solesque uitat. hinc aues querulae fremunt
ramique uentis lene percussi tremunt
...
ueteresque fagi. iuuat <et> aut amnis uagi   510
pressisse ripas, caespite aut nudo leues
duxisse somnos, siue fons largus citas
defundit undas, siue per flores nouos
fugiente dulcis murmurat riuo sonus.
excussa siluis poma compescunt famem   515
et fraga paruis uulsa dumetis cibos
faciles ministrant. regios luxus procul
est impetus fugisse: sollicito bibunt
auro superbi; quam iuuat nuda manu
captasse fontem! certior somnus premit   520
secura duro membra versantem toro.[207]
non in recessu furta et obscuro improbus
quaerit cubili seque multiplici timens
domo recondit: aethera ac lucem petit
et teste caelo uiuit. **H**oc equidem reor   525
uixisse ritu prima quos mixtos deis
profudit aetas. nullus his auri fuit
caecus cupido, nullus in campo sacer

---

[207] Zwierlein has *laxantem*. Cf. p. 31.

diuisit agros arbiter populis lapis;
nondum secabant credulae pontum rates: 530
sua quisque norat maria; non uasto aggere
crebraque turre cinxerant urbes latus;
non arma saeua miles aptabat manu
nec torta clausas fregerat saxo graui
ballista portas, iussa nec dominum pati 535
iuncto ferebat terra seruitium boue:
sed arua per se feta poscentes nihil
pauere gentes, silua natiuas opes
et opaca dederant antra natiuas domos.
R*upere foedus impius lucri furor* 540
et ira praeceps quaeque succensas agit
libido mentes; uenit imperii sitis
cruenta, factus praeda maiori minor:
pro iure uires esse. tum primum manu
bellare nuda saxaque et ramos rudes 545
uertere in arma: non erat gracili leuis
armata ferro cornus aut longo latus
mucrone cingens ensis aut crista procul
galeae micantes: tela faciebat dolor.
inuenit artes bellicus Mauors nouas 550
et mille formas mortis. hinc terras cruor
infecit omnis fusus et rubuit mare.
tum scelera dempto fine per cunctas domos
iere, nullum caruit exemplo nefas:
a fratre frater, dextera gnati parens 555
cecidit, maritus coniugis ferro iacet
perimuntque fetus impiae matres suos;
taceo nouercas: mitius nil sunt feris.[208]
Sed dux malorum femina: haec scelerum artifex
obsedit animos, huius incestae stupris 560
fumant tot urbes, bella tot gentes gerunt
et uersa ab imo regna tot populos premunt.
sileantur aliae: sola coniunx Aegei,
Medea, reddet feminas dirum genus.

No other life is freer, more innocent, and better at observing the old customs, than the life that leaves city walls behind and loves the forests. The madness of a greedy mind cannot inflame him who innocent dedicates himself to the mountain range, no populist wind or a mob, untrue to good men, no toxic hate or fragile favour. He serves no dominion, nor striving for dominion does he follow empty honours and fleeting riches. He is free from hope and fear. Black voracious jealousy does not attack him with tarnished tooth. He knows not crimes bred betwixt cities and nations, nor does he guiltily tremble at every noise or devise lies. He strives not, as the opulent man does, to be hidden behind thousands of columns, nor does he brazenly guild beams with gold aplenty. Blood does not ostentatiously flood his pious altars, nor do hundreds of snow-white oxen, sprinkled with holy grain, lower their heads.

---

[208] Zwierlein has *est,* in accordance with EA. Cf. n. 155.

But he masters the empty countryside and wanders innocently in open air. He knows to construct sly traps only for wild animals, and tired from heavy labor, he soothes his body in snowy Ilissos. Now he walks along the banks of swift Alpheus, now he strides through dense places in the deep forest, where Lerna shines coolly through the clean ford, evading the sun. Here it is the birds that complain, and the branches shiver, lightly touched by the wind.

…

And old beeches. It is also delightful to lie on the banks of the meandering river, or to dream blithely on naked grass, whether it is a lavish spring that dispenses swift waves or the sweet sound made by a river fleeing through fresh flowers that murmurs. Apples, shaken from the trees, satisfiy hunger, and wild strawberries twisted from small shrubs provide easy meals. It is imperative to flee far from kingly luxuries: the proud drink from nervous gold; much better to catch the spring with naked hand! More surely does sleep press on him who twists safe members on a hard bed. He does not lewdly search to do trickery in chambers or secret beds, nor does he fearful hide himself in a labyrinth house: He seeks air and light, and lives with heaven as witness.

Indeed, I believe the first Age produced men who lived amongst the gods and by these customs. These men never had a blind lust for gold, no sacred boundary stone, judging amongst men, separated the fields on the plain; not yet did credulous vessels shear through the Black Sea. Each man knew only his own seas. Cities did not surround their sides with great ramparts and numerous towers. The soldier did not grasp savage weapons, nor did twisted engine crush closed gates with heavy stone. The soil did not, commanded to obey a master, endure serfdom under the yoked ox. But fields fruitful by themselves fed peoples who demanded nothing, the forest gave its natural riches and shaded caves provided natural homes

The pact was broken by base profit hunger, impulsive hate, and lust, which drives exacerbated minds. The bloody thirst for empire came; the weak became prey to the stronger. Force replaced justice. It first then that man warred with naked hands; rocks and rude branches were turned into weapons. There was no light spear armed with gracious iron, sword equipping its side with long edge, or helmets, crests shining from afar. Pain produced weapons. Warlike Mars invented new strategies and a thousand forms of death. Hence blood, splattered everywhere, stained all lands and dyed the sea red. Then crimes without end went through all homes, no sin lacked an example to follow: Brother were felled by brother, a parent by a child's hand, a husband lies dead by a spouse's iron and impious mothers strangle their own infants; I shall not speak of step-mothers - they are in no respect milder than beasts.

But chief of all wickedness is woman: This contriver of crimes besets minds. So many cities burn because of her foul adulteries, so many nations go to war, realms are tottered to crush so many peoples. Though nothing be said of the others, Aegeus' wife alone, Medea, will prove that women are an accursed race.