Vindicta Nostris:

The Psychological Development of Seneca's Revenger in the Elizabethan Renaissance

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Optimis parentibus omni cum amore gratiaque

“That is what it means to become a revenger.
It means to wade in blood, to sup full with horrors.”

Peter Mercer, Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge

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Introduction

The title of my study concerning the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan revenge tragedy is a manipulation of Hieronimo's first line of Act 3, scene 13 in Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy. His personal "Vindicta mihi" becomes the collective Vindicta Nostris, as Kyd and his contemporaries incorporate centuries-old Senecan revenge into their own tragedies. The vengeance and psychology of Seneca's characters flows into the English Renaissance as the Elizabethan playwrights take up Senecan examples and turn them to the English stage. In his Moral Epistle 84, Seneca himself addresses such literary imitation:

> nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congessimus, separare, melius enim distincta servantur, deinde adhibita ingenii nostri cura et facultate in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit, unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est, appareat.
>
> (Moral Epistle 84.5)

[We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us,— in other words, our natural gifts, — we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing that whence it came.][1]

Seneca makes the case that imitatio, executed by those having superior natural gifts, will produce an end result that is a pleasing and unique amalgamation of the sources examined. He allows the process by which the blending occurs to remain mysterious, for the methods are often varied and difficult to define, but the final product of this collective accumulation of literary examination has the potential to rival or even surpass its influences. Armed, as we modern readers are, with both Seneca's own literary theory and the results of Senecan imitation, we can look back at this

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1 Translated by Richard Gummere (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Epistles. Trans. Richard Gummere. 3 vols., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920)). I am deeply indebted to Thomas Greene's wonderful analysis of Seneca's view of imitatio in his The Light in Troy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

process of integration to determine the depths of Seneca's influence on the playwrights of Elizabethan England.

In Seneca's mind as opposed to most modern sensibilities, the impression of direct influence does not negate the value of new literature. On the contrary, imitation is something to be sought and praised, as the greatest achievements are a self-aware blend of what has come before. Yet Seneca also addresses those works that seem entirely removed from previous literary undertakings. Thomas Greene notes, "The emphasis on the unrecognizability of the final product is not...a counsel of dissimulation to hide one's thefts, but rather the simple evidence of mature individuality."[2] While I am not concerned with addressing the educational processes of Senecan imitation, for the Latin learning of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been documented extensively by scholars,[3] I am interested in revealing the revenger's character development as a result of such a process of imitation and adaptation and in tracing its progression to what Greene deems "mature individuality."

The influence of Senecan tragedy on English Renaissance playwrights has been acknowledged and seriously considered by scholars since the late nineteenth century, although

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2 Greene, Light in Troy, 74

3 Although scholars still remain at odds as to exactly what Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights read in grammar school, there is a general consensus that by the time he was writing his plays, Shakespeare had read Seneca's tragedies. Recent scholarship overwhelmingly acknowledges Senecan influence. See Kenneth Muir, The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays (Abington: Routledge, 2005); Charles Martindale and Michelle Martindale, Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity (London: Routledge, 1990); Ann Lydia Motto and John R. Clark, "Senecan Tragedy: A Critique of Scholarly Trends," Renaissance Drama, New Series 6 (1973). It is appropriate to note, however, that T.W. Baldwin held that there is "no indication that Shakspere [sic] read Seneca's plays in the original. Nor do I find any evidence worth repeating that Shakspere had read English Seneca " (Baldwin, Small Latine, Lesse Greeke (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), 2: 560). I am convinced by Kyd's use of Latin quotations and general style that he has read original Senecan tragedy.

Renaissance critics themselves were by no means blind to the Senecanism on their stage.[4] Given the widespread availability of Seneca's plays and their popularity in mainland Europe, it comes as little surprise that English dramatists were eager to take up the classical source material.[5] The resulting imitations, adaptations, and innovations of Senecan drama have guided the course of the development of English literature.

Prior to the 1890s, those who commented on Senecanism in sixteenth and seventeenth century England were tentative in their observations at best, and left their analysis at vague notes of rhetorical similarities.[6] But beginning most notably with John Cunliffe's 1893 The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy, scholarship began to take an active role in ascertaining the extent of Senecan influence.[7] While such scholarship has been consistently produced since the late nineteenth century, it has often fallen into several traps which do significant disservice to both Seneca and the Elizabethans.

The first is the tendency to make assumptions or generalizations about the periods of the plays' authorship. F.L. Lucas claims in 1922 that "the Roman [Seneca] takes the figures of the Greek

4 Consider for instance, Thomas Nashe's famous remark in the late 1580s:

> yet English Seneca read by candle light yeeldes manie good sentences, as Bloud is a begger, and so foorth; and, if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will affoord you whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of tragical speaches. But O griefe! tempus edax rerum, what's that will last alwaies? The sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance be drie, and Seneca let bloud line by line and page by page at length must needes die to our stage.
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> (The Works of Thomas Nashe (London: A.H. Bullen, 1905), 315-6)

5 For an extensive bibliography of international Senecan influence, see Eckard Lefèvre, Der Einfluss Senecas auf das europäische Drama, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

6 e.g. H.A.J. Munro, "Seneca's Tragedies," Journal of Philology 6 (1876): 70-9: "Again and again my ear seems to catch in Shakespeare some echo of a saying in Seneca"

7 John William Cunliffe, The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy (Hamden: Archon Books, 1965). Frederick Kiefer's "Seneca's Influence on Elizabethan Tragedy: An Annotated Bibliography," Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama 21 (1978) is especially useful in tracing the development of scholarship.

[Euripides], remoulds them with his own clumsy, massive violence, repaints them with his own crude loudness."

[8] Even more broadly, T.S. Eliot suggests that "many of the faults of Seneca which appear 'decadent' are, after all, merely Roman and (in the narrower sense) Latin."[9] Ten years earlier than Lucas, Evelyn M. Spearing comments, "The Senecan drama, crude and melodramatic as it seems to us, appealed far more strongly to the robust Englishmen of the sixteenth century, whose animal instincts were as yet only half subdued by civilization."[10] Statements such as these have been, thankfully, largely outdated as scholarship has advanced, yet more recent studies sometimes demonstrate the same tendency to generalize, especially concerning the so-called violent nature of Seneca's tragedies and the English reaction to "Senecan" bloodletting.[11]

Another frequent and almost more disappointing failure of scholarship is some critics' propensity to analyze quantitatively, rather than qualitatively. By this I mean their susceptibility to identify direct quotations taken from Seneca's plays, the five act structure, some literary and rhetorical devices, and from these disparate elements to form a incomplete and hasty judgement of Senecan influence. When G.K. Hunter remarks that after a survey of Seneca's influence, "we are left with a few well-worn anthology passages and a few isolated tricks like stichomythia (and even that occurs outside tragedy) as relics of the once extensive empire of Seneca's undisputed

8 F.L. Lucas, Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922): 12

9 T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays, (New York: Harcourt, 1950): 56

10 Evelyn M. Spearing in The Elizabethan Translations of Seneca's Tragedies (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1912) noted in Kiefer, "Senecan Influence," 17-34

11 E.g. Maurice Charney, "The Persuasiveness of Violence in Elizabethan Plays," Renaissance Drama, New Series 2 (1969): 65 on the Elizabethan's love of violence; B.R. Rees, "English Seneca: A Preamble," Greece & Rome, Second Series 16 (2) (1969): 129: The Elizabethans saw in Seneca "what they wanted to see, and used his plays as models on which to mould their own view of tragedy, but the first translators and imitators lacked the genius to transcend their own failings and turn the undoubted merits of Seneca to their advantage— instead they only accentuated his defects by emphasizing them through their own."

influence,"[12] he is ignoring the psychological implications of Senecan characterization as well as the reality that Shakespeare was not only exposed to primary Senecan Latin, but adaptions and innovations of Senecan texts carried down through the work of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Scholars also have a tendency to dismiss the literary value of Seneca's plays, citing graphic violence and gross exaggeration as impediments to true theatrical appeal.[13] While such thinking has begun to dissipate, largely due to the excellent work of scholars such as A.J. Boyle and Gordon Braden, these views still persist. I believe, however, that an appreciative understanding of Senecan drama and of its themes, rhetoric, and characterization is essential to determine the influence it had on the English Renaissance. Seneca is a brilliant playwright in his own right and should be acknowledged as such to ascertain correctly the significant impact he had on Elizabethan playwrights.

What I propose to do here is to reveal the psychological mind of the Renaissance revenger, a mind that would not have been possible without the characters of Seneca. I will examine how the hero views his situation, his self, and his revenge, as well as the resulting success or failure of his venture. While considering Seneca's own views on literary imitation, I will attempt to unearth the traces of Senecan influence which allow Kyd and then Shakespeare to construct a form of revenge that further develops the model begun by Seneca. The classical dramatist presents us with characters who have already been destabilized and whose potential for

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12 G.K. Hunter, Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions: Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1978): 167

13 See Robert S. Miola, Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992); Emrys Jones, The Origins of Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); B.L. Joseph, "The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet: Two Exercises in English Seneca," in Classical Drama and Its Influence: Essays Presented to H.D.F. Kitto, ed. by M.J. Anderson, (London: Methuen, 1965) for further discussion of Seneca's modern reception.

evil has already been established. Kyd and his Renaissance successors give us the process of such a deterioration, culminating in the deaths of their revengers.

In order to trace the development of the psychological implications of Senecan tragedy on the revenge genre, I first set out to identity in the Senecan plays the elements which proved so popular to the Elizabethans. My first chapter is a study of Seneca's tragedies, concentrating on the revenge dramas Thyestes, Medea, and Clytemnestra, but also examining his other five tragedies. I have identified Seneca's concerns with self-loss and reconstruction central to all the plays as well as a specific formula for revenge with which future playwrights engage.

My second chapter uses Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy as a case study in Senecan influence. I trace the progressions of both Don Andrea and Hieronimo as they struggle to find their place and their revenge in the Senecan landscape of their play. I chose this tragedy because I believe Kyd's use of Seneca to be significant and complicated, but other plays of the period also exhibit significant Senecan influence. The earlier Norton and Sackville's Gorboduc (1561), as well as Marlowe's Tamburlaine (c. 1587), Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus (c. 1588-1593), Marston's Antonio's Revenge (c. 1599-1600), Middleton's Revenger's Tragedy (1606), Tourneur's Atheist's Tragedy (1611), and Webster's The Duchess of Malfi (1612-3) among others also provide notable examples of the development of Senecan psychology.[14] Kyd, however, is especially relevant to my study for his play leads directly to Shakespeare's Hamlet while significantly developing the Senecan revenge formula.

My conclusion serves as a look to the future of the Senecan revenger and Hamlet. Seneca's formula for revenge and the psychological instability of his revengers is muddled, mixed, and transformed by Shakespeare's ingenium (Ep. 84.5). The transformation of victim to

14 See also Peter Mercer, Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1987), appendix "Tormented now with ghosts": Revenge in Early English Tragedy

revenger that is generally clear in The Spanish Tragedy is often almost imperceptible beneath the complete self-deterioration that characterizes Hamlet. I have isolated the ghost, the play, and the death scene as places of particular Shakespearian innovation. Each of these elements is central to the workings of a Senecan revenge plot, yet Shakespeare complicates them to heighten the extreme psychological confusion of his protagonist. Shakespeare's Senecan ghost urges compassion; his Senecan spectacle arrives too early with little revenging effect. And in a significant departure from his classical and native predecessors, Shakespeare concludes Hamlet not with the spirit of revenge, but with hope for the future.

I must also begin my study with the caveat that at no point do I mean to imply that Seneca, or even the entire classical tradition, was the only influence on the authors of the Renaissance. Contemporary foreign and native tradition existed as well, as did translations and interpretations of the classical texts. Hunter rightfully warns of the danger of extracting just one author from the "generalized mass of classical example."[15] I do, however, believe that Seneca specifically played a significant role in influencing the development of the English stage and that an isolated study of his influence does much to explore further the psychology of the Elizabethan revenger.

Central to the concerns of these plays, both Senecan and Elizabethan, is the construction of the self. Seneca forces his characters and his audience to turn inwards, to confront and observe the inner workings of the minds of madmen. The majority of his characters, most notably the revengers, have lost autonomy and security; they desperately attempt to re-stabilize their selves by using extreme action to reconstruct a new identity. The playwrights of the Renaissance observe and develop this internal movement. Upon an expanded stage, they compel

15 Hunter, "Seneca and the Elizabethans: A Case Study in 'Influence,'" in Shakespeare Survey 20, ed. by Kenneth Muir, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 20n12

their audience to watch rational thought change to revenge, love and duty turn to murder. Senecan characterization becomes the end goal of Kyd and Shakespeare's revengers. Hieronimo and Hamlet attempt to become like Medea, Clytemnestra, and Atreus on their paths to vengeance. Yet both Elizabethan authors complicate this pattern by allowing their revengers varying degrees of success and by killing their protagonists as a result of revenge's paradox. A man moved to murder by the murder of another becomes what he despises. What was Medea becomes Hieronimo, and Hieronimo takes us to the future of Hamlet.

Chapter I: Eram Medea

In order to understand what Kyd, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries saw in Seneca, one must understand Seneca's drama. For, although the fact that books of Seneca appear on the English stage is of vital importance,[16] more consequential is the ghost of Seneca's tragedy which floats above the scenes. I do not only mean the character of the ghost, who is Senecan in nature, but also the spectral influence of a playwright long dead molding the shape, feel, and movement of revenge. The true nature of this spirit is only visible through a thorough and appreciative study of Senecan tragedy. More important than the quotations, structure, and conventions gleaned from Senecan drama are the psychological depths first probed by the classical playwright which allow the Elizabethans to fashion their own revengers.

In the following chapter, I will identity the elements of Senecan tragedy that made the Latin texts so appealing for the revenge dramas of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Why are even the non-revenge plots of Seneca, as well as those of Medea, Thyestes, and Agamemnon, so vital to the evolution of the English Renaissance vengeance play? To answer this, I have divided my analysis of the Senecan texts into three sections: loss of selfhood, rhetorical response and compensation, and the revenge plot. The first of these parts will examine the psychological destabilization at the heart of Seneca's tragedy that found its way to the English stage, while the second will address the characters' response to such disruption. From the heights of self-aggrandizing soliloquies to staccato stichomythia, the rhetoric of Seneca's characters constantly attempts to reassert political, social, sexual, and personal authority. These elements are two of the defining characteristics of Seneca's tragedies and are central not only to the progression of vengeance, but to all of Seneca's characters. Thus I have determined to give them preeminence here. The third section I explore specifically addresses the development of a Senecan revenger within his or her own world and the formula for vengeance that Seneca establishes. I examine

16 ST 3.13; Ham 2.2

the actions and motivations of Thyestes' Atreus, Medea's Medea, and Agamemnon's Clytemnestra.

Before I begin an analysis of Seneca's plays, however, several points must be addressed. Concerning Seneca's performance methods, debates still rage as to the actability of the eight tragedies which survive.[17] Yet regardless of whether they were physically performed on stage or merely read aloud, Seneca's drama contains such powerful rhetorical depths as to be called "drama of the word."[18] I will not comment on the scholarly dispute about actability in much detail, other than to remark that whether or not the plays were performed in first-century Rome, Senecan tragedies were certainly staged in Renaissance England, most notably at Cambridge in the 1560s.[19] The authors of these dramatic translations obviously concluded that the tragedies were indeed possible to produce on stage. Thus, speculation as to their original theatrical nature is perhaps out of place in a discussion of sixteenth and seventeenth century imitation and innovation.

As for the authorship of the ten plays attributed to Seneca, I have determined to work only with the eight which are considered to be unquestionably his, leading to the exclusion of

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17 For arguments against staging see R.J. Tarrant, Seneca's Thyestes (Reprint, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 13-6; Elaine Fantham, Seneca's Troades (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 34-49; and, most notably, Otto Zweirlein, Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1966). For arguments in favor of physical performance, see Boyle, "Senecan Tragedy: Twelve Propositions," Ramus 16 (1987); D.F. Sutton, Seneca on the Stage (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986). For general discussion, see John Gordon Fitch, Seneca Tragedies, Vol. 1 and 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). Gordon Braden, Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege (New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1971) provides a useful compilation of the arguments, 230n14.

18 Fitch, Seneca: Tragedies, 1:1

19 See Jessica Winston, "Seneca in Early Elizabethan England," Renaissance Quarterly 59 (1) (2006), 30; Frederick Ahl, Seneca Medea (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 26-7. For discussion on the staging of new Latin dramas in this time period, see David Greenwood, "The Staging of Neo-Latin Plays in Sixteenth Century England," Educational Theatre Journal 16 (4) (1964).

Octavia and Hercules Oetaeus. [20] Although the Elizabethan canon included these two other plays, I am able to demonstrate my thesis using the central plays of Seneca, all of which I have found to be influencing Renaissance playwrights, without commenting at length on the question of authorship. These eight dramas all convey the devastation and desperation so vital to Seneca's penetrating look into the psychology of personal loss and reconstruction.

LOSS OF SELF

Apparent in all of Seneca's plays is the instability of the main characters' conception of their selfhood. There is no real constancy in the world of Senecan tragedy. In almost every scene, every dialogue, there is a power struggle between the self and the outside, past internal security and present external pressures. Seneca's protagonists have lost a part of themselves and desperately attempt to get it back. But in doing so, they often overstep the bounds of both the natural world and social norms. The seduction of a wife can hardly justify a cannibalistic banquet; a divorce does not merit filicide; vengeance for the murder of a daughter cannot justly claim a raped and helpless captive as collateral damage. Yet the hurts done to Atreus, Medea, Clytemnestra and their literary companions mean more to them than the actual, initial affront. These injuries are direct assaults upon their selves, and for the revengers, there can be no limit to their subsequent search for wholeness. They follow Atreus' assertion that sceleri modus debetur ubi facias scelus,/ non ubi reponas [crime is owed some limit when you commit crime, not when you repay it] (1052-3).[21]

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20 i.e. Agamemnon, Oedipus, Phaedra, Hercules Furens, Medea, Troades, Thyestes, Phoenissae, abbreviated as Ag, Oed, Pha, HF, Med, Tro, Thy, and Pho. See Tarrant, Seneca's Thyestes, 9 concerning the authorship of Octavia.

21 All the translations provided in this study are from Fitch's Loeb editions unless otherwise specified.

When the characters specifically call for vengeance, the causes of their self-doubt are easily distinguishable. Medea speaks of her patria..pater frater pudor [my fatherland…, my father, my brother, my modesty] (488), given up for the sake of her husband. Of these, her pudor seems to be the most dear. Medea clearly differentiates between her life as a virgo and her life in Corinth and repeatedly speaks of her girlhood years.[22] In the epithalamion of the first choral ode, the Corinthians deliberately goad the jilted wife with descriptions of virginity and innocence.[23] Devastated by their joyous yet mocking words, Medea is confronted by what she has lost. All that had made up her world in Colchis fell (cessit, 488) to a new identity, and now again the proverbial walls are collapsing around her. She survived her last expulsion from security because she had a husband with whom to create a new world, one with him at its center. Now, Jason's abandonment of her threatens not only her sense of marital justice but her entire identity.[24]

Adding to the dissolution of her private sphere is the very public banishment and her status as an exul. Medea was never considered a welcome friend of Corinth,[25] and the protection

22 Cf. Med, 49, 131, 238, 984.

23 Cf. nivei femina corporis [a female of snowwhite body] (61); virgineus decor [the maiden's beauty] (75); vincat femina coniuges [as a woman may she outdo wives] (91); ostro sic niveus puniceo color/ perfusus rubit [such is the blush of snowwhite colour suffused by scarlet dye] (99-100). Note the juxtaposition of the Chorus' views of Jason's two wives:

> Ereptus thalamis Phasidis horridi,
> effrenae solitus pectora coniugis
> invita trepidus prendere dextera,
> felix Aeoliam corripe virginem,
> nunc primum soceris sponse volentibus"

[Rescued from a marriage bed of daunting Phasis, inured to fondling the breast of an untamed wife in fear, with reluctant hands, seize the Aeolian maid with good fortune, for the first time now a bridegroom with consent from your parents-in-law] (102-6).

24 See Helen Fyfe, "An Analysis of Seneca's Medea," in Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama, ed. by A.J. Boyle (Berwick, Vic.: Aureal Publications, 1983), 85 for comments on Medea's still "moral universe"; 80 on Medea's imperative preservation of her relationship with Jason.

25 See Creon's "Colchi noxium Aeetae genus" [that noxious child of Colchian Aeetes] (179); "libera cives metu" [free my citizens of fear] (270). Medea is always held at arms' length from

available to her through her marriage is now void, placing her even farther outside the social world she attempted to inhabit. Even the friendship of King Aegeus available to Euripides' character is not offered to this Medea. Thus, it is of little surprise that she reacts with such furor. Having lost family, purity, conscience, a marriage, and now all the cultural and social identity that remained to her, she succumbs to the anger and hurt raging in her psyche. The revenge motifs that characterize her tragedy are all attempts to restore to her a whole world, culminating in what she sees as her ultimate success:

> iam iam recepi sceptra germanum patrem,
> spoliumque Colchi pecudis auratae tenent;
> rediere regna, rapta virginitas redit. (982-4)

[Now in this moment I have recovered my sceptre, brother, father, and the Colchians hold the spoil of the golden ram. My realm is restored, my stolen maidenhood restored.]

With her new identity now confirmed and her body healed from the harmful interference of a betrayer, Medea then crows to Jason: i nunc, superbe, virginum thalamos pete,/ relinque matres [Go on now, arrogant man, seek out virgins' bedrooms, and abandon mothers] (1007-8). She now wishes her fate upon other women because she is no longer in danger of being a victim. Her triumphant rise per alta spatia sublime aetheris [on high through the lofty spaces of heaven] (1026) is an ascension into this new self and into role of Medea.

Like the Colchian sorceress, Thyestes' Atreus too has lost social stability, demonstrated by his extreme Machiavellian dominance over his subjects.[26] His hyper-aggressive reaction, caused by social and political insecurity, to the demands of the throne is compounded by sexual unease, manifesting itself in a highly unstable and ultra-violent frenzy of compensation. The

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Corinth and society's embrace.

26 E.g. Maximum hoc regni bonum est,/ quod facta domini cogitur populus sui/ tam ferre quam laudere [This is the greatest value of kingship: that the people are compelled to praise as well as endure their master's actions] (206-8); qua iuvat reges eant [kings should go where they please] (218)

unsure paternity of his sons reflects back on him as a father and as a man, destabilizing his conception of his own sovereignty. In his first words in the play, Atreus condemns himself for not acting immediately post tot scelera, post fratris dolos/ fasque omne ruptum [after so many crimes, after your brother's treachery and the breaking of every principle] (178-9). Omne fas is hyperbolic, but to the king, Thyestes has undermined and corrupted all things and thus his preconceived identity. Medea echoes this statement with her "fas omne cedat, abeat expulsus pudor; vindicta levis est quam ferunt purae manus" [let all right be gone, let any sense of shame be expelled; the vengeance is trivial that is gained by pure hands] (Med, 900-1), connecting dissolution of self-image to revenge in a way similar to Atreus' words. Like Medea's motivations, the king's revenge upon his brother is a frenzied attempt to restore selfhood and lost virtue. It allows him to declare at its culmination liberos nasci mihi/ nunc credo, castis nunc fidem reddi toris [Now I believe that the children are mine, and that my bed is faithful and chaste once more!] (1098-9).

Seneca's third revenger, Agamemnon's Clytemnestra, also becomes obsessed with what she has lost. Like Atreus, she enters after the appearance of a ghost and a choral ode, and similarly, her opening lines chastise her anima for its currently unavenged state.[27] Surprisingly, however, she does not mention the sacrificed Iphigenia, the most obvious and expected reason for her anguish, until l. 158, and even this reference is prompted by a comment of her nutrix. Instead, she is preoccupied with her husband's infidelity above all else:

> licuit pudicos coniugis quondam toros
> et sceptra casta vidua tutari fide;[28]
> periere mores ius decus pietas fides

27 For a discussion of Seneca's revengers' tendency to self-address, see my analysis on pp. 40ff.

28 I disagree with Fitch's translation of lines 110-1, for I do not believe he puts the necessary emphasis on the marital relationship. Thus, the translation of these lines is my own. His interpretation reads: "Once you had the option of safeguarding your husband's bed and his empty throne through chastity and loyalty."

et qui redire cum perit nescit pudor. (110-3)

[Once you were permitted to guard your husband's chaste bed and the widowed throne with pure loyalty. But integrity, right, honour, loyalty, faith are lost, and same, which once lost cannot return.]

Agamemnon's sceptra (111) are not "empty" as John Fitch translates, but widowed. The distinction is an important one, as Clytemnestra identifies her husband's departure to Troy as the death of her marriage, even while Agamemnon is still living.[29] Vidua is how Electra identifies her mother after her father's murder and is the same word Phaedra's title character uses in her sexual appeal to Hippolytus.[30] Seneca's female characters self-identify as widowed while they still have living husbands because of their extreme marital and emotional insecurity. The loss of a husband disrupts pre-formed selfhood and can be used as a justification for aberrant actions.

Abandoned and shamed by her husband, Clytemnestra becomes obsessed with Agamemnon's infidelities. Note how the queen refers to him with scorn and contempt:

amore captae captus, immotus prece (175)

[captured by love for a captive, and unmoved by prayer]

ardore sacrae virginis iam tum furens (177)

[mad even then with passion for a holy virgin]

inter ruentis Graeciae stragem ultimam
sine hoste victus marcet ac veneri vacat
reparatque amores; neve desertus foret
a paelice umquam barbara caelebs torus (182-5)

[Amidst the final devastation of falling Greece he was conquered, though not by an enemy, enfeebled, with leisure for love, and replaced one mistress with another; lest his bachelor bed should ever be empty of a barbarian mistress…]

nunc novum vulnus gerens
amore Phrygiae vatis incensus furit (189-90)

29 Cf. Decem per annos vidua respiciam virum? [Single for ten years, shall I give thought to my husband?] (156)

30 Ag 963; Pha 623

[Now, wounded afresh, he is on fire with mad love for the Phrygian prophet]

captae maritus remeat et Priami gener (191)

[he returns as a captive's husband and Priam's son-in-law!]

Clytemnestra's husband's lack of faith is paramount in her mind as she plans to take her revenge as indicated by the abundance of charges of infidelities.[31] She feels abandoned and replaced, even as she admits that as queen and dutiful wife she should turn a blind eye to his unfaithfulness.[32] Bereft of masculine companionship and the sanctity and pudor of marriage, and with her own royalty offended and devalued,[33] Clytemnestra finds herself a new king in Aegisthus who is himself seeking to restore what he perceives to be lost: royal prerogative. Such a compulsion for new self-definition leads Clytemnestra to the sententia (115) echoed almost sixteen centuries later by Kyd's Hieronimo.[34]

Clytemnestra's response to her daughter's charge of widowhood and murder is a result of her newly constructed and affirmed sexual and social position: Indomita posthac virginis verba impiae/ regina frangam [These unbridled words from an undutiful virgin— I shall break them later as queen] (964-5). She is a widow no longer, but a powerful queen in her own right. Iphigenia's sacrifice had almost no role in her mother's motivations for planning of revenge. Clytemnestra's true desire is to become autonomous, powerful, and royal, values denied to her while Agamemnon was alive. Her marital infidelity, while hypocritical for it is the fault for

31 See Fredson Thayer Bowers, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642 (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1959), 43

32 Ag 260-7

33 See Clytemnestra's identification of herself as caeli genus [child of heaven] (162) in response to such challenges.

34 per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter ST 3.13.6

which she condemns her husband, becomes a means to an end and a justifiable necessity of self-preservation.

Self-loss and destabilization do not only appear in Seneca's revengers. While a specific call for vengeance exists in none of Seneca's other five tragedies, it is still possible to identify personal insecurities that are central to Seneca's psychological exploration.[35] In Troades, instability is predicated by physical death. The Trojan women have lost almost everything: their home, their country, their families, their freedom, and even their sexual integrity. Fitch defines as central to this tragedy "the experience of suffering, bereavement, loss of identity," and Boyle remarks the play "dramatizes human dissolution,"[36] for not only are the women forced to sail in countless directions, but their cultural, marital, maternal, sexual, and personal constructs dissolve into the bonds of captivity. Death itself is preferable to the war-torn and defeated life the survivors have left. The chorus of women cries:

> Felix Priamus;
> felix quisquis bello moriens
> omnia secum consumpta tulit. (161-3)

[Blest is Priam; blest is anyone who, dying in war, has taken with him his whole destroyed world.]

The deaths of these men allowed their worlds, their collective experience of suffering, to collapse. They were freed from the horrors of war because in death there is termination. The women are cursed for they still stand among the ruins of Troy and watch more of their companions fall to the Greeks. The deaths of Polyxena and Astyanax are brutal reminders of their lack of autonomy.

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35 Although HF's Juno does desire to punish Hercules for his potential to harm the heavens, demonstrating her own insecurities. The main plot of this play, however, concerns not the actions of the revenger but the results achieved in the victim. Juno is also a goddess and thus outside the realm of mortal vengeance.

36 Fitch Seneca: Tragedies, 1:166; Boyle, Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67

The women's identities are so linked to their city that when Troy falls, they no longer have true selfhood. This identification holds especially true for Hecuba who is the embodiment of the city itself:

> Quoscumque luctus fleveris, flebis meos,
> sua quemque tantum, me omnium clades premit.
> mihi cuncta pereunt; quisquis est Hecubae est miser. (1060-2)

[Whatever griefs you weep, you will weep for mine. Individuals bear just their own disasters, but I bear everyone's. Every death touches me; anyone who is wretched touches Hecuba.]

She feels the blows against the walls, every death of every citizen. While her men have taken omnia consumpta with them to be released in the underworld, Hecuba still experiences a destroyed world by living. With such a connection to death and destruction comes severe psychological trauma as Hecuba sees her city burn along with her past and present security.

Her daughter-in-law feels a similar loss in the death of her husband. To Andromache, Hector represents all of Troy, and she sees Astyanax only as a remnant of her dead husband. The boy's physical and genetic relationship to his father is the only connection she still has to life: Iam erepta Danais coniugem sequerer meum,/ nisi hic teneret [I would have escaped the Danaans and followed my husband by now, if this one [indicating Astyanax] did not hold me] (418-9). To her, Troy fell when Hector did,[37] and so did her world. While Hecuba and Andromache individually mourn, the Trojan women of the chorus still make up a community of sorts, albeit one of grief and despair. But once they are distributed to their Greek captors, they sail away from each other. Troy is finally dismantled, and Troades ends with movet (1179), carrying the women away from their home and themselves.

Even more troubling than the immediate loss of life and liberty is the emerging view of death as the end of all things. While in the first choral ode Priam peacefully walks in the fields of Elysium, death in the second ode is a longed-for termination of consciousness: post mortem

37 Tro 412ff.

nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil [after death is nothing, and death itself is nothing] (397). To die is a comfort because it ends pain and existence, not because it promises anything better that mortal life. Although both views of death remain throughout the play, the later seems to take preeminence in the minds of the characters. The women of Troy lose first their faith in life, and then even their belief in the comforts of death. Their beautiful and tragic lament becomes a cry to end existence.

Seneca also explores the loss of physical and sexual rationality. Hercules Furens' title character descends into madness in front of his family and audience, his loss of mental control resulting in the murders of his wife and children. His initially unclouded psyche, albeit over-ambitious bordering on dangerous, turns to caecus furor [blind fury] (991). During his break from reality, he loses his sense of place, his relationships, and even his humanity, thinking he can conquer even the gods. Juno removes his ability to judge rationally, knowing that by making Hercules mentally blind, he will lash out in confusion and rage. The tragedy in Hercules Furens is not only that Hercules murders his family, but that the gods can so easily take away the ability to discern what is real and what is imagined. No longer able to identify correctly what his senses perceive, Hercules loses touch with his reality, sanity, and self.

Like Clytemnestra, Phaedra's protagonist has "lost" a husband. Theseus' disappearance to the underworld and the insecurity it causes prompt in Phaedra an illicit sexual desire for her stepson. In her first speech, Phaedra laments her marriage, missing husband, and soon, the sexual love she feels for her Hippolytus. She knows such an attraction is morally wrong, admitting that the arguments of her nurse are valid, yet still cannot resist her passion. She claims:

> Quae memoras scio
> vera esse, nutrix; sed furor cogit sequi
> peiora. vadit animus in praeceps sciens
> remeatque frustra sana consilia appetens...
> quid ratio possit? vicit ac regnat furor.
> potensque tota mente dominatur deus. (177-85)

[I know that what you say is true, nurse; but madness forces me to follow the worse path. My spirit goes knowingly into the abyss, and turns back ineffectively in search of sane judgement...Madness has conquered and rules me, and a mighty god controls my whole mind.]

While Phaedra can realize the immorality of her desires, she is incapable of denying them. Just as she cannot control her emotions, she can also no longer function in her immediate world. She is unable to sleep, socialize, worship, and think. Her true passivity, exhibited through her interactions with others and her eventual suicide, is focused into an unrelenting desire for the hunt, the same compulsion which so captivates the object of her affection. Only in her chase, Hippolytus is the prey of her insatiable desires. While Phaedra understands that the longed-for sexual relationship is morally and socially repugnant, lust, madness, and insanity swiftly overcome reason. Hippolytus too displays a lack of rationality as he universally denies and is even repulsed by all women. His overzealous connection to nature prevents him from reacting reasonably to his stepmother's advances and prompts in him the extreme response and flight that leads to his death.

Such an analysis of the lost selfhood of Seneca's characters yields a distinct psychological profile of the individuals who eventually transform into the revengers of the English Renaissance. Seneca deliberately avoids scenarios in which death or murder is the justification for retribution, although they are not scarce in classical mythology.[38] Instead, he choses to explore internal casualties of the mind and self-image. Death does play a role in destabilizing his dramatic landscape, but is not the impetus for action. Instead, an inward movement, an invasive and extreme examination of the mind by both the characters and Seneca

38 E.g. Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra, Achilles' killing and desecration of Hector, Nessus' portmortem revenge on Hercules. A possible exception to Seneca's avoidance of murder leading to revenge could arguably be Agamemnon, in which Clytemnesta attempts to avenge the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis. Her actions, however, are prompted more strongly by the violation of her marriage bed by her husband's constant sexual transgressions. Although the loss of her daughter plays strongly in her motivations and would be the reasoning she herself might employ in her defense, she would not have reacted as strongly to the intrusion of the captive Cassandra if she was not highly jealous.

himself is responsible for the collapse of personal confidence.[39] Such inwardness reveals a lack of stability as the characters are forced to confront their shortcomings and can often result in dramatic violence. The tragedians of the Renaissance use this increasingly internal movement prompted by instability in addition to murder as the catalyst for the development of their revengers' revenge.

RHETORICAL RESPONSE

Seneca's characters, in response to the challenges to their autonomy, react with heightened rhetoric in an attempt to redefine and reconstruct their selves. His plays, especially the revenge dramas, become desperate searches for self-definition and preservation, fueled by a reliance on speech, language, and rhetorical control. Words have power in Senecan tragedy. To characters who have nothing left, not even a sense of who they are, words and thought become essential precursors to action. The deeply personal and bombastic soliloquies and monologues in Seneca's dramas constitute a reaction to an assault on security.

To begin the study of the rhetorical compensation of Seneca's characters, let us consider not Seneca's, but Sophocles' Oedipus of Oedipus the King. Sophocles' title character is destroyed by the end of the play; a murder becomes patricide, a marriage becomes incest, and intelligence becomes blindness. The ravaged Oedipus, however, does not make an attempt to reassert his personal authority at any point after the discovery. He remains internally broken and externally crippled as he limps back into the palace for Creon to decide his fate. Seneca's

[39] For example, compare the Oedipuses of Sophocles and Seneca (in Oedipus the King and Oedipus, respectively). Sophocles' character begins as a confident and capable king, looking on the citizens of Thebes as his own children. In great contrast, Seneca's character appears anxious and guilty, already questioning the merits of kingship and dwelling on his curse. See Ahl, Two Faces of Oedipus: Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus and Seneca's Oedipus (Cornell University Press, 2008).

Oedipus, however, although based very closely on Sophocles' play, regains rhetorical power in the depths of his despair. [40] The self he lost through the revelation of his true paternity is never fully reconstructed, and indeed it would be impossible for that to occur. Yet he is able to create a new identity, one dependent on its own suffering but one over which he himself can be master.

The moment he understands who he truly is, Seneca's Oedipus opens the earth with his words and embarks on a frenzy of commands:

> Dehisce, tellus, tuque, tenebrarum potens,
> in Tartara ima, rector umbrarum, rape
> retro reversas generis ac stirpis vices!
> … redde nunc animos pares,
> nunc aliquid aude sceleribus dignus tuis. (868-70; 878-9)

[Split open, Earth! And you who govern the darkness, ruler of the shades, carry off to the depths of Tartarus this inversion of the roles of stock and offspring...Now respond with matching courage, now show some daring worthy of your crimes.]

Compare this response to that of Sophocles' character who reacts with lament and grief, not anger and bombastic demands:

> ἰοὺ ἰού: τὰ πάντ᾽ ἂν ἐξήκοι σαφῆ.
> ὦ φῶς, τελευταῖόν σε προσβλέψαιμι νῦν,
> ὅστις πέφασμαι φύς τ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ὧν οὐ χρῆν, ξὺν οἷς τ᾽
> οὐ χρῆν ὁμιλῶν, οὕς τέ μ᾽ οὐκ ἔδει κτανών. (1182-5)

[Ah! Ah! It has all come out clear and true! Oh light,/ may I now look my last on you, revealed as born/ from those I should not be, as intimate with those/ I should not be, as killing those I should not kill.][41]

This Oedipus mourns the past, a victim to fate and birth, while Seneca's character addresses himself and reacts with conviction, although it is self-harming. His decision to blind himself comes as his own welcomed, active choice. Now certainly no victim, he is repossessing his predecessor's ancient punishment.

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40 Ahl, Two Faces of Oedipus

41 Translation from Ruby Blondell, Sophocles: The Theban Plays (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2004).

The Oedipus of Seneca's Phoenissae recreates himself as well. As the play opens, the influence of Antigone manages to keep him alive and fairly calm as he relives his tragedy. Retracing the steps of his life through the Theban landscape,[42] he attempts to escape both himself and life:

> Me fugio, fugio conscium scelerum omnium
> pectus, manumque hanc fugio et hoc caelum et deos
> et dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens. (216-8)

[I flee myself, I flee a conscience burdened with all those crimes, I flee this hand and these heavens and gods, and I flee the terrible crimes I did in innocence.]

Yet in his flight, he still listens to the pleas of his daughter and promises to live. At the moment of his assent, a messenger enters the scene and shatters its calm. Oedipus immediately reacts with extreme rhetorical violence, reconstructing his character through his words to combat the threat the messenger represents.

His first word in his new self-creation is ego [I] (328), immediately giving personal authority to what the messenger calls his violentus impetus [violent outburst] (347). Compared to his previous speeches of self-pity and acquiescence, this is a dramatic adjustment. Additionally, his diction becomes stronger, bigger, more impressive:

> tumet animus ira, fervet immensum dolor,
> maiusque quam quod casus et iuvenum furor
> conatur aliquid cupio. non satis est adhuc
> civile bellum: frater in fratrem ruat.[43] (352-5)

[My spirit is swelling with anger, my pain is burning beyond measure, and I want some outcome greater than the random efforts of young men's madness. A war that is just a civil war is insufficient: let brother rush upon brother!]

Whereas he had just urged Antigone to leave him to avoid further genetic disorder, he now specifically calls for fraternal conflict. Oedipus is establishing himself as the exact character

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42 ˙Est alius istis noster in silvis locus,/ qui me reposcit (Pho 27-8)

43 ˙My emphasis

whom he previously feared in order to regain control over his self. When the messenger asks Oedipus to stop the brothers' violence, his intrusion triggers in the old man an extreme reaction to his own helplessness. The terms in bold above demonstrate his reactive, assertive, and swelling distress and emotion. Using his expanded rhetoric, Oedipus builds himself up as a defense against his destabilized previous identity, a technique used by many of Seneca's main characters.

As mentioned above, Clytemnestra attempts to establish herself as a queen again through her response to Electra. Having killed Agamemnon and carried on a sexual and political affair with his rival, she can hardly expect to regain her former place of stability in the palace. Yet she still constructs a rhetorical identity as a powerful queen, even almost abandoning her gender in her verbal excess:

> Animos viriles corde tumefacto geris;
> sed agere domita femina disces malo. (958-9)

[You carry a man's spirit in your puffed-up heart, but when tamed by suffering you will learn to play the woman.]

As she threatens Electra to give up on masculine authority, Clytemnestra forgets the pain she has suffered as a woman. Given the psychological turmoil she experienced because she was female, thus powerless and disposable, a desire to shield her daughter would be expected. Instead, her commitment to revenge, expressed by frenzied and increasingly controlling language, overtakes her maternal impulses. The fear that Orestes will return to take his own revenge, thus again destabilizing her place in the royal household, is enough to make her demand her children's deaths.

Similarly, but much more piteously, Andromache establishes her own fantasy world as well. Her son grows up only in her words as she tearfully hands him over to his death. Unable to watch him become a man, she momentarily suspends her true reality while she recounts what Astyanax will not become:

Iliaca non tu sceptra regali potens
gestabis aula, iura nec populis dabis
victasque gentes sub tuum mittes iugum,
non Graia caedes terga, non Pyrrhum trahes;
non arma tenera parva tractabis manu
sparsasque passim saltibus latis feras
audax sequeris... (771-7)

[You will not carry Ilium's sceptre as ruler in a royal palace, you will not give laws to nations and bring conquered peoples under your yoke; you will not slaughter the Greeks in rout, you will not drag Pyrrhus; you will not handle small weapons in your tender hands, nor boldly pursue wild beasts scattered throughout the broad forests…]

For a tragic instant, she sees her son's potential, only to watch him, and then Polyxena, be given as sacrifices to the Greeks. As the princess is pulled from her fellow captives, Andromache turns to the rhetoric used by Oedipus and Clytemnestra, demanding slaughter with imperatives: maculate superos caude funesta deos, maculate manes! [Stain the gods above with bloody slaughter, stain the spirits of the death!] (1004-5). Grief has not saved her or her son; anger remains.

The two main revengers of Senecan tragedy, Medea and Atreus, are the most vehement rhetorical defenders of their insecurities. Their selves are so destabilized by outside forces that they react in hyper-violent and destructive words and actions. Medea had already reinvented herself once before when she first arrive in Corinth. Now, the loss of the identity created after she abandoned her original home finally pushes her beyond the bonds of rationality.[44] Seneca, unlike Euripides, gives the first lines of his Medea to the title character herself, beginning his drama with what Boyle describes as a theatric "high-spot,"[45] a forceful and bold soliloquy appealing both to the gods of marriage and the underworld. Reacting strongly and antagonistically to a shaken identity, Medea soon names herself, calling upon quosque iuravit

44 Gregory A. Staley, Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33

45 Boyle, Tragic Seneca, 128

mihi/ deos Iason, quosque Medeae magis/ fas est precari [those [gods] by whom Jason swore oaths to me, and those to whom Medea more rightly directs her prayers] (7-9). She first refers to herself with the dative first person pronoun (mihi), but immediately follows with "Medea." Note that the first relative phrase, which modifies Jason and his actions for Medea, uses the natural and expected first person pronoun, creating a personal connection and familiarity between husband and wife. The following phrase, however, still spoken by the Colchian woman and addressed to the underworld and vengeful gods, names 'Medea.' This is the beginning of Medea's realization of and growing into her literary and mythological predecessor, the start of her journey to reassert and define herself.

Although this self-naming is a dramatic technique to introduce the character, Medea names herself eight times within the play.[46] Euripides' protagonist does so only once, at l. 402.[47] This is no coincidence, but a conscious and deliberate stance of authority. As Medea uses the third person, she is not just alluding to herself, but her mythological predecessors, thus creating a literary and dramatic vacuum her character must fill. Ulrich von Wilamowitz famously remarked that Seneca's Medea has read Euripides, and indeed, she seems to know and become what the audience expects her to be.[48] Alternatives to furor no longer exist, and she builds up a new Medea.[49]

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46 The Perseus Digital Library has been an invaluable resource in analyzing the classical texts.

47 This self-naming, displayed also by Atreus, will play a key role in the characterization of Renaissance revenge heroes.

48 "Diese Medea hat offenbar die Medea des Euripides gelesen": Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Griechische Tragödien, vol. 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1906), 162; discussed in Boyle, Tragic Seneca, 129

49 See Fitch, "Character in Senecan Tragedy (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1974), 133ff. concerning Medea's establishment of her new crime-driven identity.

Through his sorceress, Seneca casts the spells that swell her hurt, betrayal, and anger into inhuman proportions. [50] The playwright drives his character into the heights of language and against the barrier of natural boundaries. Her nurse sees her grow rhetorically and almost physically with the magic:

> immane quantum augescit et semet dolor
> accendit ipse vimque praeteritam integrat.
> vidi furentem saepe et aggressam deos,
> caelum trahentem: maius his, maius parat
> Medea monstrum. (671-5)

[It is monstrous how her resentment grows, feeds its own fires, renews its past violence, I have seen her raging, assailing the gods, drawing down the heavens; greater than that, greater still is the monstrosity Medea is preparing.]

Medea channels her past crimes into one to surpass them all. To do this, she needs a rhetoric to match her aspirations. Her incantation is a "dark parody" of the epithalamion; she invokes the same gods but now the result is not a blessing but a challenge.[51] Medea manipulates tradition and safe prayers into a twisted and dangerous curse.

Likewise, Atreus finds a vocabulary and pace to suit his distended psyche. His play is one of appetite, greed, consumption,[52] all expressed disturbingly through his increasingly crazed and disconcerting language. R.J. Tarrant calls the king a "virtuoso rhetorician, whose verbal powers are an expression— in a sense, the most complete expression— of his personality."[53] Atreus' delight in his trickery reveals itself through punning and double meanings. He uses language as a weapon as sharp as the knives that butchered the boys to cause pain to his brother. Examine his response to Thyestes' request to see his children:

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50 First relayed by the nurse and then in Medea's own words

51 Fyfe, "An Analysis of Seneca's Medea," 82-5

52 Boyle, "Hic Epulis Locus: The Tragic World of Seneca's Agamemnon and Thyestes," in Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama, ed. by A.J. Boyle (Berwick, Vic.: Aureal Publications, 1983), 209ff.

53 Tarrant, Seneca's Thyestes, 44

Hic esse natos crede in amplexu patris.
hic sunt eruntque; nulla pars prolis tuae
tibi subtrahetur. ora quae exoptas dabo
totumque turba iam sua implebo patrem.
satiaberis, ne metue! nunc mixti meis
iucunda mensae sacra iuvenilis colunt;
sed accientur. poculum infuso cape
gentile Baccho. (976-83)

[Consider your sons as here in their father's embrace. Here they are, and will stay. No portion of your offspring will be taken from you. I shall show you shortly the faces you long for, and give the father his fill of his own dear throng. You will be surfeited, never fear! At the moment, in company with mine, they are observing the sweet communion of the young men's table. But they will be summoned. Take this cup of our bloodline, with an infusion of wine.]

Every line has a darker meaning, every word is a double entendre. Not satisfied with just the act of the banquet, Atreus uses his rhetoric to supplement the visual horror and as a response to the severe insecurities and instability in his psyche.

With personalities challenged and confidence shattered, the characters of Senecan tragedy desperately reassert themselves through their speech. By constructing a new world with words and erecting an active defense of rhetorical extremes, many are able to fashion a new self. Oedipus zealously claims his punishment and lashes out at his sons who have betrayed him. Clytemnestra becomes an independent queen, while Andromache watches her son grow. Through speech, Medea and Atreus develop beyond the bounds of morality and even humanity. Seneca's characters face their destabilization using extremes as their defense. The Roman playwright consistently presents his audience with characters who have lost a personal compass and find direction again, often not in a constructive way, through rhetorical representation. Such verbal reconstruction is most apparent and violent in Seneca's revengers. These three characters, Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra, take rhetorical self-fashioning and turn it into murderous action, disturbingly physicalizing their speech. As their words know no bounds, neither do their deeds as the revengers stop at nothing to bring pain to those who have wronged them, thus reasserting their personal power and autonomy.

Atreus is often considered the principal character of the subset of Senecan tragedy that deals with revenge, specifically Thyestes, Medea, and Agamemnon. Precisely defining himself as inultus [unavenged] (178) in his third line of speech, Atreus is the physical incarnation of hic, hic furor [this very frenzy] (Thy 101) the Fury wants dispersed. The king, along with his vengeful companions Medea and Clytemnestra, provides the template of the revenger employed by the dramatists of the English Renaissance. A comparison of the Senecan plays reveals evidence of a formula for revenge, one which is found largely intact centuries later: the appearance of a ghost; hyperbolic rhetoric; declaration of action promising to surpass past deeds and norms; self-address leading to reconstruction; hesitation in the act; performance; and, finally, the ultimate survival of the revenger.

In each of the three dramas mentioned above, an appearance of a ghost sparks the spirit of revenge in its protagonists. A ghostly presence is necessary to facilitate the contemplation, planning, and execution of vengeance. While considering the role of the ghost on the English stage with a mind to its Roman predecessor, Charles Hallett writes, "[The ghost] is the voice of passion. And the effect on the avenger is to alter his perceptions and transform his relations with other characters. This spirit is both a reflection of the passion that is within the avenger, and a reminder that that passion is itself a response to a natural law that is external to the psyche in which it is aroused."[54] The ghost demands action from those in whom the conception of revenge already exists, but who need such a prod to see the events through. To satisfy such a precondition, Seneca provides his audience with two types of ghost: the physical character

54 Charles A. Hallett, "Andrea, Andrugio and King Hamlet: The Ghost as Spirit of Revenge," Philological Quarterly 56 (1977): 45

consumed by furor appearing in Agamemnon and Thyestes and the invisible specter demanding a physical response found in Medea as well as in Troades and Phoenissae.[55]

Both Agamemnon and Thyestes begin with the entrance of a ghost who speaks the first words of the play, setting the stage for the horrors about to come. A reader must be careful to note that the ghost of Thyestes does not appear in the play bearing his name; his domain is Agamemnon while Tantalus haunts Thyestes. The phantoms of the two tragedies, however, are very much connected to each other, Thyestes being the descendent of Tantalus. Both emerge from the same world, as they locate themselves geographically by the punished souls and landmarks around them. Each mentions Sisyphus, Ixion, Tityos, Cerberus,[56] and Thyestes even adds Tantalus himself to the list. Their appearance in the upper world is no reward, however, as both ghosts desperately long to return to the darkness. Compare Thyestes' libet reverti [I want to go back] (12) to Tantalus' abire in atrum carceris liceat mei/ cubile [Give me leave to return to my prison's black lair] (70-1). The umbrae are aware that their temporary escape from punishment prompts further misfortune for their descendants. Tantalus even attempts to resist the Fury who goads him: stabo et acerbo scelus [I shall stand and block the crime] (95). Nevertheless, their reluctance and resistance soon turns to compulsion as they accept their mission and urge madness on those they see.

Agamemnon's Thyestes commences the drama with opaca [dark] (1), entering through darkness. A comparison of the first to the last word of the drama, furor (madness) [1012], spoken by Clytemnestra, reveals that Agamemnon begins in a ghost's darkness and ends in a revenger's madness, a pattern found in revenge drama from Seneca to the Elizabethan

55 Although Phoenissae is not specifically a revenge drama, the development of Oedipus from guilty, ineffective victim to raging, vengeful curser mirrors the evolution of the Senecan revenger.

56 Cf. Ag 1-21, Thy 1-12

Renaissance. Thyestes' lines beginning with sed [but] (22-7) mark his transformation from a fearful prisoner to violent exhorter. [57] This ghost changes his mind suddenly, after recalling Tantalus' punishment and his own crimes. As he dwells on causes for punishment, he becomes possessed by the fury that caused the past deeds. Naming himself, Thyestes declares, "vincam Thyestes sceleribus cunctos meis [I Thyestes shall outdo them all by my crimes] (25). His newly acquired aggressive confidence causes him to address Aegisthus, urging unspeakable crimes for which he himself is being punished. He exits by allowing the sun to return to the skies, restoring the natural order only so as to see it perverted once again.

Thyestes' Tantalus too undergoes a change, but one forced by fear. Although he actively attempts to resist the commands of the Fury, her flames are too much for him. The sight of such personified madness shifts his will from hesitation to obedience in an instant. His last address to the Fury demonstrates the progression:

> Quid ora terres verbere et tortos ferox
> minaris angues? quid famen infixam intimis
> agitas medullis? flagrat incensum siti
> cor et perustis flamma visceribus micat
> sequor. (96-100)

[Why do you menace my face with your whip and threaten me fiercely with entwined snakes? Why do you rouse the hunger set in my bones' marrow? My heart is fired and ablaze with thirst, and flames dart through my burnt flesh. I follow!]

This final exclamation comes not just as a fearful response to a terrible sight, but as a reaction to the possession of his mind by the Fury. She sinks into his ora, his intimae medullae, his cor, his viscera, until the poor ghost gives himself over to the frenzy she commands. Resistance is futile.

Although Medea does not contain a physical ghost character, Medea's dead brother appears through her eyes, resembling the sighting of Laius in Phoenissae and the presence of

57 Note how he shakes as he enters the stage: en horret animus et pavor membra excutit [Ah, my spirit shudders, my limbs tremble] (5)

Achilles, and to some extent Hector, in Troades. As Medea hesitates to commit the deed and murder her own children, the shade of her brother appears to her, pursued by Megaera:

> Quonam ista tendit turba Furiarum impotens?
> quem quaerit aut quo flammeos ictus parat,
> aut cui cruentas agmen infernum faces
> intentat? ingens anguis excusso sonat
> tortus flagello. quem trabe infesta petit
> Megaera? cuius umbra dispersis venit
> incerta membris? frater est, poenas petit.
> dabimus, sed omnes. fige luminibus faces,
> lania, perure, pectus en Furiis patet. (958-66)

[What is the target of this wild throng of Furies? Whom are they hunting, whom are they threatening with fiery blows? At whom is the hellish band pointing its bloody torches? A huge snake hisses, entwined in a lashing whip. Whom is Megaera seeking with her bludgeon? Whose shade approaches ill-defined with limbs dispersed? It is my brother, he seeks amends. We shall pay them, yes, every one. Drive torches into my eyes, mutilate me, burn me: see, my breast is open to the Furies.]

Here we see in Medea the effects of ghostly interference. Absyrtus' presence, real or imagined, is the direct cause of the stroke that kills the first of Medea's sons. He is like Thyestes' Tantalus, pushed by the Furies to implant vengeance in others.[58] And resembling Tantalus, Medea has no choice but to allow the Fury to sink into her lumina and pectus. The sight of her murdered brother causes her to welcome such frenzied possession; the imperatives of ll. 965-966 show her new resolve.

Likewise, the appearances of the Achilles and Laius spur to fierce action those who see them. Achilles' voice, filling the dramatic space it inhabits,[59] provides the impetus to violence in

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58 Megaera uses the same means to coerce her victims in both plays. Her whips, snakes, and fire haunt her audience. She also appears through the words of Juno in Hercules Furens:

> Incipite, famulae Ditis, ardentem incitae
> concutite pinum, et agmen horrendum anguibus
> Megaera ducat atque luctifica manu
> vastam rogo flangrante corripiat trabem. (HF 100-4)

[Begin, handmaids of Dis, brandish the blazing pine torch violently. Let Megaera lead your troop, fearsome with snakes, and snatch a huge beam from a blazing pyre in her baleful hand.]

59 implevit omne litus irati sonus [the sound of his anger filled the whole shore] (190)

the Troades that Absyrtus imparts in Medea. Laius in Phoenissae is the most imaginary of Seneca's ghosts, for Antigone is unable to see him and it seems as if he only exists in Oedipus' fevered mind.[60] The dead father's presence animates in Oedipus feelings of self-violence and the fear of further incest:

> … genitor vocat.
> sequor, sequor, iam parce! sanguineum gerens
> insigne regni Laius rapti furit;
> en ecce, inanes manibus infestis petit
> foditque vultus. nata, genitorem vides?
> ego video. tandem spiritum inimicum expue,
> desertor anime, fortis in partem tui.
> ...discede a patre,
> discede virgo. timeo post matrem omnia. (39-45; 49-50)

[My father calls. I follow, I follow, stop now! Laius rages, bearing the bloodied symbol of his stolen kingship; see, he attacks my empty eyes and claws them with his malevolent hands. Daughter, can you see my father? I can see him! Finally spew out this hated life, my spirit—you quitter, brave only against a portion of yourself!… [to Antigone] leave your father, leave while a virgin. After my mother I fear everything.]

Lauis' claw-like hands search for his son's eyes both as a reminder of what Oedipus did to himself but also as a representation of the Furies who hound other Senecan characters.

Renaissance playwrights will employ both of Seneca's two ghost types, the physical and the recounted, in their own fashioning of revenge. The corporality and impetus of Tantalus and Thyestes combined with the frenzy inducing propulsion of Absyrtus, Achilles, and Laius appear together in their ghostly descendants. The dead rise to inspire fear, rage, and revenge. Yet the ghost is not the only element of Seneca's design which finds its way into later years.

The rhetoric of Seneca's revengers consistently follows the same pattern of hyperbole and excess.[61] The predilection for bombast they exhibit will find a place in the mouths of

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60 If Phoenissae were to be staged, it is unlikely any director would choose to put Laius physically on the stage. Medea's Absyrtus, however, could be cast; his corporeal entrance would not be out of place amidst Medea's spells and incantation.

61 See John Kerrigan, Revenge Tragedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 115

Renaissance revengers. Boyle writes that such language is used "not only to express the inexpressible, to give the control of the rhetorical form to unbridled passion and pain, but to construct tragic character out of the very grandiosity and cosmic dimensions of the language used."[62] Although a complete exploration of the verbal overstatement of Seneca's characters is beyond the scope of this study, a few examples will demonstrate the tendency. Note that such rhetorical heights are often characterized by a second character urging caution and temperance, marking how far from the standards of conventional behavior the speeches fall.[63] See Clytemnestra's words which so upset her nurse:

> ...per tuum, si aliter nequit,
> latus exigatur ensis et perimat duos;
> misce cruorem, perde pereundo virum:
> mors misera non est commori cum quo velis. (199-202)

[The sword must be driven through your own side, it cannot be otherwise, and slaughter two; mingle your blood, destroy your man by self-destruction: to die with someone you want to die with is no wretched death.]

So destabilized and demoralized by her husband's abandonment, Clytemnestra reconstructs herself as a martyr for revenge. Although she has no real intent to die or commit suicide, as demonstrated by the attempted self-preserving murder of her witnessing children, the queen uses such excessive language and threats to convey the extremes of passion she cannot escape. Clytemnesta is attempting to communicate her psychological turmoil through self-destructive rhetoric. It is not the feelings expressed that are important here; it is how she presents her thoughts that matters and that makes her Senecan.

Atreus articulates similar self-destructive sentiments in his first speech:

> ...tota sub nostro sonet
> Argolica tellus equite; non silvae tegant

62 Boyle, Tragic Seneca, 160

63 Restraint scenes occur in Act 2 of Agamemnon, Medea, and Thyestes. They can also be found in Act 1 of Phaedra, and, more distantly in Phoenissae, Troades, and Hercules Furens.

hostem nec altis montium structae iugis
arces. relictis bellicum totus canat
populus Mycenis. quisquis invisum caput
tegit ac tuetur, clade funesta occidat.
haec ipsa pollens incliti Pelopis domus
ruat vel in me, dummodo in fratrem ruat. (184-91)

[Let the whole Argive land ring beneath my cavalry; let forests not hide the enemy, nor strongholds built on high hilltops. Let the whole populace leave Mycenae and sound the trumpets for war. Let all who hide and protect that hated creature perish in a blood bath. This mighty house of famous Pelops itself— let it fall even on me, so long as it falls on my brother.]

Hyperbole is Atreus' only possible means of expressing his extreme emotional anguish. His self-doubt and inner confusion can find no outlet but anger, and through this anger, he reaches staggering rhetorical heights of madness and aggrandizement. The repeated jussive subjunctives (in bold above) are challenges rather than prohibitions, tools in his rhetorical arsenal of self-constructing ambition. Just as Medea welcomes the Fury's entry to her soul, Atreus encourages calamity to fall on his land and house so that he might appropriate the disaster for himself and emerge more powerful because of it. He strives to be a champion, even if it is of nefas. In such a state, Atreus sees and speaks in only extremes. He says of his brother aut perdet aut peribit [He will either destroy or be destroyed] (203). The audience of course knows such fratricidal thoughts could not be further from Thyestes' mind, but Atreus can realize no alternative. The maxim "kill or be killed" pervades the minds of all Seneca's desperate, unstable revengers who see assault from all sides and no alternative to bloody vengeance.

We can see a similar kind of self-creating oratory in the ever-ambitious Hercules, although he is not prompted by revenge, but is the victim of it:

in alta mundi spatia sublimis ferar,
petatur aether: astra promittit pater.
—quid, si negaret? non capit terra Herculem
tandemque superis reddit. (958-61)

[I must travel on high to the lofty expanses of the cosmos, and make for the sky: the stars are my father's promise. What if he should now refuse? The earth cannot contain Hercules, and at last yields him to the world above.]

It is not surprising that such talk finds itself at home in Marlowe's Tamburlaine.[64] The emperor, like his Herculean predecessor, encompasses whole worlds within his speeches, reaching for the highest glory with only his words. This type of verbal fashioning leads Braden to characterize Senecan tragedy as "an enactment of the mind's disruptive power over external reality."[65] Strength comes from within and expresses itself initially in Seneca's revengers through a pattern of hyperbolic oration.

With such rhetorical excess comes a desire to surpass past crimes and societal norms during the completion of revenge. As words are no longer able to express fully the self and inner turmoil, extreme action compensates for oratorical impotence. During the declaration of vengeance present in all the revenge plays, the revenger vows to surpass everything before, specifically labeling past thoughts and actions as inadequate for the present magnitude of their undertaking.[66] The Juno of Hercules Furens, although not one of Seneca's primary revengers because of her limited presence in the play and her divinity,[67] declares her intentions:

> non sic abibunt odia: vivaces aget
> violentus iras animus, et saevus dolor
> aeterna bella pace sublata geret. (27-9)

[Even so, my hatred will not just evaporate. My mind will aggressively pursue undying anger, and my fierce resentment will abolish peace and wage eternal warfare.]

Nothing could turn her from this course. Relentless ira will turn peace to war. As she sets her mind on the path to revenge, Juno recounts her complaints against her stepson. Yet she concludes that these accusations fall short of a justification for the revenge she demands.[68] Here

64 Cf. Tamburlaine, Part II, 4.1.118-20

65 Braden, Anger's Privilege, 39

66 The motive for such declarations for all of the revengers is a restoration and reconstruction of past security. See my comments on loss of self above.

67 Perhaps she can be considered more like a Senecan ghost than a revenger, coming from the heavens instead of the underworld to inspire madness in those on earth.

68 Levia sed nimium queror [But these complaints are too trivial] (63)

her personal and divine instability reveals itself as she fears for the exclusivity of the heavens. What she views as a possible penetration of the divine sphere becomes a rationale for revenge. Like Medea summoning the serpents for her poisons, Juno calls up Discord and her companions[69] to send against Hercules. The previous monsters were not enough; here is the ultimate fiend.

Back in the mortal world, Clytemnestra too displays vengeful intent. She is a reversed Pandora's box: with all goodness released, only scelera remain:

> periere mores ius decus pietas fides
> et qui redire cum perit nescit pudor.
> da frena et omnem prona nequitiam incita (112-4)

[But integrity, right, honour, loyalty, faith are lost, and shame, which once lost cannot return. So loosen the reins, crouch forward, spur on each form of wickedness.]

She declares her desire to be unleashed, to allow her negative impulses to find vengeance for her stolen marriage bed. By imagining herself as a charioteer, Clytemnestra puts herself in control of the evils. She drives them forward, allowing and urging on unbridled speed and fury, as she is pulled behind them. But in order to be fully sated, she must build upon her fellow females' evil deeds to surpass them:

> tecum ipsa nunc evolve femineos dolos,
> quod ulla coniunx perfida atque impos sui
> amore caeco, quod novercales manus
> ausae, quod ardens impia virgo face
> Phasiaca fugiens regna Thessalica trabe:
> ferrum, venene… (116-21)

[Unfurl now in your mind the tricks of womankind, all that any faithless wife, crazed with blind passion, all that stepmothers' hands have dared commit, or the girl blazing with disloyal lust as she fled her Phasian kingdom on a Thessalian ship: the steel, poison…]

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69 discordem deam [goddess Discord] (93); invisum Scelus [hateful Crime] (96); Impietas ferox [savage Disloyalty] (97); Error [Confusion] (98); Furor [mad Rage] (98)

Clytemnestra reintroduces the evils before her in order to have the courage to commit such an atrocious act as mariticide. The specifically feminine gendering of the past crimes she notes gives her authority as a woman and wife, and ultimately as a feminine revenger.

The Phasian princess Clytemnestra alludes to in the previous passage is the young Medea, grown to adulthood and full extremes of vengeance in Seneca's Medea. She is the only character in all eight of the tragedies to use the word ultio [revenge]:

> ...parta iam, parta ultio est:
> peperi. (25-6)

[My revenge is born, already born: I have given birth.]

Although she has not yet determined to use her two sons as means of revenge, peperi is a foreshadowing of what is about to unfold. Medea specifically identifies her revenge with children and motherhood, a connection which remains an overarching theme throughout the play. Revenge has grown inside her, developing as if a child in her womb. Considering the wrongs done to her and her past propensity for extreme and violent action, we have no question if she will bear this "child," but when.

Medea's crimes to which Clytemnestra refers are not, however, the murders of the children, but the deeds committed by the young princess before her life in Corinth, the actions which Medea herself argues she must surpass:

> ...levia memoravi nimis;
> haec virgo feci. gravior exsurgat dolor:
> maiora iam me scelera post partus decent. (48-50)

[But these things I talk of are too slight; I did all this as a girl. My bitterness must grow more weighty: greater crimes become me now, after giving birth.]

Faced with extreme social and even sexual pressures following Jason's abandonment, the enraged Medea will only be satisfied by radical action. The murder of her brother and treason against her country were regrettable necessities compared to the bloodbath that must occur here. Revenge demands extravagance, and Medea will have it.

Atreus' declaration of vengeance comes in the hyperbolic terms already discussed above. His speech beginning at l. 184 promises extreme consequence for extreme action and demonstrates his commitment to retributive schemes. Working himself up into a frenzy of violence, he declares his intent to his attendant, to his audience, and to the world he considers to be his domain. And like his fellow revengers, Atreus is not content merely to limit his violence to what has been done before. He too spends a moment on past crimes only to reject them in favor of more drastic and severe action:

> Age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet,
> sed nulla taceat. aliquod audendum est nefas
> atrox, cruentum, tale quod frater meus
> suum esse mallet. scelera non ulcisceris
> nisi vincis. (192-6)

[Come, my spirit, do what no future age will endorse, but none fail to talk about. I must dare some fierce, bloody outrage, such as my brother would have wished his own. You do not avenge crimes unless you surpass them.]

The scelera that spur him on are supposedly his brother's, adding fuel to the fire of his rage. He does not wish merely to match the affronts against them, but to surpass, to conquer them. The passive periphrastic of l. 193 (translated as a first-person active form by Fitch) implies a sense of obligation. Atreus is not just taking the initiative for the nefas atrox; in his mind, he is fulfilling a necessary imperative.

As we can see in Atreus' ranting above, the declaration of revenge is almost always accompanied by an inducement to the animus. Seneca's plays demonstrate a pointed and consistent interest in psychology, especially concerning the villain, manifested strikingly in the revenge plays through the proliferation of self-address. In Medea alone, there are five instances of anime.[70] Seneca uses the vocative form in seven of his eight plays, excepting only Hercules

70 Cf. 41, 895, 937, 976, 988. A useful comparison is to the Medea of Euripides, where a vocative form of animus synonyms is used by Medea only once (θυμέ 1056), although here she attempts to calm and dissuade her spirit in contrast to Seneca's character's exhortations. For further discussion of Euripides' psychological terminology, see Shirley Darcus Sullivan's useful study, Euripides' Use of Psychological Terminology (Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press,

Furens. And even in Hercules Furens, Juno speaks to herself in the third person, encouraging the vindictive action she desires.[71] The instances of Seneca's anime are as follows: Medea 41, 895, 937, 976, 988; Thyestes 192, 270, 283, 324, 423; Agamemnon 108, 192, 228, 868, 915; Phoenissae 45; Troades 613, 662; Oedipus 933, 952, 1024, ; Phaedra 112, 592, 599, 719.

I believe the abundance of anime and the self-address it signifies among the defining and most influential characteristics of Senecan tragedy. Seneca takes Greek dramas and common mythology and turns them inwards, internalizing action, emotion, and impetus. In his particularly useful study of Renaissance use of Seneca, Braden writes, "The soliloquy does not merely serve such a plot, but virtually gives rise to it."[72] The converse of this statement also holds true: the plot of a Senecan tragedy does not merely allow for soliloquy, it demands it. With Seneca's interest in the inner workings of revengers' and victims' minds alike, sustained internal insight is essential and provided. Compare the revengers' speeches:

> quid, anime, cessas? sequere felicem impetum.
> pars ultionis ista, qua gaudes, quota est! (Med 895-6)

[Why are you slackening, my spirit? Follow up your successful attack. How small a part of your revenge is this that thrills you!]

> Nescioquid animo maius et solito amplius
> supraque fines moris humani tumet
> instatque pigris manibus. haud quid sit scio
> sed grande quiddem est. ista sit. hoc, anime, occupa. (Thy 267-70)[73]

[Something greater, larger than usual, beyond normal human limits, is swelling in my spirit and jolting my sluggish hands. What it is I do not know, but it is something mighty! So be it. Seize on it, my spirit!]

> Accingere, anime: bella non levia apparas

2000), especially 60ff.

71 HF 109-12

72 Braden, Anger's Privilege, 39

73 This is in response to his attendant asking facere quid tandem paras? [What are you planning to do?] (266)

scelus occupandum est. (Ag 192-3)

[Arm yourself, my spirit: this is no light war you are planning. In crime, one must strike first.]

As Medea, Atreus, and Clytemnestra address themselves, they dissolve into their new vengeance. Old selves are left behind as the new animus they have created drives them towards violence.[74]

Although absent in Atreus, the most vindictive and insatiable of the revengers, in both Medea and Clytemnestra there exists a hesitation about the final blow. This is not merely dramatic filler designed to make the action last longer and the audience more invested. Instead it is a look into the mind of the revenger who is bent on action yet still displays a level of uncertainty. Both women exhibit a kind of moral oscillation throughout their plays, wanting to punish those they see at fault for their suffering but also uncomfortable with a final commitment to such terrible actions. Yet neither manages to suppress desire for vengeance and both rush headlong to their crime.

Once hesitation has been overcome and a commitment has been made to vengeance, each of the revengers engages in a performative spectacle, culminating, specifically in Medea and Thyestes, in a triumphant reveal to a terrified and traumatized audience. Seneca's fascination with metatheatre is not, however, confined to the revenge tragedies. For example, examine the reaction of the bystanders to the sacrifice of Polyxena and Astyanax in Troades:

> extrema montis ille praerupti petit,
> semusta at ille tecta vel saxum imminens
> muri cadentis pressit, atque aliquis (nefas)
> tumulo ferus spectator Hectoreo sedet. (1084-7)

[Someone made for the edge of a sheer scarp, another put his eight on a half-burnt roof or a rock jutting from the collapsing wall, and— an outrage— one callous spectator took his seat on Hector's tomb.]

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74 Seneca has his characters addresses their animi rather than their animae to emphasize their deteriorating mental and rational capabilities. Anima is used with much less frequency as Seneca focuses on more active passions than states of being. The animus to anima ratios in Thyestes, Medea, and Agamemnon, respectively, are 18:2, 18:4, and 20:2.

The verb spectare and its derivatives are used specifically for theatrical viewing.[75] The appearance of spectator here turns the Greeks into an audience within the play, an occurrence found again in Medea as the sorceress calls for Jason as a spectator to her staged crime: derat hoc unum mihi,/ spectator [This was the one thing I lacked, this spectator.] (992-3). With this word, Medea invites parallels to a theatrical production with herself as the director. Her viewing pleasure is interwoven with and dependent upon her pleasure of mastery.[76] She has successfully orchestrated the dialogue of the play, engineered her revenge, and now is literally staging her final act. She ascends to the roof as she ascends to dramatic heights, the presentation of the scene reflecting her mastery of the play. From her elevated vantage point, Medea seems to give stage directions to those watching. She gains dramatic power akin to that of a playwright. Her incantations construct her new animus and the fates of the characters around her as she conquers separate elements to create a whole work of destructive and dramatic spectacle.

As the ira within Medea calls for a spectator, the personified Fury of Thyestes requires Tantalus to be one himself:

> liberum dedimus diem
> tuamque ad istas solvimus mensas famem:
> ieiunia exple! mixtus in Bacchum cruor
> spectante te potetur. inveni dapes
> quas ipse fugeres. (63-7)

[We have given you a day of freedom, and released your hunger for this meal: fill up your fasting! Let blood mingled with wine be drunk while you watch. I have found a dinner that even you would rush from.]

The vision-frenzied Cassandra of Agamemnon realizes the Furies' demand of spectators as she looks into the underworld and cries out to her unfortunate companions:

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75 Boyle, Tragic Seneca, 117; c.f. Ovid Metamorphoses 10.575; Ovid Amores 3.2; Plautus Amphitruo 5.2.16; Petronius Satyricon 53

76 C.A.J. Littlewood, Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 193

spectate, miseri: fata se vertunt retro!
Instant sorores squalidae,
anguinea iactant verbera,
fert laeva semustas faces
turgentque pallentes genae
et vestris atri funeris
exesa cingit ilia (758-64)

[Watch, you poor folk: fate is reversing itself!/ The scabrous sisters advance,/ they brandish snaky whips,/ their left hands bear charred torches,/ their cheeks are pale and bloated, and black funereal garments/ girdle their wasted flanks.]

In Seneca's plays, an audience is a necessary precondition for an appearance of the Furies and thus a full realization of revenge's potential. The presence of spectare and related terms is only one way to identify Seneca's metatheatrical preoccupations which are echoed in the play-within-a-play technique so popular within Elizabethan drama. For the revengers of both cultures, staging and performance are a way of placing inner anguish outside the self, making the internal external and thus, momentarily, survivable. For their enemies to realize the extent of their suffering, they must be made to see a physicalized result of vengeance.

While the English playwrights of the Renaissance follow closely Seneca's revenge formula outlined above (the appearance of a ghost; hyperbolic rhetoric; declaration of action promising to surpass past deeds and norms; self-address leading to reconstruction; hesitation in the act; and performance), they differ drastically in one regard: they kill their revenger. Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra all survive their dramatic finales of vengeance. If all Renaissance revengers were merely shadows and imitations of a Senecan past, they would be able to rest content in the morality of their actions after revenge was concluded and thus spend the rest of their days secure in their newly constructed and avenged selves. Instead, they fall at the height of their dramatic ascension. This divergence goes to the heart of the Elizabethan reception of Senecan plays. Seneca presents us with characters whose potential for evil has already been established. Kyd and his Renaissance successors give their audience the process of such deterioration, while including and expanding upon the moral fluctuation that plagues Seneca's characters. Ultimately, with the path of vengeance made visible on stage from initial affront to eventual effect, the revenger perishes in the acting of his own revenge plot. He is unable to continue to live having been involved in breaking the very principles that he so desired to defend.

Chapter II: Hieronimo Nunc Sum

The protagonists of Seneca's tragedies appear onstage as fully grown, fully angry, and fully capable revengers. Their final step of murderous execution and theatrical reveal may take some time and self-convincing, yet it is achievable and inevitable. There is a progression in Seneca, one from internal passion to external action, but the personalities of the characters do not significantly develop within the space of their plays. Seneca introduces his revengers with the desire for vengeance already paramount in their minds; they are already mature and fit to act. The only process they must undergo is from the conception to the enactment of their revenge.

When Thomas Kyd takes up the Senecan cause, as it were, in the 1580s with his Spanish Tragedy, he follows Senecan patterns while expanding the metamorphosis of victim to revenger. In Seneca we never see Atreus as a loving brother, Medea as an innocent lover, or Clytemnestra as a devoted wife. These characters only appear after they have undergone the personal loss that drives them to vengeance. But in The Spanish Tragedy, Kyd first shows his audience Hieronimo the wise counsellor and doting father before brutally destroying his protagonist's world. We watch Hieronimo take faltering steps through grief, despair, confusion, and anger, before he finally assumes his ancient predecessors' mantle of revenge. Kyd is not transcending the Senecan selfhood, but enriching it.[77] When Hieronimo ascends the stage in front of the court and reveals his actions to his uncomprehending audience, he reaches into the murderous heights of Atreus, the self-fashioning of Medea, and the desperate hypocrisy of Clytemnestra.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the psychological characterization of Kyd's Renaissance revenger through Hieronimo's deep-seated connection to Senecan tragedy. I will argue that while using the Senecan revenge formula, Kyd expands the character of the revenger by showing the progress and process of his metamorphosis from self-loss to radical restoration.

77[1] See Braden, Anger's Privilege, 209

As I have established, the Senecan formula consists of the appearance of a ghost; hyperbolic rhetoric; declaration of action promising to surpass past deeds and norms; self-address leading to reconstruction; hesitation in the act; and performance. Kyd guides his tragedy through each of these elements, and especially addresses the self-loss and attempted rhetorical reconstruction so important to Seneca.

As he works through the formula, Kyd goes beyond his Roman source and Seneca's so-called "dead end"[78] to construct the psychological journey of a revenger. He takes the end point of Seneca's "full psychological detail" of violence and revenge[79] and shows his audience how a character reaches this extreme. We watch Hieronimo change onstage. Seeking to avenge the death of his son, Kyd's protagonist is transformed from what seems like a Senecan victim to an Anglicized version of an extreme Senecan manipulator and murderer. Hieronimo abandons the legal and social hierarchy initially upheld by his position as Knight Marshal of Spain as necessity forces him to work in the very channels he so abhors. In response to murder, the judge murders. In response to the loss of a child, he causes others to lose their children. Such Old Testament retribution is at odds with his modern legal and social obligations. The revenger paradoxically loses himself in the struggle to reclaim his self, his son, his family, his faith, and his speech. Senecan-like antitheses are brought together as rational evidence fuels madness; co-conspirators cause further isolation; exaggerated rhetoric leads to silence; victory calls for death. And finally, as a result of a clear understanding and use of Seneca's dramas, the English playwright advances the template begun by Seneca by killing his revenger.

To examine the influence of Seneca on The Spanish Tragedy I will begin with Kyd's ghost and his frame story. Andrea's metamorphosis, as it mirrors Hieronimo's, takes him to the

78 Braden, Anger's Privilege, 62

79 Charney, "The Persuasiveness of Violence," 63

violent and vengeful rhetoric and action expected from a Senecan character. While I examine Andrea, I will identify the elements of the Senecan revenge formula which appear in the frame plot, demonstrating how the Kydian ghost is an extension of Seneca's spirits as well as Hieronimo's experience. The interaction between the two plots sheds light on both Kyd's use of Seneca and his development of the process of revenge. I will then turn my attention to the main plot, focusing on Hieronimo as The Spanish Tragedy's central revenger. My primary goal throughout is to expose the progression of Senecan psychological development used by Kyd to advance the genre of revenge.

THE GHOSTLY FRAME

Kyd chooses to begin his play not with the characters around whom his main plot revolves, but with a very Senecan ghostly frame. Although the frame story is often completely ignored or only briefly and negatively commented on by critics,[80] I find it to have a concrete connection to the main plot, serving as a mirror to the principal action and characters. There is a marked interplay between the two plots. Hieronimo takes the same journey to the "dismal gates

80 e.g. James Shapiro, "'Tragedies naturally performed': Kyd's Representation of Violence" in Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991); Thomas Hyde, "Identity and Acting in Elizabethan Tragedy," Renaissance Drama, New Series 15 (1984); and, surprisingly, Braden, Anger's Privilege. Hallett and Hallett find the ghost motif "awkwardly handled" (Charles A. Hallet and Elaine S. Hallet, The Revenger's Madness (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 142) and Bowers claims it is "superfluous and even obtrusive" (Bowers, Revenge Tragedy, 74). A noteworthy exception is Kerrigan (Revenge Tragedy) who makes several insightful remarks on the relationship between Andrea and Hieronimo and Kyd's Senecanism, although he could have taken his points further. Empson briefly comments on the relevant connection between the frame and main plots, but as Coursen rightly notes, he "does little more than advance his speculation" (Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., "The Unity of The Spanish Tragedy," Studies in Philology 65 (5) (1968): 769). See William Empson, "The Spanish Tragedy: a letter, "The Spanish Tragedy (I)," and "The Spanish Tragedy (II)" in Essays on Renaissance Literature, Volume Two: The Drama, ed. by John Haffenden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

of Pluto's court" (3.13.110)[81] as Andrea, although his descent is mental rather than physical.[82] Both men evolve together in intensity and involvement with revenge. Andrea sits next to a personified Revenge who urges him on and provides guidance while Hieronimo must look into his own psyche for violent action. Both characters are accompanied, infected, and ultimately overwhelmed by the power of Revenge. By the end of the tragedy, Hieronimo and his ghostly counterpart have established themselves as judges, eager to sentence those who have wronged them. The progression of revenge begun by Seneca appears in The Spanish Tragedy in more than just its protagonist. This frame story is also a parallel plot, the birth of a revenger on a miniature scale.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, ghosts open two of Seneca's revenge plays (Thyestes and Agamemnon) and also appear in the mortal worlds of Medea, Troades, and Phoenissae. The Spanish Tragedy's ghost is Don Andrea, an "Anglicized surrogate" for the Furies, the revenger, and audience.[83] Accompanied by the personification of Revenge, he enters before the audience with an opening speech explaining his appearance in the world of the living.[84] This first monologue is overwhelmingly classical, from its geography to its allusions to the self-defined function of the two characters as the "chorus in this tragedy" (1.1.91).[85] Kyd

81 All quotations from The Spanish Tragedy are taken from English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology, ed. David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002)

82 Hallett, "Spirit of Revenge," 50

83 Hallet and Hallet, Revenger's Madness, 143

84 In this study, I have chosen to gender Revenge neutrally. For the suggestion that Revenge might be female, see Thelma N. Greenfield, "The Spanish Tragedy: Revenge's and Andrea's Kindred," Pacific Coast Philology 16 (2) (1981).

85 In no way, however, does this chorus mimic the function of a classical chorus, either Greek or Roman. For a discussion of Seneca's chorus, specifically in Thyestes, see P.J. Davis, "The Chorus in Seneca's Thyestes," The Classical Quarterly, New Series 39 (2) (1989). I believe Kyd has Revenge identify the frame plot as a chorus to create a connection to the classical world of Seneca as well as to give the frame a necessary role in a neoclassical text, imbuing Revenge with critical authority.

takes special pains to situate his ghost in Seneca's world, for it is in Seneca that he finds his inspiration here. Braden comments that "Senecan plays take their start and even their sense of reality not from the unchangeable truth of past history but from the turmoil of affective experience, where history is taken up and remade."[86] Kyd creates the same impression: Andrea emerges from hell to learn to "take up and remake" his own past, to set right the wrongs committed against him, to inspire others to remake their selves. By casting his impetus for revenge in the role of a Senecan ghost, Kyd reminds his audience of the devastating effects Seneca's specters had on their plays.

The Kydian ghost, like his Senecan ancestors, is the ghostly stimulus of revenge and is, as Hallett remarks, "ultimately responsible for the carnage, for it was his desire that opened the door and ushered Revenge into the world."[87] Andrea's presence, accompanied by Revenge itself, is the cause of the actions on stage, even though the ghost does not personally address the actors or even initially desire violence. Because of the dead Spanish don, Revenge/ revenge infects the other characters, "soliciting their souls" (3.15.20). Like Thyestes' Tantalus and Agamemnon's Thyestes, this ghost brings with him the spirit of revenge, this time personified in an actual figure, and inserts it into the drama. None of these ghost figures interacts directly with those they watch; they remain aloof, allowing their mere presence in the frame plot to bring out extremes of passion. Kyd increases the influence of his frame, however, by directing Andrea and Revenge to remain onstage throughout the entire production.[88] Never do they fade from the eyes and minds of the audience, always present during the workings of revenge. Again and again the audience becomes engrossed in Hieronimo's despair only to be pulled back to the dialogue

86 Braden, Anger's Privilege, 40

87 Hallett, "Spirit of Revenge," 47

88 See Empson "ST (I)," 18 and "ST (II)," 51 for theories on Andrea and Revenge's location on stage.

between a ghost and Revenge itself. By interspersing a developed form of the prologues of Thyestes and Agamemnon between the acts of mortal men, Kyd uses his ghost to a greater effect than Seneca.

Like his Senecan counterparts, Andrea takes his audience down into the underworld, situating himself by geographic landmarks of hellish attendants and punishments. As his "soul descend[s] straight" (1.1.18), Andrea passes the Acheron, the boatman Charon, the Avernus lake, and Cerberus on his "way to Pluto's court" (1.1.55), all mentioned multiple times in Seneca's tragedies. He sees the Furies, Ixion, Pluto, Proserpine, Tityus, and Sisyphus, all familiar to Seneca's characters. He traces the steps of the ancients before him, walking down to Seneca's underworld. Andrea soon reaches hell's three judges whom Hercules Furens' Theseus also encounters. The two descriptions are similar:

> Not far from hence, amidst ten thousand souls,
> Sat Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth,
> To whom so sooner 'gan I make approach
> To crave a passport for my wandr'ing ghost,
> But Minos, in graven leaves of lottery,
> Drew forth the manner of my life and death. (1.1.32-7)

> Non unus alta sede quaesitor sedens
> iudicia trepidis sera sortitur reis:
> aditur illo Cnosius Minos foro,
> Rhadamanthus illo, Thetidis hoc audit socer.
> quod quisque fecit, patitur… (HF 731-5)

[There is not just one investigator seated on a high bench and allotting overdue judgements to terrified defendants. Minos of Crete presides in one court, Rhadamanthus in another, and Thetis' father-in-law hears cases in a third. What each man did, he suffers…]

The judges who preside over different courts in Seneca's plays come together to judge the difficult case of Andrea in The Spanish Tragedy. Although Andrea is the one being judged here, he will, as a result of his vengeful development, become a judge himself by Act 5. As Hieronimo loses faith in the established system of legal justice, Andrea increasingly gains confidence in his

newfound court of revenge. Hieronimo will also obtain similar conviction after a more complicated and lengthy process.

While the judges of the underworld deliberate and eventually decide to send him to their master, Andrea looks out into the landscape of the underworld, gazing at the scenery of Seneca. Charged to continue on, the ghost takes the middle path, moving beyond the realm that normally constricts mortal souls. Andrea walks between the two roads of in Aeneid, moving beyond the Virgilian source for this scene. Kyd is establishing that the aberrant path to revenge (here Revenge) stretches beyond norms and alternatives.[89] The stagnant underworld of Seneca becomes part of the journey to unbridled passion and revenge.

While he exists in the same location as Seneca's ghosts and visitors to the underworld, Andrea has not yet reached his potential as an active and willing participant in Senecan vengeance. A comparison of Andrea's opening lines with the speeches of Tantalus and Thyestes shows a distinct difference in tone. The Senecan sprits enter in extreme confusion, rage, and aversion. They are repulsed by their newfound freedom and cower at both the fury within themselves and the personified Fury that drives them. Thyestes begins with opaca [darkness] (Ag 1) and Tantalus bursts onto the stage with an accusatory question. Andrea, however, is calm, even poetic and romantic, as he introduces himself:

> When this eternal substance of my soul
> Did live imprisoned in my wanton flesh,
> Each in their function serving other's need,
> I was a courtier in the Spanish court.
> My name was Don Andrea... (1.1.1-5)

He even remembers his love, Bel-imperia, with a charming rhyme: "In secret I possessed a worthy dame/ Which hight sweet Bel-imperia by name" (1.1.10-1). His general perspective on his physical death and journey to the classical underworld is matter-of-fact and unperturbed.

89 See Kerrigan, Revenge Tragedy, 175

There is no evidence to indicate even the slightest amount of melancholy, let alone postmortem despair. We must remember, however, that this ghost is very newly dead, and as such, has not settled into the underworld just yet. The Senecan ghosts have had generations of torture and torment in which to lose their grasps on reality, morality, and sanity. Andrea needs some more time.

By bringing out Andrea without the furor so essential to his predecessors, Kyd presents his audience with a Senecan ghost before its personality becomes fused with and subjugated by revenge and violence. This ghost is a character who at first has no interest in revenge or violence, not even substantial concerns with mortal happenings. William Empson goes so far as to describe him as "entirely unjealous" and "undarkened";[90] Thelma Greenfield stresses his innocence, calling him human and baffled.[91] Yet such preliminary placidity suits the larger enterprise of the Renaissance tragedy and the themes Kyd intends to explore throughout. Strong emotions are soon to follow as the play and Andrea's psychological connection to revenge progress. It is noteworthy that such initial descriptions could also be applied to the guileless old Knight Marshal soon to appear. Both characters emerge on stage in a state of untainted innocence and naivety, a condition that will not last long. But for now, Andrea's diction is light, his sentiments untroubled, his pain in the past. The strongly Senecan setting has not yet made an impact on the mind of the ghost. From the beginning of his speech, Andrea placidly establishes himself as apart from his former place in the human world. His first word, "when," separates his history from the "now." His use of the past tense in identifying himself (1.1.5) indicates a calm awareness of his new condition. Andrea divides his being into "eternal soul" and "wanton

90 Empson "ST (I)," 22; Empson "ST (II)," 41

91 Greenfield, "Revenge's and Andrea's Kindred"

flesh," acknowledging without consternation that this soul lives on without a corporeal component. He sedately accepts his death and new form.

Yet in spite of conscious recognition that he is now dead, Andrea does remember both his identity and his function in the court of Spain, demonstrating a vestigial connection to the mortal world and one which will increase rapidly over the course of the play. He understands that his presence here is not natural, as he expresses surprise and a little confusion ("No sooner had she spoke but we were here—/ I wot not how— in twinkling of an eye" (1.1.84-5)), but Andrea does not have the same extreme reaction to the reversal of the laws of nature that Tantalus and Thyestes display. Revenge, however, understands the perverse implications of this ghostly revisit and the act of revenge, emphasized by its "I'll turn…/Their day to night…/their peace to war…" (1.5.6-8), but welcomes it. It will take the observed progression of events and the vengeful actions of others to inspire in Don Andrea this sentiment and the furor that possesses Tantalus and Thyestes. The emotion that inspires them is still externally personified as the character of Revenge for Andrea and must be internalized before he becomes fully Senecan.

Andrea appears with Revenge at his side, as his appointed companion, teacher, and guide in the "mystery" and "tragedy" (1.1.90-1) about to unfold. The two characters function as a unit,[92] Revenge providing the spirit of revenge with Andrea supplying an environment in which it can flourish. As stated above, Andrea begins his play without an active vengeful impulse; Revenge must tell him of their purpose to "see the author of thy death,/ Don Balthazar, the Prince of Portingale,/ Deprived of life by Bel-imperia" (1.1.87-9). Yet as The Spanish Tragedy progresses, the spirit begins to display more vengeful momentum prompted by the events and reactions of Hieronimo on stage. Violent desires grow in the watchful Andrea as Revenge slumbers. It awakes to a fully developed, active, and Senecan ghost.

92 Hallett, "Spirit of Revenge," 46

Andrea's opening speech contains no imperatives and no questions as he, passive and detached, accepts his situation. It is a recollection of a past life, a situational explanation for the audience. His first lines are those of a still only vaguely Senecan ghost, yet his vengeful potential begins to increase. The next "choral ode" finds him beginning to become more involved, asking questions as to Revenge's purpose:

> Come we for this from depth of underground
> To see him feast that gave me my death's wound?
> These pleasant sights are sorrow to my soul—
> Nothing but league, and love, and banqueting! (1.5.1-4)

After Andrea spends the last four scenes watching the action with Revenge, pleasure, which gave him no distress in his previous monologue, is now a "sorrow." He understands that a significant result is expected from a return from "depth of underworld,"[93] one that cannot be achieved with "league, and love, and banqueting." The question posed to Revenge confirms a slightly increased interest and participation in the enactment of vengeance.

Senecan influence comes strongly through the response of Revenge, as it speaks in the language of a Fury. This language is one of inverted polarities and rhetorical violence. Revenge's carefully phrased communications with Andrea are intended to direct him towards seeking vengeance on his own. It presents the don with Fury-like reversed contradictions to foreshadow coming events and to instill in his mind as well as those of the audience stirrings of unrest:

> Be still, Andrea. Ere we go from hence
> I'll turn their friendship into fell despite,
> Their love to mortal hate, their day to night,
> Their hope into despair. their peace to war,
> Their joys to pain, their bliss to misery. (1.5.5-9)

93 A phrase that recalls Seneca's inferorum sede ad infausta [the accursed abode of the underworld] (Thy 1) and opaca...Ditis inferni loca [the dark world of infernal Dis] (Ag 1)

Its "Be still" by no means quiets the audience. Instead, we want more and lean forward in our seats in anticipation of the "fell despite" to come. These are exactly the same sentiments as those of Thyestes's Fury:

> miser ex potente fiat, ex misero potens,
> fluctuque regnum casus assiduo ferat. (Thy 35-6)

[Let the ruler be ruined and the ruined turn ruler; let chance toss the throne on incessant waves.]

> nox alia fiat, excidat caelo dies. (51)

[Let there be another night, let daylight be lost from the heavens.]

Such reversals are also found in Thyestes' words, as he disbelieves his brother's newfound friendship:

> ante cum flammis aquae,
> cum morte vita, cum mari ventus fidem
> foedusque iungent. (476-82)

[soon will water join flame, life join death, wind join sea in a bond of allegiance.]

Much of Seneca's genius comes in his inversion of norms. In his tragedies, day becomes night, brother becomes enemy, husband becomes son, a gift becomes a curse, natural calm turns to environmental disasters reflecting the nefas that pervades the Senecan world. This rhetorical strategy destabilizes the natural and psychological landscape of the tragedies. If even the progression of time becomes disrupted and light turns prematurely to darkness, how can mere mortals hope to survive with their selves intact? When versa natura est retro [nature has been inverted] (Ag 34), there is no escape. Kyd's Revenge takes its inspiration from these reversals as it declares its intentions to manipulate positive to negative, serenity to revenge. Kyd uses Revenge's words to insert Senecan instability and potential for violence into Andrea's and Hieronimo's worlds. Andrea's response will be to become a powerful, raving ghost while Hieronimo will react with the rhetorical and physical violence of Seneca's revengers.

Before the death of Horatio, Andrea's dramatic interruptions are detached and uninvolved. He has been informed by Revenge that he will have vengeance, but is largely

content to watch the actions unfold in front of him without interfering. His complaints in 1.5 could easily have been voiced by a disgruntled groundling, waiting to see the blood, death, and gore promised by the theater. But once Horatio is murdered and once Hieronimo's grief has been witnessed, Andrea's rhetoric becomes more forceful and passionate. Just as Hieronimo once believed in the success of the status quo, so Andrea trusted passively in Revenge's plot. Horatio's death, however, sends both characters reeling into a destabilized world where they themselves will have to take violent action to achieve what they now consider justice.

After watching Horatio die and Hieronimo's response, Andrea becomes substantially more invested in vengeance:

> Brought'st thou me hither to increase my pain?
> I looked that Balthazar should have been slain,
> But 'tis my friend Horatio that is slain,
> And they abuse fair Bel-imperia… (2.6.1-4)

He does not say, "Revenge, you told me that Balthazar would die," but "I looked," I want him to die. There is a level of anticipation and expectation in his words that was not present before. He is growing closer to the intentions of revenge that characterize his Senecan predecessors. Additionally, the placement of the pronouns "thou me" suggests an intensified intimacy between the two characters. The pronoun pairing is used only once more in the text concerning a similarly entwined personal relationship, in Hieronimo's words to the bereaved Don Bazulto: "Lean on my arm; I thee, thou me shalt stay,/ And thou, and I, and she will sing a song…" (3.13.171-2). Syntactically and psychologically, Andrea begins to see himself as an extension of Revenge, and conversely, Revenge as an extension of himself.

Following the growing connection between itself and its charge, Revenge again constructs its response in order to maximize Andrea's interest in the development of vengeance. It presents revenge as the culmination of a natural and lengthy process which must be seen to fruition before desires are satisfied:

Thou talkest of harvest when the corn is green.
The end is crown of every work well done;
The sickle comes not till the corn be ripe.
Be still, and ere I lead thee from this place
I'll show thee Balthazar in heavy case. (2.6.7-11)

Andrea is made to understand that revenge must undergo a necessary process of maturation before the sickle can descend on the necks of his enemies. Furthermore, this activity, like the cultivation of crops, is not a passive one; it requires constant attention and participation. Careful "work well done" is an essential prerequisite to a full harvest of vengeance. The process is the one set out by Seneca in his tragedies. The revenger must be shaped into the proper vessel for an external display of internal passions; this takes time and the full enactment of the Senecan revenge formula. The character of Revenge encourages this process and Andrea's newfound involvement, promising to give him his desire and "show [him] Balthazar in heavy case." The repetition of "Be still" at 2.6.10 again does not calm but encourage the interests of Andrea and the audience.

After a silence of 14 scenes,[94] the ever-present "chorus" speaks again. By now, Horatio is dead, Bel-imperia silenced, Pedringano hanged, and Lorenzo and Balthazar reassured in their schemes. Andrea and Revenge have watched Hieronimo discover the dead body of his son and transform from anguish to rage to revenge. They witness the overwhelmingly Senecan speech of Hieronimo at 3.13, and Andrea's involvement in the main plot increases appropriately with the Knight Marshal's rising furor. In contrast to the calm and ambivalent statements of his initial appearance, Andrea now shouts and commands. He cries, "Revenge, awake!" (3.15.8) and calls out "Awake, Revenge" four more times in his 20 lines of this scene. Not only is he waking his

94 For a possible explanation of the extended length of Act 3 and its absence of the ghostly plot, see Empson "ST: a letter," "ST (I)," and "ST (II)." He puts forth the theory that The Spanish Tragedy was censored by Elizabethan authorities. He holds that play we have is missing key scenes which would divide it into the five expected acts and explicitly discuss the involvement of Lorenzo and Castile in Don Andrea's death.

companion, but he is calling to the spirit of revenge within himself to whom Hieronimo also appeals in his self-exhortations. The ghost commands Erictho, Cereberus, Pluto, Proserpine, Acheron, and Erebus, drawing on classical imagery and mythology to support his vengeful venture as he takes himself and his audience back into Seneca's underworld. Andrea's repeated imperatives of this scene, mimicking Hieronimo's previous "stay," twice-repeated "strike," and "enjoin" (3.13.4,7,39), are his first attempt to interfere actively and forcibly with the action unfolding before him. His previous speeches were statements, then questions. Now they are transformed into violent commands as the ghost begins to take control of revenge.

What Andrea does not realize is that Revenge is assuming full control over him. The allegorical figure feigns sleep in order to inspire in his charge a sense of outrage and urgency. Revenge has so far carefully led the ghost into the beginnings of involved vengeance, and now it requires its student to take the next step. Andrea does not disappoint. He enters into the pedagogical conversation as passionately as Revenge could have hoped. To continue its student's learning experience, Revenge's response to Andrea's initial outcry is almost comical:

> ANDREA: Revenge, awake!
> REVENGE: Awake? Forwhy? (3.15.8-9)

The personified Revenge is arguably the most knowledgeable actor in the entire play, excepting of course non-actors Pluto and Proserpine. Authorized by hell's deities, confident in its actions, and generally omniscient, the character has no reason to ask any questions. The only explanation for its "Forwhy?", therefore, can be that its questioning and behavior are didactic, designed to guide Andrea's involvement further.

Like Hieronimo's dissembling to the king and Lorenzo, Revenge's deception too serves a specific purpose to advance the course and success of vengeance. Its affected ignorance causes Andrea to articulate his own function in his drama and his newly found strong connection to the cause:

Awake, Revenge, for thou are ill-advised
To sleep away what thou art warned to watch...

Awake, Revenge, if love, as love hath had,
Have yet the power of prevalence in hell!
Hieronimo with Lorenzo is joined in league
And intercepts our passage to revenge.
Awake, Revenge, or we are woebegone! (3.15.10-11, 13-7)

Andrea urges Revenge to watch what is happening in an inversion of Revenge's earlier fashioning of Andrea as the watcher. The ghost believes that he must now guide his teacher, and by doing so, he becomes more involved in the action at hand. He is taking active rhetorical control in much the same way as Hieronimo. His suddenly plural first person pronouns indicate Andrea's increasing alliance with Revenge and its cause. Compare this to his speeches' pronouns beginning after his address to Revenge at 1.1.81 (thus putting aside his explanatory narrative). Out of the twelve first-person forms present, ten are singular. Now, he speaks for himself and for Revenge. The ghost does, however, get a little carried away and has to be reined in with Revenge's slightly exasperated "Thus worldings ground what they have dreamed upon./ Content thyself, Andrea" (3.15.18-9). Perhaps its teachings have worked a little too well. Vengeance still needs times to grow.

Assured that Andrea has begun to learn his lesson of retribution, Revenge offers a line akin to a Senecan sententia:

Nor dies Revenge, although he sleeps awhile;
For in unquiet, quietness is feigned,
And slumb'ring is a common worldly wile. (3.15-23-5)

For Andrea, the purpose of The Spanish Tragedy's dramatic development thus far has been to present to him a visual representation of the enactment of revenge. The entire play essentially is to this ghost what the commonplace book in 3.13 is to Hieronimo. Revenge provides, like Seneca, bits of information and pithy sayings which educate its listener, elucidate its plotting, and further its constructed vengeance. Hieronimo's suffering acts as a visual depiction of

hyperbolic grief and destabilization designed to provide Andrea with a necessary template of Senecan reconstruction. Andrea effectively reads the book in front of him, even substituting Hieronimo's progression for his own as he moves closer to his climax even during the scenes where he is a silent watcher.

Revenge's comment on dissembling quietness goes far in explaining the preceding actions of Hieronimo in the main plot. Although Andrea fears he is "with Lorenzo...joined in league/ and intercepts our passage to revenge" (3.15.15-6), the Knight Marshal is merely pretending truce to further his schemes. Such masking finds an ancestor in Atreus' speech as the Mycenaean king too checks himself initially to enjoy more fully the enormity of what he has accomplished. His image of a leashed hound lunging at its prey accurately describes the unquiet mentioned by Revenge (Thy 496-503), especially his lines:

> cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi—
> tamen tegatur. (Thy 504-5)

[When anger senses blood, it knows no concealment. But concealed it must be.]

Even Atreus, the most bloodthirsty of Seneca's revengers, understands the need for temporary concealment of passion in order to achieve vengeance. Kyd explores this idea of necessary suppression more fully in his development of Hieronimo's revenge, but also plants it in his frame play, appropriately in the mouth of Revenge.

To instruct Andrea further, the personified ultio summons more actors to the stage for a dumb show. Revenge turns to the Senecan device of play-within-play, adding to the layers of spectacle in The Spanish Tragedy. This rather odd little drama recalls the tragedy of sundry languages soon to be put on by Hieronimo as well as the previous dumb show of 1.4. Its somewhat out-of-place theme of marriage and character of Hymen bring to mind the corrupted nuptials of Senecan tragedy. Compare:

> The two first the nuptial torches bore
> As brightly as the midday's sun;

But after them doth Hymen hie as fast,
Clothèd in sable and a saffron robe,
And blows them out and quencheth them with blood,
As discontent that things continue so. (3.15.30-5)

nunc, nunc adeste, sceleris ultrices deae,
crinem solutis squalidae serpentibus,
atram cruentis manibus amplexae facem;
adeste, thalamis horridae quondam meis
quales stetistis… (Med 13-7)

[Be present now, you goddesses who avenge crime, your hair bristling with loosened snakes, your bloody hands grasping a black torch; be present, as once you stood unkempt and fearful around my marriage chamber.]

cum subito thalami more praecedunt faces
et pronuba illi Tyndaris, maestum caput
demissa. (Tro 1132-3)

[Suddenly, as at a wedding, torches led the procession, and the Tyndarid as matron escorting the bride, hanging her head in sorrow.]

The atra fax of Medea's Furies is reinvented centuries later by Revenge itself. The traditionally joyful conjugal occasion becomes perverse, distorted, and full of blood as in Polyxena's "marriage" in Troades. Just as the frame plot provides its audience with the metamorphosis of a revenge on a smaller scale, this mime is the main plot's metatheatrical acting in miniature. The corrupted metaphorical marriage is horribly realized in the physical deaths of the engaged couple during Hieronimo's play.

The chorus of Medea gives us a description of the conventional function of Hymen, turned abnormal in The Spanish Tragedy:

Et tu, qui facibus legitimis ades,
noctem discutiens auspice dextera,
huc incede gradu marcidus ebrio,
praecingens roseo tempora vinculo. (Med 67-70)

[And you who attend the torches of lawful unions,/ dispelling darkness with a propitious hand, approach with your languid, drunken steps,/ wreathing your brows in a rose garland.]

Instead of noctem discutiens [dispelling darkness] (68), Kyd's Hymen causes brings it as he extinguishes the marriage light. The nuptial god replaces "midday's sun" with blood and

darkness, effectively cursing the alliance between Balthazar and Bel-imperia while working with Senecan inversions. His ominous dousing of the dual torches foreshadows the deaths of the two characters in question, as well as the general bloodshed soon to come. Hymen almost becomes a Fury.

Once its companion and the audience have been informed of the implications of its little drama, Revenge, with Andrea's approval ("Rest thee" (3.15.39)), continues to lie dormant until the very last scene in which Andrea reaches his Senecan potential. Andrea's "Rest thee" replaces Revenge's "Be still," as the ghost grows in strength, control, and vengeance. After Hieronimo's play is acted and he, with his victims, have perished, the surviving characters of the main plot exit the stage, leaving only the "chorus" with their audience to carry on Hieronimo's initiative. Andrea, having watched Hieronimo perform his violence, is now sated with the blood of the victims, resembling Atreus, Clytemnestra, and Medea:

> Ay, now my hopes have end in their effects,
> When blood and sorrow finish my desires:
> Horatio murdered in his father's bower,
> Vile Serberine by Pedringano slain,
> False Pedringano hanged by quaint device,
> Fair Isabella by herself misdone,
> Prince Balthazar by Bel-imperia stabbed,
> The Duke of Castile and his wicked son
> Both done to death by old Hieronimo,
> My Bel-imperia fall'n as Dido fell,
> And good Hieronimo slain by himself—
> Ay, these were spectacles to please my soul. (4.5.1-12)

Andrea still distinguishes between friend and foe, yet the "blood and sorrow" of all were "spectacles to please [his] soul." The death and pain of even Horatio and Bel-imperia are the satisfying effects of his established desire to see destruction, slaughter, and revenge.

The theatricality of all the deaths adds to their "pleasing" effect for the ghost. He becomes like Medea standing before Corinth, only now we the audience play the part of the Corinthians as spectators to the bloodletting:

… voluptas magna me invitam subit,
et ecce crescit. derat hoc unum mihi,
spectator iste. (Med 991-3)

[A great sense of pleasure steals over me unbidden, and it is still growing. This was the one thing I lacked, this spectator.]

The corn of which Revenge speaks in 2.6 has grown to fruition. Andrea stands a full revenger; he talks of "sweet pleasure" (24) and "sweet Revenge" (29), reassigning the adjective once describing his lover (1.1.11). Vengeance is all-consuming. Now Andrea provides an answer to the underworld's judges about where he should be placed in hell. Because of the considerable amount of personal autonomy and passion gained through his rhetorical and revengeful heights, Andrea is free to escort both Horatio to the Martial fields and Bel-imperia and Hieronimo to Elysium, able to wander at will through the divisions of hell. His violent vengeance has broken constraining norms.

Now confident in his power to revenge, Andrea's only questions to Revenge are to determine if his companion can think up more terrible punishments for his enemies. When Revenge acquiesces to assisting in the tortures, Andrea begins a series of exhortations, establishing himself as a judge of the guilty: "Then, sweet Revenge, do this at my request:/ Let me be the judge and doom them to unrest" (4.5.29-30). His desire to judge follows Hieronimo's function as both the dramatist and authority in his own play. Andrea considers himself to have the power to manipulate the punishments of the underworld and to release eternally damned classical sinners in order to replace them with his own adversaries. His punishments are extreme, even distastefully so, and his rhyming couplets are disturbing in the horrors they describe.[95] Rhyme was once used by Andrea to describe his beloved (1.1.10-1), but now his rhetoric and poetry have more sinister purposes. "Name" no longer rhymes with "dame," but "flame." As his violent desires and command of vengeance increase, his rhetoric becomes

95 See ll. 19-20; 23-26; 29-30; 37-44

increasingly tangled in the expression of extremes. Kyd complicates in Andrea the rhetoric of revenge, as well as its powers and benefits, as he does in Hieronimo.

Even though The Spanish Tragedy's "chorus" functions as a framing device, it still exhibits some elements of the Senecan revenge formula followed in the main plot. Within the interactions between Revenge and Don Andrea we see the obvious ghost as well as hyperbole, reconstruction of self, commitment to revenge, and a play-within-a-play. The Spanish Tragedy begins in the underworld's darkness and the confusion of a ghost, and ends with the fury of its revenger, just as Agamemnon starts with opaca (1) and ends in furor (1012). The interplay between this and the main plot emphasizes Hieronimo's ties to the ghost and to a Senecan framework.

The true last word of the play is spoken by Revenge, and it is "tragedy" (4.5.48). Over the course of the The Spanish Tragedy, Revenge encourages, instructs, manipulates, and molds Don Andrea into the revenging ghost of Seneca's plays. It is appropriate then that the allegorical figure has the proverbial "last laugh" of the drama and that this laugh is tragic. Kyd allows Revenge to overflow the bounds of the play, to continue even as the audience members applaud, gather their possessions, and leave the theater. Its laugh, along with the screams of those it punishes, echoes out into the Renaissance tradition. Andrea stands with his companion in the dizzying euphoria of successful revenge, having been transformed from a mildly Senecan mirage to a neoclassical revenging fury. But Andrea is not alone in his metamorphosis: Hieronimo joins him on the passage to revenge.

HIERONIMO'S METAMORPHOSIS

Throughout the play, the ghost follows the lead and progression of his main plot counterpart, growing in his vengeful desires as Hieronimo realizes his own. Along with the prompting from Revenge, observation of Hieronimo's transformation from emotional stability to

Senecan furor encourages Andrea's own development into a raving Senecan figure. Both end The Spanish Tragedy at the full height of their Senecan potential. But while Kyd introduces Andrea as a faintly Senecan ghost, Hieronimo begins the play with none of the qualities seen in Senecan revengers. He in fact embodies their exact opposite: he is calm, in control, responsible, loving, and a willing and even successful participant in the overarching social, political, and legal system of Spain. Andrea has the initial potential to become violently Senecan (he lives with Senecan ghosts, has met the Senecan gods, and is a confederate of Senecan Revenge), although he needs some additional time and attention to reach this point. There is nothing in Hieronimo's initial characterization, however, to indicate that he will become, or even can become, a full-fledged revenger. Kyd chooses to show us first this non-Senecan side of Hieronimo and to establish a character type unseen in the Senecan tragedies in order to make the end of Hieronimo's transfiguration that much more in contrast to its beginning. He gives us a good man turned excessive villain, a much more disturbing characterization than Seneca's bad men (and women) turned worse. Kyd is concerned not only with Hieronimo's Senecan end, but with the development the character must undergo to reach this point. While Act 1's Hieronimo is not even faintly Senecan, by the climax of the play and the production of his own drama, he rivals Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra in his vengeance.

In my analysis of Andrea, I demonstrated his movement from passive observer to active participant in the theatrics of revenge. Each of his appearances brings him and his audience one step closer to the full embodiment of Senecan characteristics and vengeance. The interplay between the frame and main plots reveals similarities between Andrea and Hieronimo which aid an analysis of the characters and their situations. Andrea's progression moves steadily forward, encouraged by Revenge and the growing of revenge in the main plot. The metamorphosis of Hieronimo, however, is not as orderly as Andrea's.

The advantage to a mirroring, reduced frame is that its author is able to eliminate complications and explore the themes of the main plot as simply as possible. The case of Hieronimo offers more of a challenge, and it is one which Kyd meets with even greater success. Hieronimo's transformation is not as consistently forward-moving as Andrea's. In each of his scenes, he does not always stepped perceptively closer to enacting his violent grief. There is more hesitation in him than in Andrea, more uncertainty about what he is to do. But the Knight Marshal still manages to embody every element in the Senecan revenge formula before his death. Horatio's murder is his great personal loss, a loss compounded by his destroyed faith in the social and political status quo. His reconstruction comes through his language shifts and raving. The hesitation displayed by Medea and Clytemnestra is expanded through all of Acts 2 and 3. He addresses himself by name fourteen times, desperately calling forth his Senecan potential. But at the end of The Spanish Tragedy, when a Senecan-minded audience watches Hieronimo take the stage as a violent, metatheatrical, and extreme revenger and expects his triumph, Kyd kills his protagonist. The revenger allowed his emotions to build to Senecan heights but by then keeping them contained and in check for so long, Hieronimo loses his ability to control them, and he self-destructs. Having broken the laws he swore to uphold and having committed the same deeds as his enemies, Hieronimo cannot continue to live as such a paradox.

After Revenge and Andrea take their seats as "the chorus of this tragedy" in Act 1, the king, Castile, a general, and Hieronimo enter to discuss the success of the Spanish army against the Portuguese. This marks a distinct transition from a classical, ghostly, allegorical world to a contemporary political and social system. Kyd jolts his audience away from a Senecan scene to realistic modernity to emphasize the current stability of Hieronimo's world. The shady landscape of Andrea, full of uncertainty and ghosts, gives way to recognizable earthly scenery and reassuring relationships. The Knight Marshal interacts with kings and subjects, upholds justice and the law, loves and defends his family. Yet by the end of the play, his world, with

Andrea's, will become that of Seneca's revengers. Because Kyd desires to show the progression of a revenger, he begins with a neutral foundation. He must establish Hieronimo's character before it is destabilized by the call to and demands of vengeance.

Hieronimo's first line in The Spanish Tragedy shows him to be an active and willing participant in the current system. He engages in military and feudal discourse and relationships in the role of Spain's Knight Marshal. Although Hieronimo is not aware of any irony in his lines, his words come eerily true as Horatio soon dies: "Long may he [Horatio] live to serve my sovereign liege,/ And soon decay unless he serve my liege!" (1.2.98-9). The phrase "serve my liege" is formulaic here, but still rings true; the repetition of the term of allegiance is sincere and binding. Hieronimo is confident in the established system; he believes in it enough to pledge his beloved son to upholding the social and political authority. He loves Horatio more than all else, as proven by his reaction to his son's death, yet he defines his love of his son to the king and company by Horatio's value to the social system:

> That was my son, my gracious sovereign,
> Of whom, though from his tender infancy
> My loving thoughts did never hope but well,
> He never pleased his father's eyes till now,
> Nor filled my heart with overcloying joys. (1.2.116-20)

Although these words are those of a subject attempting to ingratiate himself with the king, for they are indeed hyperbolic and "overcloying," they still demonstrate Hieronimo's trust in the status quo to safeguard and reward him and his son. Such confidence makes his later declarations to surrender his state position (e.g. 3.12.77) and his mistrust in the legal system particularly jarring.

Even if the king were not "just and wise," Hieronimo could still find comfort in "nature" and "law of arms":

> But that I know Your Grace for just and wise,
> And might seem partial in this difference,

Enforced by nature and by law of arms,
My tongue should plead for young Horatio's right. (1.2.166-9)

"Nature" here denotes both blood ties and the natural laws of justice, while "law of arms" represents social norms and the established regulations pertaining to warfare. Hieronimo's legal terminology of "just," "partial," "law," "plead," and "right" indicate that he is acting as a judge, attempting to put aside personal bias for just adjudication. Hieronimo could have taken much greater issue with the inclusion of Lorenzo in the praise and reward for Balthazar's capture but does not because he trusts the king, the law, and the social hierarchy. Horatio, however, is a bit sullen:

LORENZO: This hand first took him courser by the reins.
HORATIO: But first my lance did put him from his horse.
LORENZO: I seized his weapon and enjoyed it first.
HORATIO: But first I forced him lay his weapons down. (1.2.155-8)

LORENZO: I crave no better than Your Grace awards.
HORATIO: Nor I, although I sit beside my right. (1.2.176-7)

Notice that instead of simply stating his role in the capture, Horatio is quick to take a defensive position ("But...But" (1.2.156, 158)), and his "although" of l. 177 does not entirely characterize him as content with the judgment passed. His position is understandable, even defensible, but one that Hieronimo does not uphold because of his faith.

Hieronimo's trust here is still well earned, and the king's pronouncement seems fair and just.[96] He declares, "Then by my judgement thus your strife shall end:/ You both deserve and both shall have reward" (1.2.178-9). Courtly justice is still functioning. Although perhaps some preferential treatment is given to Lorenzo as he is indeed the nephew of the king, Horatio still receives substantial reward and Hieronimo is well satisfied. He remains proud and pleased,

96 See Hallett and Hallett (1980)'s chapter on The Spanish Tragedy for further comments on Kyd's characterization of the king as a good ruler and as God's deputy.

giving no sign of the emotions that characterize Senecan revengers. Of course, there has not yet been an event that calls for vengeance.

In spite of Hieronimo's initial lack of Senecan qualities, glimmers of Seneca still lurk in the background of the first act, ready to leap to the surface when Hieronimo becomes a fit vessel for revenge. Although Senecan extremes are not yet planted in Hieronimo's character, they still lie in wait in his world. We hear the general recounting the Spanish army's success:

> Both raising dreadful clamors to the sky,
> That valleys, hill, and rivers made rebound,
> And heaven itself was frightened with the sound. (1.2.29-31)

This immediately brings to mind the final lines of Jason in Medea:

> testare nullos esse, qua veheris, deos.[97] (1027)

[...bear witness where you ride that there are no gods.]

as well as Atreus' planning of the cannibalistic banquet:

> … et moti Lares
> vertere vultum. (Thy 264-5)

[and the housegods shake and avert their faces]

The Spanish general's words show the same perception of the heavens' reaction to mortal deeds as in Seneca's tragedy. Human action can be such that even the gods retreat. Men can reach extremes so great that they not only offend, but repel supposedly omnipotent watchers. Such language foreshadows Hieronimo's rhetorical bombast and hyperbole of the later acts and his decision to seek his own justice. The words are a Spaniard's, but the sentiments are Seneca's.

Undertones of Senecanism also appear in the first Portuguese scene. The viceroy turns to Senecan Latin to express his extreme grief while mourning Balthazar. Despite the fact that

97 See Eliot, Selected Essays, 59: "It seems to me more effective if we take the meaning to be that there are no gods where (ever) Medea is, instead of a mere outburst of atheism."

Balthazar is actually still alive and well as we just saw, he acts as a father having lost a son, a role that Hieronimo will soon play. Falling to the ground, he laments:

> Qui jacet in terra non habet unde cadat,
> In me consumpsit vires fortuna nocendo,
> Nil superest ut iam possit obesse magis. (1.3.15-7)

[He who lies on the ground can fall no farther. In me, Fortune has exhausted her power of hurting; nothing remains that can harm me anymore.][98]

Line 16 evolves from Agamemnon:

> Fortuna vires ipsa consumpsit suas. (Ag 698)

[Fortune has used up all her resources!]

In the Senecan tragedy, Cassandra conveys her anguish over the fate of Troy and her fellow captives. Her misfortunes are so vast; there can be no greater pain. Like the Trojan princess, the viceroy can conceive of no worse torture, not even death. Experiencing the inexpressible grief over the loss of a child, he turns to Latin and Seneca in a desperate attempt to articulate his emotions, prefiguring Hieronimo's Latin dirge at 2.5.67. His "long aria of grief" is an expression of the "frantic poetry of loss and sense of universal injustice" that soon confuse Hieronimo.[99] Kyd's characters instinctively lapse into the language and sentiments of Seneca in moments of high emotional stress and instability, unleashing the Senecan qualities latent in their selves. When their native language fails to express completely internal emotion, they substitute Seneca's words for their own.

The viceroy is also the first character in the main plot explicitly to mention revenge. Alexandro cites the same societal norms as Hieronimo while arguing that Balthazar still lives. He asserts that killing the prince would be "...a breach to common law of arms" (1.3.47) to which the viceroy replies, "They reck no laws that meditate revenge" (1.3.48). The viceroy's verb,

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98 Translations of the Latin in The Spanish Tragedy are from English Renaissance Drama.

99 Hunter, "Ironies of Justice in The Spanish Tragedy," Renaissance Drama 8 (1965): 95

"meditate," implies internal contemplation and deep study, emphasizing the personal and introspective nature of revenge made clear in Seneca's tragedies as well as foreshadowing the psychological process Hieronimo will undergo throughout the play.[100] The viceroy's statement is highly Senecan, while Alexandro's recalls the legal diction and exact phrasing of Hieronimo in the preceding scene. The nobleman retains faith in the system of social behavior and the rules of warfare, while his lord immediately thinks of revenge, even if not for himself. Compare the viceroy's response to Medea's

> numquam meus cessabit in poenas furor,
> crescetque semper (Med 406-7)

[my rage will never slacken in seeking revenge, but grow ever greater]

and Clytemnestra's

> per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter (Ag 115)

[For crimes the safest path is always through crimes]

a phrase that we will hear again. Although he himself will not become a revenger, as he has no access to those that committed the "crime" and for the obvious reason that his son is alive, the viceroy still articulates a key component of Senecan revenge which will later influence Hieronimo's vengeance. When faced with devastating self-loss and the opportunity for revenge, the laws that initially seemed so reliable to Hieronimo break down and are ineffective. Paradoxically, in order to revenge his son, Hieronimo will knowingly break the social codes he first so valued and protected.

The dumb show put on by Hieronimo and the reactions of its audience in Act 1 scene 4 is also colored in a Senecan light. The Knight Marshal puts on a play that foreshadows his theatrical climax in Act 4. Both plays are allegories, and ones that need explanation. The king's

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100 C.f. Horatio's futile intention to meditate "on dangers past and pleasures to ensue" (2.2.25)

question after the end of Suleiman and Perseda exposes his incomprehension of what he has just seen: "But now what follows for Hieronimo?" (4.4.72). Not only has he failed to see that the actors on the stage are actually dead, the king does not understand the meaning behind the drama. He has a similar response to this first dumb show: "Hieronimo, this masque contents mine eye,/ Although I sound not well the mystery" (1.4.138-9), recalling Revenge's "Here sit we down to see the mystery" (1.1.90). While Andrea and Revenge act as an active and observant audience to the main plot, the king does not have the understanding to interpret what he sees and hears. This is indicative of the current system's failings; the man charged to be the embodiment of justice and social system does not have the capacity to perceive deeper meaning within observed acting or to work out even the simple allegory of Hieronimo's dumb show.

Kyd designs Hieronimo's reward for pleasing his sovereign to further embed his character in the system of feudal allegiance:

> Hieronimo, I drink to thee for this device,
> Which hath pleased both the ambassador and me.
> Pledge me, Hieronimo, if thou love thy king. (1.4.172-4)

The king takes his cup from Horatio (1.4.174.1), pulling both father and son into a ritualistic display of feudal authority. He considers his goodwill to be enough of a reward for a job well done. For now, it is enough, as Hieronimo happily fulfills the legal and societal obligations of his title. He understands what to expect and what to pledge, and he is content to do so.

By showing his audience Hieronimo as the Knight Marshal and loving father before giving the character a reason for vengeance, Kyd establishes a non-Senecan personality successfully working within the current system. Hieronimo trusts and is trusted; he is a valued member of the social and political hierarchy. Content in his position, Hieronimo has confidence in his and the king's ability to safeguard his son. But Kyd does not allow his audience to rest content with the seeming security of the Knight Marshal's situation. The Senecan undertones ominously foreshadow the furor that will emerge in Hieronimo. The viceroy's Latin, his

comments on revenge, and the first masque install the rhetoric, themes, and acting of Seneca's tragedies in the Elizabethan plot. They point to the horrors to come.

Act 2 finds Hieronimo secure and content in his position and peacefully asleep in his bed. But then he is roused from oblivious slumber by Bel-imperia's cries and, soon, the Senecan call to revenge. In this moment and during the discovery that quickly follows, Hieronimo experiences loss like Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra. While Atreus loses a wife and a kingdom, Medea a husband and a home, and Clytemnestra a marriage and a throne, Hieronimo is deprived of his family, his morality, his faith (both in the Christian god and in the social, legal, and political parameters), and all of his personal security. When he stumbles groggily onto the stage, he exhibits an uneasy premonition, very much like Thyestes' subconscious reaction to his meal. Hieronimo exclaims,

> What outcries pluck me from my naked bed,
> And chill my throbbing heart with trembling fear,
> Which never danger yet could daunt before? (2.5.1-3)

while Thyestes groans,

> Mittit luctus signa futuri
> mens ante sui praesaga mali:
> instat nautis fera temptestas,
> cum sine vento tranquilla tument. (Thy 957-60)

[Signs of grief to come are sent/ by the mind, foreboding its own misfortune:/ sailors are threatened by a savage storm/ when a calm sea heaves without any wind.]

Even without encountering the actual corpse, Hieronimo senses that something horrible has happened. Yet his foreboding, like that of Thyestes, cannot prepare him for what he is about to discover.

When he sees the "spectacle," however, Hieronimo is more concerned with the perversion of his garden than for the dead man. The Knight Marshal and the ghost are the only characters in The Spanish Tragedy to use the word "spectacle,"[101] always in connection to

101 Hieronimo at 2.5.9, 4.4.89, and 4.4.113; Andrea at 4.5.12

corpses, and specifically, Horatio. But for the moment, there is still a detachment between the father and the dead son. The hanged corpse is something to be observed, but not necessarily interacted with:

> But stay, what murd'rous spectacle is this?
> A man hanged up and all the murderers gone,
> And in my bower, to lay the guilt on me?
> This place was made for pleasure, not for death. (2.5.9-12)

Hieronimo's consideration is still with himself; he worries that since this man was killed on his property, he will be blamed. He is upset, even annoyed that his pleasantly landscaped pleasure garden has been stained with the actions of murderers. But Hieronimo soon realizes that this spectacle is more personal, as he walks over to cut down the body.

Horatio's body is recognized not by his face, but by his clothing. That Hieronimo uses physical evidence to make an identification befits his position in the legal system. As a judge, he relies on the presentation of evidence to form conclusions and pass judgements. But legal objectivity disintegrates when Hieronimo makes the connection between garments and person. The seven "Oh"s beginning his lines are indicative of his extreme emotional distress. Instead of immediately looking upwards for divine assistance, Hieronimo places himself in a classical, Senecan world, populated by "savage monster[s]" (19), "bloody corpse[s]" (21), and the "dark and dreadful shades" (22) like Thyestes' Tantalus (detestabilis/ umbra [loathsome shade] (Thy 23-4). His lament "O earth, why didst thou not in time devour/ The vile profaner of his sacred bower?" (2.5.26-7), recalls Oedipus' Dehisce, tellus [Split open, Earth!] (Oed 868). Just as Oedipus expects and demands a natural response to so great a perversion, in his case the fulfillment of his prophecy, Hieronimo does not understand why the entire world has not been affected by the death of Horatio when his woes are so great that their "weight hath wearièd the earth" (3.7.2).

In his confusion and grief, Hieronimo lapses into rhyming couplets at l. 24.[102] Before Horatio's murder, Hieronimo never rhymed. But now he does so unconsciously. Like the viceroy's sudden Latin, and Hieronimo's own Latin dirge soon to follow, the rhyming indicates language's inability to express fully what a victim is experiencing. With words unable to convey emotion, the victims fall into patterns and "sundry languages" in the hopes that a new form of communication will come closer to expressing the inexpressible. When commenting on Hieronimo's trite rhyming in his soliloquy at 3.2.7-11, Steven Justice remarks that the couplets "poke awkwardly out of Kyd's blank verse and emphasize the "hobbled language" of the lines.[103] They do so here as well. It should strike any audience as odd that a man who has just discovered the body of his beloved son hanging on his property would start rhyming in couplets. Such poetry is more suited for talk of love, as in Balthazar's silly smitten speech at 2.1.9-28.

But Hieronimo uses his rhyming to declare his intent to revenge, instead of frivolous sweet nothings:

> See'st thou this handkercher besmeared with blood?
> It shall not from me till I take revenge.
> See'st thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?
> I'll not entomb them till I have revenged.
> Then will I joy admidst my discontent;
> Till then my sorrow never shall be spent. (2.5.51-6)

Still a judge, Hieronimo shows the marks of murder to Isabella, presenting physical evidence that calls for retributive action. Evidence X equals action Y. Blood equals revenge. Line 55 shows Hieronimo to be using the act of revenge as an attempted replacement for Horatio. He had called his son, "my joy...my sweet boy" (2.5.32-3) just before his statement of vengeance and now asserts that revenge will cause him new joy in the midst of his despair. Vengeance designed to

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102 Rhyming couplets occur in this scene at ll. 24-34; 36-7; 40-1; 47-8; 55-6; 62-3; 65-6

103 Steven Justice, "Spain, Tragedy, and The Spanish Tragedy," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 25 (1985): 282

reconstruct the self is also attempted by Seneca's revengers; they too feel that "in revenge my heart would find some relief" (2.5.41).

Isabella is partially consoled by the justice of the heavens (2.5.57), but Hieronimo finds no such comfort. Instead of passively allowing himself to mourn his son, he urges active concealment of his and Isabella's true grief. He must be considering the extremes to which he will go for adequate justice. The temporary dissembling of emotion is not an expected or appropriate response unless Hieronimo intends to act in the channels of Senecan vengeance and become like the Atreus Revenge urges Andrea to be:

> cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi—
> tamen tegatur. (Thy 504-5)

[When anger senses blood, it knows no concealment. But concealed it must be.]

Brief concealment of furor is necessary for the completion of Senecan revenge, and Kyd quiets Hieronimo accordingly.

While dragging his son's body offstage, Hieronimo bursts into a spoken Latin dirge, using the language as a tool in his attempt to communicate his loss. His use of Latin imitates that of the viceroy and gives his lamentation a solemnity, formality, and weight. His emotional distress is so great that it cannot be expressed in the "vulgar tongue." His hyperbolic intentions to gather herbs and drink the draughts prepared by a sorceress very much like Medea demonstrate his growing commitment to revenge. He cries,

> Omnia perpetiar, lethum quoque, dum semel omnis
> Noster in extincto moriatur pectore sensus. (2.5.74-5)

[I will attempt all things, even death, until all feeling dies at once in my dead heart.]

The declaration of omnia prefigures the extremes to which Hieronimo will go to feel satisfied in his justice. The sudden influx of Latin must have surprised Kyd's audience, even if they understood the language. We have already heard a little of the ancient tongue, but this dirge is five times longer than the three lined lamentation of the viceroy (1.3.15-7) as befits the grief of a

father standing over the physical body of his son. But the momentary disorientation of the audience is deliberate as Kyd causes his viewers to feel briefly something akin to what Hieronimo is experiencing. Command and understanding of language fleetingly escape us, as selfhood and security slip through Hieronimo's fingers.

Within this scene we have witnessed the start of Kyd's fashioning of Hieronimo's progression in the Senecan revenge formula. The death of Horatio is the devastating loss akin to those experienced by Seneca's revengers. Hieronimo has not only lost a son, but his vita [life] (2.5.76) and self-possession. When he echoes Oedipus at 2.5.26 and commands the earth to split, he is beginning to take on the hyperbolic rhetoric of Seneca's characters, the oratorial passion in response to the deprivation of self.[104] Replacing the joy of his son with the joy of revenge signifies an attempt to reconstruct his self and his destroyed world. Hieronimo also explicitly declares his intent for vengeance, but does not yet wholeheartedly consign himself to abandoning the morality he upholds in order to achieve his goals. His Latin dirge hints at the extremes he will soon take, but Kyd holds him back from fully committing to Senecan revenge, choosing progression over instant transformation. As the play continues, Hieronimo begins his metamorphosis from a old man in his nightclothes to a raving, raging, ravenous revenger. The experience of self-loss enters the world as the responsive action of revenge.[105]

The death of Horatio brings on acute isolation and detachment, as Hieronimo sequesters himself to "meditate revenge." After the discovery, the old man has no other scene with Isabella, the only person who might understand his grief, for she too has lost her son. He is not even present at her suicide, presumably hearing of her death secondhand from a maidservant or

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104 Kevin Dunn, "'Action, Passion, Motion': The Gestural Politics of Counsel in The Spanish Tragedy," Renaissance Drama, New Series 31 (2002): 47

105 Scott McMillin, "The Book of Seneca in The Spanish Tragedy," Studies in English Literature 14 (2) (1974): 206

passer-by. Kyd distinctly separates husband and wife to emphasize Hieronimo's increasingly consuming solitude. Like the Senecan revengers, he has no one to trust, no one in whom to confide. The loss of Horatio brings with it the loss of his wife, a bereavement first of intimacy between the couple and then of life when Isabella kills herself. And with that loss comes a deterioration of Hieronimo's faith in the norms which he initially so trusted. His next soliloquy after discovering Horatio's body makes this degeneration clear:

> O sacred heavens, if this unhallowed deed,
> If this inhuman and barbarous attempt,
> If this incomparable murder thus
> Of mine— but now no more— my son
> Shall unrevealed and unrevenged pass,
> How should we term your dealings to be just,
> If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust? (3.2.5-11)

Hieronimo appeals to the heavens, but with a defeatist and aggrieved tone. He does not understand why God and justice have not protected a man who has served them his entire life. The rhyme of "just" and "trust" is an attempt to establish structure where there is none. By pairing words that sounds the same, Hieronimo desperately tries to create a repeatable pattern to make up for the heavens' lack of justice, but it is no use. The system has abandoned him; he is alone and without an ally. He is becoming a revenger.

While he is pushed further into isolation, Senecan spirits begin to whisper in his ear. The Furies and ghosts of Seneca's plays float above Hieronimo, invisible to the Knight Marshal, but infecting him nonetheless:

> The ugly fiends do sally forth of hell,
> And frame my steps to unfrequented paths,
> And fear my heart with fierce inflamèd thoughts.
> …
> Eyes, life, world, heavens, hell, night, and day
> See, search, show, send, some man, some mean, that may—(3.2.16-18; 22-3)

Considering the Senecan coloring of the text we have already revealed, whom could Kyd be conjuring but Thyestes' Fury and Senecan ghosts? Andrea and Revenge too are part of these

"ugly fiends" as their presence on stage literally frames Hieronimo's "steps to unfrequented paths." Their veiled influence inspires Hieronimo to cast his net of appeal to more than just the heavens. He invokes "eyes, life, world, heavens, hell, night, and day" in an all-inclusive cry for help. He is willing to take assistance by any means available. The heavens have not answered, so even hell must be asked. The increasing scope of Hieronimo's appeal follows his rhetorical development into a Senecan revenger. He includes the entire world in his grief. Note too the joining of polarities in "heavens, hell" and "night, and day," as Hieronimo follows Senecan speech patterns.

At l. 37, Hieronimo addresses himself for the first time. This is one of the elements of the Senecan formula and one which Kyd certainly does not neglect to supply. With the information delivered by Bel-imperia's bloody note, Hieronimo has definitive proof of Lorenzo's involvement, although he still retains enough connection to the legal system not to trust it immediately. The letter is physical evidence, but such extreme charges are not yet substantiated. Instead of directly taking action, he warns himself, "Hieronimo, beware" (3.2.37). His self-address serves the same function here as it does in the Senecan plays; it internalizes the rhetoric and simultaneously constructs a new self. He must move away from his old identity as the Knight Marshal to his new identity as a revenger. But his personal warning demonstrates that he still has feelings of self-preservation for his revenge has not yet been fulfilled. Having already resolved against suicide at 2.5.79-80, he does so once again:

> Dear was the life of my belovèd son,
> And of his death behooves me be revenged;
> Then hazard not thine own, Hieronimo,
> But live t'effect thy resolution. (3.2.44-7)

Vengeance is cause enough to stay alive in the face of insurmountable personal grief and self-destabilization. If he were to take his own life, the murder of Horatio and his own resulting inability to remain content within the established system would "unreavealed and unrevenged

pass" (3.2.9). He again turns away from suicide at 3.12.1-24 following the same mental process of commitment.

Hieronimo realizes that suicide is a means of preservation, not restoration. He could prevent further sadness and future pain and preserve what little self he has left, but would never again be secure or content. Having certainly read Troades, as his quotation at 3.13.12-3 demonstrates, Hieronimo is familiar with the beautiful and haunting chorus of ll. 371-408. The Trojan women ask themselves what happens after death and conclude that post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil [After death is nothing, and death itself is nothing] (Tro 397). To the Trojans, suicide is an end of suffering, but termination is their only intention; they do not seek to revenge themselves and their city on their captors. Even if Hieronimo retains some faith in a Christian, or even pagan, afterlife, such Senecan sentiment cast doubts on his ability to achieve anything after death and he has much to do. We must remember that Hieronimo is ignorant of the presence and purpose of Don Andrea. Therefore, he must work his revenge in this life; he must achieve his goals now. Killing himself would leave Lorenzo, Balthazar, and the rest unpunished for their crimes. Like Seneca's revengers, he must complete his retribution.

By now, Hieronimo is well on the path to Senecan revenge. He has experienced extreme self-loss. He has used rhetoric to attempt reconstruction, only to fail. He has addressed himself by name and will do so again thirteen more times,[106] separating his past and present selves, working himself up to the deeds he is going to commit. He turns away from suicide three times, realizing that his death would not achieve his intentions.[107] Hieronimo has also shown a reluctance to commit to violent action, partially as a result of his connection to the system of the Spanish court but also as a Kydian development of the Senecan hesitation existing in Medea and

106 Hieronimo's self-address occurs at 3.2.37, 46; 3.12.6, 12; 3.13.4, 16, 39, 95, 102, 106; 4.3.21, 27, 29; 4.4.83

107 See above: 2.5.79-80; 3.2.44-7; 3.12.1-24

Clytemnestra. Just as the women cannot move immediately from hurt to vengeance, neither can Hieronimo. He still needs more time to complete his metamorphosis and enact his theatrical revenge and reveal.

In Chapter I, I discussed the Senecan revengers' declaration to surpass past crimes in order to complete thoroughly and enjoy their own revenge. Kyd's character, unlike Seneca's, has no past evils to fall back upon and makes no statement of intended excess. But he, unlike Senecan revengers, does not need to do so. By first establishing Hieronimo as the good, loyal, and faithful Knight Marshal, Kyd replaces the Senecan declaration of excess with his protagonist's simple statement that "in revenge my heart would find some relief" (2.5.41). This sentiment is obviously repeated and expanded on throughout the play, but its first instance is enough to convince the audience that Hieronimo is becoming a Senecan revenger. Because of his deep connection to the legal system and social hierarchy which would forbid seeking revenge especially on aristocrats such as Lorenzo and Balthazar,[108] merely a statement of revenge means Hieronimo is abandoning an essential part of his character and morality to turn to Senecan violence. When Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra say they wish to exceed what has gone before, they mean that they are abandoning all sense of common decency and that they will surpass the wrongs done to them. Hieronimo has precisely the same intention. No one could argue that his bloody play is by any means less horrible than the original murder. Four will die, five if Hieronimo is to be included here, instead of one.

In order to reach this point, Hieronimo must fully abandon his connection to the mortal justice system, which he almost achieves in his interactions with and sentencing of Pedringano. The king's following failure to intervene in the matter of Horatio's death completes Hieronimo's commitment to his cause of vengeance. When called upon to judge Pedringano for the murder of

108 As they are men who have the authority to "draw/ [his] life in question and [his] name in hate" (3.2.42-3)

Serberine, he is unable to focus on the case at hand, unable to differentiate the victim in the trial from the victim who was his son. Confused, disoriented, and watching the gallows which remind him of his son's death in the bower,[109] he remarks,

> Thus must we toil in other men's extremes,
> That know not how to remedy our own,
> And do them justice, when unjustly we,
> For all our wrongs, can compass no redress. (3.6.1-4)

Having lost everything important to him, Hieronimo gambles his remaining stability and rationality on his ability to enforce the justice and success of Spain's legal system. The death of Horatio destroys Hieronimo's conception of his self, and in order to fill this vacuum he turns to the judgment of "other men's extremes." Although the legal system which he is at this very moment embodying as judge unjustly provides no help to him, he thinks that perhaps he can achieve justice for others. While attempting to adjudicate Pedringano's guilt fairly, he cannot forget that "neither gods nor men be just to me" (3.6.10). Such piteous sentiments are repeated throughout the scene, notably at 3.6.37 and 99. He is desperate in his appeals but to no avail. His extreme frustration has a kind of poetry:

> Yet still tormented is my tortured soul
> With broken signs and restless passions,
> That, wingèd, mount, and, hovering in the air,
> Beat at the windows of the brightest heavens,
> Soliciting for justice and revenge. (3.7.10-4)

Hieronimo becomes a broken bird, helplessly fluttering at windows. But now he is admitting that he is not only seeking justice, but revenge. Soon he will abandon all hope of external justice, instead only trusting himself with retribution. The injured bird will solicit not longer, but act.

Once he reads Pedringano's postmortem note which substantiates Bel-imperia's previous letter, Hieronimo's rhetoric climbs to Senecan extremes as befits the verification of his

109 "This makes me to remember thee, my son." (3.6.101)

suspicions. Compounding the disturbing confirmation of previous evidence is Hieronimo's realization that he has ordered the execution of an underling, not the man truly responsible for Horatio's murder. Pedringano was merely "an actor in this accursèd tragedy" (3.7.44), not its director. Hieronimo has failed as a good judge. He has utterly lost the gamble he took by attempting to preside over this case for stable footing. Now no semblance of his past security remains intact and Hieronimo is driven to Senecan extremes:

> Woe to the cause of these constrainèd wars,
> Woe to thy baseness and captivity,
> Woe to thy birth thy body and thy soul,
> Thy cursèd father, and thy conquered self!
> And banned with bitter execrations be
> The day and place where he did pity thee!
> But wherefore waste I mine unfruitful words,
> When naught but blood will satisfy my woes? (3.7.61-8)

The repetition of "woe to" turns Hieronimo's words into a curse, not only against Balthazar and Lorenzo, but also directed towards the viceroy of Portugal who had no hand in these events. Hieronimo is expanding his wrath to include all around him, for there is increasingly no limit to his revenge. As Clytemnestra curses poor Cassandra, so Hieronimo rages against the viceroy. All the revengers display the same inability to appoint blame rationally, and the people and environment around them get pulled into the vengeance. Within this speech, Hieronimo escalates the recipients of his cursing from war to cowardice to birth to body to soul to father and, finally, to self. His attention to Balthazar's self originates from Hieronimo's concerns about the integrity of his own self. He curses the part of his enemy that has been challenged in himself. But even having reached the heights of Senecan rhetoric, he, for the last time, pulls himself back into the social hierarchy.

The audience might think that the call for blood at 3.7.68 is a final, decisive commitment to revenge, but it is quickly followed by

> I will go plain me to my lord the King
> And cry aloud for justice through the court,

Wearing the flints with these my withered feet,
And either purchase justice by entreats
Or tire them all with my revenging threats. (3.7.69-73)

Hieronimo will make one more desperate attempt to validate the king, the court, and the law. But there is also a threat undercutting these lines. He vows to get justice or "tire them all with my revenging threats," playing on two meanings of "tire." The first is obviously "to wear out, to weary," but the second, more ominous definition is "to prey or feed upon."[110] If Kyd intended only the primary definition, the created contrast between ultimate success and mere annoyance would be unbalanced. This "either...or" is presenting opposing outcomes, making Hieronimo's conviction that much more threatening and dangerous. Both potentialities of Hieronimo's appeal are contained in this word, and he sets out to see which will prevail. The double meaning presages Hieronimo's future pun of "I'll fit you" to Balthazar (4.1.70) as well as recalling Thyestes' delighted rhetorical wordplay. When the Senecan character declares his intent to make sacrifices (destinatas victimas [designated victims] (Thy 545)), for example, the intended offering are not the animals of Roman religious formulae, but the sons of Thyestes. Both senses of victimas simultaneously remain, as does the double meaning of Hieronimo's "tire."

On his way to test once more the validity of Spain's justice, Hieronimo interacts with some Portuguese visitors and seemingly becomes "passing lunatic" (3.11.33), his raving a result of his preceding lost legal confidence. His intended confrontation with the king is merely a formality in the formation of his revenge; Hieronimo knows, though will not admit, that this attempt will be futile and his madness reflects his desperation. Kevin Dunn notes, "Possessing the power of office but lacking sovereignty, needing to act on his affections but without the legitimacy to do so, Hieronimo runs mad."[111] He should be able to obtain justice; he should be

110 See OED tire, v.1 and v.2

111 Dunn, "Gestural Politics," 47

able to make a successful appeal in the courts of law and to his social betters. But he cannot, and the failure drives him to the brink of insanity. Hieronimo deliriously raves about "a forest of distrust and fear" (3.11.16), "a darksome and dangerous place" (17), "despair and death" (20), "the world's iniquities" (23), "filthy and detested fumes" (24), "cursèd souls" (26), "sulfur flame" (28), and "boiling lead and the blood of innocents" (30), as his world becomes overwhelmingly dark and ominous. His extreme imagery and violent language produce a nervous reaction in the Portuguese which Hieronimo uncomfortably echoes:

> FIRST PORTUGUESE: Ha, ha, ha!
> HIERONIMO: Ha, ha, ha!
> Why, ha, ha, ha! Farewell, good, ha, ha, ha! (3.11.31-2)

His laughter is unsettling. The madness Hieronimo displays here is largely unconscious. We have seen him vow to dissemble his grief and rage like Seneca's revengers.[112] He knows that to get close to the king and to those against whom he wishes to carry out revenge, he must retain at least some pretense of rationality and calm. But he is simultaneously getting caught up in Senecan rhetoric, in his immense pain and self-loss. Although he does not mean to, Hieronimo creates the decoy self identified by Braden, which allows him to face those who have committed wrongs against him. The madness, the lunacy, the senile behavior, as well as the opposing disguise of rationality, mask a "new and more powerful self, speaking with the voice of Senecan rage..."[113] Hieronimo's outward appearances of composure and madness shown to the court and the Portuguese are facades over his Senecan furor and ultio.

I do not believe, however, that Hieronimo is creating a potential defense of "innocent by insanity," pretending to be mad for a specific legal purpose. Although he initially turns away from suicide, I do not find any evidence that he expects to survive his revenge long enough to be

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112 C.f. especially Thy 504-5: cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi—/ tamen tegatur [When anger senses blood, it knows no concealment. But concealed it must be.]

113 Braden, Anger's Privilege, 205

tried once he fixates on this course. His self-casting as the bashaw who hangs himself (4.1.129-30) proves that he associates his death with the end of his plot.[114] Although his madness is a somewhat conscious disguise, it is more of a reflection of his imagination's obsession with revenge and Senecan action. Such internal turmoil will invariably force its way out into the external world.[115]

The mad behavior continues as Hieronimo works himself up to confront the king. Within his small soliloquy of 24 lines, he addresses himself directly three times. The "sir" of his first line is not only to "an imagined listener,"[116] but to himself as well. Examine his words:

> Now, sir, perhaps I come and see the King;
> The King sees me, and fain would hear my suit.
> Why, is not this a strange and seld-seen thing,
> That standers-by with toys should strike me mute?
> Go to, I see their shifts, and say no more.
> Hieronimo, 'tis time for thee to trudge.
> Down by the dale that flows with purple gore
> Standeth a fiery tower; there sits a judge
> Upon a seat of steel and molten brass,
> And 'twixt his teeth he holds a firebrand
> That leads unto the lake where hell doth stand.
> Turn down this path, thou shalt be with him straight.
> Or this, and then thou need'st not take thy breath.
> This way, or that way? Soft and fair, not so;
> For if I hand or kill myself, let's know
> Who will revenge Horatio's murder then? (3.12.1-16)

Hieronimo moves from rational doubt about the success of his appeal to the depths of the Senecan underworld described by Andrea. He now fluctuates between the two realms, so connected to his son that he has one foot in the grave but also so committed to seeking revenge that he cannot die. No longer does he contemplate imploring a Christian or mortal judge for aid;

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114 He does not only assume the part, but finds it to be an obvious casting:

> BALTHAZAR: But which of us is to perform that part?
> HIERONIMO: Oh, that will I, my lords, make no doubt of it…
> ...For I have already conceited that. (4.1.131-4)

115 Hallett and Hallet, Revenger's Madness, 149

116 English Renaissance Drama note to 3.12.1

he turns to Pluto in his "fiery tower." The language of these lines also reflects Hieronimo's deterioration. The rhyming that was an attempt to restore some order now disintegrates. The rhyme scheme of this passage is ABABCDCDEFFGHIHJJ, a jumbled and confused pattern, no longer restoring order but complicating rhetorical chaos.

Hieronimo's confrontation of the king is as useless as he feared. His sovereign remains uncomprehending, even obtuse. With the mention of the ransom due to Horatio, Hieronimo almost screams for help, "Justice, oh, justice, justice, gentle King!" (3.12.63) to which the king responds with a surprised and simpleminded, "Who is that? Hieronimo?" (3.12.64). If he had been paying attention as a just lord should, he would have known Hieronimo was in the room and would have been aware of his distress and the death of Horatio. Instead, he does not notice or perhaps even care, and allows Lorenzo to bully Hieronimo off the stage, accepting his nephew's ludicrous explanation of jealousy to explain Hieronimo's actions. But before the old man exits, the Knight Marshal becomes Knight Marshal no longer. He renounces his title at l. 76 for all remnants of the social and legal system which could have offered justice have collapsed. All security crumbles and Hieronimo readies himself for his most important speech of revenge in The Spanish Tragedy.

Hieronimo renters the stage at 3.13.1 with a book in his hand. This book has been described both as a volume of Seneca's tragedies and Hieronimo's own commonplace book in which he has written passages relevant to his case.[117] I am inclined to believe that the later assumption is correct, for these passages are by no means arbitrary. If this were a collection of Senecan tragedies, Hieronimo, in his distraught state, would likely be opening the pages at random, quoting the relevant lines he comes to first. Yet the Latin quoted from Oedipus at

117 For analysis supporting the first theory see e.g. McMillon (1974), for the second, see e.g. Dunn, "Gestural Politics." McMillin's article "The Book of Seneca in The Spanish Tragedy" is particularly useful while examining the "Vindicta mihi" speech.

3.13.35 is not in Seneca's exact word order.[118] If Hieronimo were quoting from a printed collection of Senecan texts or even a Latin grammar, he would have almost certainly recited the line as it appears in the original Latin. Instead, he molds it into his own meter and syntax, taking authoritative and authorial control over Seneca's words. This manipulation of the Senecan Latin suggests not only that Hieronimo has written down his own copy of the quotations, but that Kyd's protagonist is actively engaging with the Senecan text. Hieronimo is not just quoting Seneca; he has written down the lines, physicalizing verbal support. He needs to see the text, to read it, not just to hear it.

Scholarship has always been divided over this speech. Some critics, like Peter Mercer, Empson, and Braden, believe Hieronimo's Senecan quotations to be "off the point" and "to no obvious purpose," that "for Hieronimo, and perhaps for Kyd too, one bit of Seneca does as well as another." [119] Others, like Boyle and Scott McMillin, believe Kyd fashions a method from the madness. I am convinced that both the actual Latin lines chosen by Kyd and Hieronimo's use of them hold special importance to the text as a whole. McMillin correctly observes: "Literally, the quotations are wrenched form their original meaning, for they do not bear upon revenge. Beneath the distorted language, however, in three examples of action turning to self-destruction, Hieronimo recognizes a radical similarity to his own situation."[120] Everything we have seen so far in the fashioning of revenge has pointed towards Kyd's awareness of and involvement with

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118 C.f. Hieronimo's remedium malorum iners est (3.13.35) to Seneca's iners malorum remedium ignorantia est (Oed 515)

119 Empson, "ST (I)," 35; Braden, Anger's Privilege, 173; Mercer, Acting of Revenge, 50. McMillin, however, surprisingly claims that "only one critic [Empson] has grasped the most surprising point of the speech...that Hieronimo cannot read Seneca correctly." ("Book of Seneca," 201). He is correct in his statement that Empson does identify the apparent flaws in Hieronimo's logic, but Empson is dismissive of the point and goes not further in determining Kyd's purpose.

120 McMillin, "Book of Seneca," 207

the Senecan formula. To attempt to identify a break with the Senecan tradition now would be a failure to acknowledge Kyd's consistent application of Senecan texts and psychology.

Hieronimo begins with Vindicta mihi! (3.13.1), a Biblical phrase from Romans 12:19. Hieronimo is not quoting this verse, however, but claiming it. Vengeance is no longer the Lord's, but Hieronimo's. These are not only God's words he holds in his hands, but Seneca's. With the Latin comes the declaration, "I will revenge his death!" (3.13.20), as Hieronimo seizes increased agency. He moves on from defying Christian doctrine to managing classical Senecan quotations. The first comes from Agamemnon 115. Clytemnestra remarks:

> Per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter. (3.13.6)

Hieronimo loosely translates the line into "Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offered thee" (3.13.8). Compare this to Fitch's translation, "For crimes the safest path is always through crimes." Hieronimo's "translation" is incorrect; nothing in the Latin serves as an exhortation to violence. But by manipulating the original intent of the lines, Hieronimo fashions himself as an increasingly independent author, readying himself for the challenge of directing his own drama. The next Senecan line is Andromache's from Troades ll. 510-2:

> Fata si miseros juvant, habes salutem;
> Fata si vitam negant, habes sepulchrum. (3.13.12-3)

Andromache is literally burying her son alive, and to include her lament here appears nonsensical. Yet again Hieronimo is appropriating Seneca's Latin for his own purposes. Andromache speaks to her son, but Hieronimo addresses himself. His son is dead; the tomb is now his own. The "health" (salutem) Hieronimo describes is not physical fitness but success in his venture.

The third quotation from Oedipus (515) is also odd, as Hieronimo is talking about his own feigned ignorance, instead of the expected ignorance of his victims. This line, however, is the most manipulated of the three Senecan quotes, as discussed above, and it is the only one not

translated. Hieronimo does not determine an English rendering necessary because the quotation has become fully his own, rendered in English iambic pentameter and fitting his line. All these oddities and confusions would cause significant textual problems if we could not be sure that Kyd, and with him Hieronimo, chose these lines for a specific reason. McMillin makes the excellent observation that all these Senecan quotations share a concern with safety and preservation.[121] Clytemnestra recklessly refuses to believe in safe strategies, Andromache seeks protection, Oedipus worries about the well-being of his people. Caught up in all of this is an interest in self-preservation, one which the old man recognizes, articulates, and then ultimately, after his drama has been performed, rejects. Hieronimo's engagement with the Latin demonstrates his own, and thus Kyd's, significant concerns of textual dominance and possession. Like his character, Kyd appropriates the Senecan text, as he allows his protagonist increasing dramatic authority and insight into revenge. The Elizabethan playwright is taking a framework begun by Seneca and using, expanding, and molding it to suit the scope of his own work.

Before this soliloquy, rhetorical shifts into Latin in The Spanish Tragedy signified an inability to express extreme emotion. Characters used the ancient language in the hopes that it could convey what they feel but cannot articulate in their native tongue. Here Hieronimo uses Latin in the same way to some extent, but now translates the quotations back into English, reshaping Seneca's words to suit his purpose. His transition from English to Latin and back to English again is an assertion of rhetorical power. He gains strength and confidence from his mastery over language.

Alongside Hieronimo's preoccupation with self-security comes an acknowledgement that his rhetoric is becoming frenzied and hyperbolic, that it is becoming the words of Seneca. He realizes that he must hold on to sanity and rationality for just a few scenes longer in order to

121 McMillin, "Book of Seneca," 204ff.

achieve his vengeance. As in his first instance of self-address (3.2.37), Hieronimo again cautions himself:

> No, no, Hieronimo, thou must enjoin
> Thine eyes to observation, and thy tongue
> To milder speeches than thy spirit affords,
> Thy heart to patience, and thy hands to rest,
> Thy cap to curtsey, and thy knee to bow,
> Till to revenge thou know when, where, and how. (3.13.39-44)

This decision is enacted by his feigned reconciliation with Lorenzo and Balthazar that so worries Andrea in 3.14. Hieronimo plays his part well, as he becomes his own playwright and "author and actor in this tragedy" (4.4.146).

At the climax of his decision to revenge his son in proper time, a servant intrudes, bearing with him a reminder of Hieronimo's old faith and involvement in the courts of Spain. Once again the Knight Marshal is required to act in the legal system, and once again he cannot complete his duty. This time, however, as opposed to Pedringano's trial, he does not actually attempt to see justice served, but merely pretends to involve himself as to not raise premature suspicions. He consciously assumes a facade of his old legal persona:

> [Aside] Now I must bear a face of gravity,
> For thus I used, before my marshalship,
> To plead in causes as corregidor. (3.13.56-8)

"Bear a face" carries the same meaning as "wear a mask," while Hieronimo plays the feigned role of advocate. Yet even as he assumes that mask, he cannot entirely contain his preoccupation with his own situation. He immediately assumes that the petitioners come to him because they have suffered physical harm ("battery" (3.13.60); violence has become a norm to be expected in his world. Similarly, Hieronimo demands from the claimants actual blood if they wish to seek redress for the destruction of their papers: "I never gave it a wound./ Show me one drop of blood fall from the same./ How is it possible I should slay it, then?" (3.13.129-31). Nothing matters now to Hieronimo except blood.

As he accepts their suits, Hieronimo catches sight of a mirror. This living mirror is the "silly man so mute" (3.13.77), whose own struggles so closely resemble Hieronimo's. The Knight Marshal's interactions with Bazulto allow him to come face-to-face with his own condition. He sees the physical and mental effect the death of a son can have on a father, and this destabilizing recognition prompts hallucinations and delirium. Hieronimo calls Bazulto "the lively portrait of my dying self" (3.13.85), not only perceiving the similarities between himself and the don, but also admitting that the murder of his son is leading to his own death.

Like Hieronimo and the Portuguese viceroy, Bazulto cannot accurately express his condition in speech. While the two other grieving fathers initially turn to Latin to convey their grief, the "meaner wit" (3.13.100) uses text. The viceroy draws on Latin speech, Bazulto relies on written English, but Hieronimo eventually attempts to work with both modes of expression. His "Vindicta mihi" soliloquy combines verbal and textual elements of communication. His upcoming play does the same, as the king and Castile both hear the lines on stage and hold the playbook in their hands.

Hieronimo has so compulsively internalized and released his grief and turmoil that they break forth in visual hallucinations once they recognize a kindred spirit. The face of Bazulto becomes Horatio's, and Hieronimo truly believes he is speaking with his son. But once the spell is broken, he views Bazulto as a Senecan Fury, and as an educated reader, he knows what the appearance of Erinyes signifies:

> What, not my son? Thou, then a Fury art,
> Sent from the empty kingdom of black night
> To summon me to make appearance
> Before grim Minos and just Rhadamanth,
> To plague Hieronimo, that is remiss
> And seeks not revenge for Horatio's death. (3.13.153-8)

In Hieronimo's delusion, a sad old man transforms into fire-wielding, snake adorned personification of furor given the mission of plaguing his soul. And when the Furies appear, they

must be obeyed. As Hieronimo has learned from his Senecan texts, a Fury invariably succeeds in her mission to spark revenge. He now gives in to the vision and his anguish, and finally we come to the climax of both the Senecan revenge formula and Hieronimo's progression of vengeance: the theatrical deaths and subsequent reveal.

Just as Senecan characters view revenge as spectacle and performance, so does Hieronimo in the enactment of his desired revenge. Having determined to stage a play, Hieronimo brings together his cast and distributes the roles in which they are to die. Although Balthazar suggests producing another play for the court's amusement, Hieronimo has anticipated the request. Given the success of his last dumb show and the arrival of the viceroy and members of the Portuguese court, he expects another call for entertainment. The staging of Suleiman and Perseda is premeditated, as indicated by Hieronimo telling Bel-imperia that "the plot's already in mine head" (4.1.51). With the plot thought out, the actors gathered, and the characters cast, the Knight Marshal transforms into a commanding author and "poet-revenger."[122]

Hieronimo again shows us a book. There is no way to tell definitively if this is the same volume as he reads from in the "Vindicta mihi" soliloquy. Kyd does not comment in the stage directions, and as far as I am aware, no critic has yet suggested or championed this point. But I am inclined to believe that this is indeed that same commonplace book that holds Hieronimo's handwritten Senecan notes. His readings of Seneca and other revengers accompany him through his revenge, like the ever-present blood-stained scarf, passed from Bel-imperia to Don Andrea to Horatio to his father. Although Senecan qualities did not characterize Hieronimo in the beginning of the tragedy, he still had access to them. He claims to have written this play at university but it is so perfect for the task at hand that one wonders whether it was especially composed or manipulated for this moment.

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122 McMillin, "Book of Seneca," 208

While convincing Balthazar, Lorenzo, and Bel-imperia to be actors in his play, Hieronimo provides a summary of the drama, much in the same way as he explains the dumb show to the Spanish court in Act 1. But now his synopsis, instead of being a means of explaining the metaphor, is an ominous method of concealment. For when Hieronimo relates the fictional deaths of Suleiman, Erastus, and the bashaw, he is picturing the real demises of Balthazar, Lorenzo, and himself. With the fashioning of his own play and the moment of revenge inching closer, Hieronimo gains more agency as an author and commander of his fate. He takes special pride in the distribution of roles, costumes, and props, his interest mimicking Atreus' careful planning of the banquet (cf. Thy 749-88). He hides Horatio's body behind a curtain (4.1.185-7), waiting for the perfect moment to reveal it, just as Atreus originally conceals the heads of his brothers' sons. Every detail must be perfect for the full potential of the revenger to be enacted.

Hieronimo's entire psychological development from the moment he discovered his son's body has led to this point and he will not let anything spoil the spectacle he has planned. To heighten the effect and pleasure of the reveal, Hieronimo directs his actors to speak in Latin, Greek, Italian, and French. He forces the murderers to undergo the same language shifts that plague him throughout the play while deliberately delaying the understanding of his audience, both in the play and in reality. Hieronimo cannot risk the king's realization of what is occurring too soon for he must be the only one to explain the events on stage. For his revenge to be complete, the audience needs his clarification. They need to hear, from his own lips, what has occurred and what he has become.

The upcoming staging of revenge and the other characters' willingness to accept their roles concentrate Hieronimo's focus. He knows that he is about to achieve his goals and so it becomes easier to feign stupefied normalcy. He pretends to jest about flirting with Bel-imperia (4.1.53-5), politely asks Lorenzo's permission to allow his sister to join in the acting (4.1.95-7), and gently chastises Balthazar for not donning his fake beard in time (4.3.20). But once alone,

he again addresses himself, his last soliloquy revealing his all-consuming obsession with revenge:

> Bethink thyself, Hieronimo:
> Recall thy wits, recount thy former wrongs
> Thou hast received by murder of thy son,
> And lastly, not least, how Isabel,
> Once his mother and thy dearest wife,
> All woebegone for him, hath slain herself.
> Behooves thee, then, Hieronimo, to be revenged!
> The plot is laid of dire revenge.
> On, then Hieronimo, pursue revenge,
> For nothing wants but the acting of revenge. (4.3.21-30)

Instead of rhyming, we are now confronted with a feverish repetition of one word: revenge. The speech patterns of structure and rhyme that Hieronimo attempted to use to reestablish control of his situation have now completely and utterly failed him. The mention of "revenge" four times in four lines is the culmination of his single-minded and consuming intentions. Hieronimo's self-address and encouragement are direct imitations of Senecan revengers' self-exhortations to commit their crimes and allow him access to his violent internal emotions. He catalogues his wrongs to justify the measures he is about to take; the murders of Horatio and Isabella, for her suicide is a direct result of his enemies' actions, call for more blood. Now, his "wits" are not rational thoughts and correct social conventions, not the ability to understand and use the legal system and established channels of justice, but memories of murders. Hieronimo recalls them to ready himself for the plot, both theatrical and bloody, about to unfold.

The production of Hieronimo's play along with his reveal and actions following the deaths on stage is at once the most Senecan and the most Kydian element of The Spanish Tragedy. The Senecan framework that we have seen throughout the play as a whole leads to this moment. The revenge formula of Medea, Atreus, and Clytemnestra culminates in spectatorial violence and theatrical reveal, and so does Hieronimo's play. His extreme self-assertion and failure to comply with the court's demand for more information could be exhibited by any of

Seneca's characters. His drama pits director against director, as Hieronimo faces and defeats Lorenzo, the main plot's other great director and manipulator. And not only does Hieronimo direct the murders on stage, he participates in them. Not even Atreus or Medea has such direct involvement in the acting of revenge among their victims. Atreus does not eat his nephews; Medea stands aloof from Jason and the Corinthians. But Hieronimo plays his role along side the other actors, reveling in the bloodshed of which he is a part.

But this scene is also the most Kydian for in it the Senecan revenger, at the height of his success and furor, collapses on himself. Hieronimo, having broken laws, defied royalty, and even played the role of his son's murderer within his drama, has left behind everything he values. The entire motivation for his revenge is his devastation after the death of his son, yet he yearns to deprive both Castile and the viceroy of their own children and inflict on them the same desolating destabilization he barely survives. Justice would have seen the punishment fall on only Lorenzo and Balthazar, for they are the ones at fault for Horatio's murder, but Hieronimo is no longer just. He knows of no other way to succeed in his revenge than to become what he abhors. Before his final play begins, he locks the stage doors, intending to trap his victims together on one stage. But by the time he takes his own life, the doors symbolize Hieronimo's own entrapment "within the inescapable theatrics of revenge" he has cultivated by his connection to the Senecan revenge formula.[123] To be a Senecan revenger is to commit mind, body, and soul to the cause that will consume you. Kyd takes the towering skyscraper of Senecan psychological reconstruction and pulls out the bottom brick which makes the entire system collapse. An Elizabethan English hero cannot sustain the strains of the raving revenge, rhetorical hyperbole, and corruption of morality demanded by Seneca. This is why Hieronimo must die in the end. Seneca's characters, literally in the case of Medea, fly off the stage, never ceasing their

123 Hyde, "Actin and Identity," 99

vengeance. There are no limits to their violence and no end in sight. But Hieronimo dies in front of us, speechless and covered in blood as Kyd adds another, now final, step on his revenger's journey.

Let us return the text to examine the Senecan moments leading up to Hieronimo's suicide. Having been pleased by the spectacle onstage, the king asks what Hieronimo will do next, prompting the extremes of Senecan rhetoric and selfhood that have been developing in Hieronimo since Act 2. It is easy to imagine the Knight Marshal throwing off his eastern costume, revealing himself and his crime to the uncomprehending audience. Again showing his control over rhetoric, Hieronimo transitions from ancient language to "vulgar tongue" (4.4.75). He has the power to understand the speeches and metaphor of the drama, for it is of his fashioning, but now translates it for his hated audience. He stands alone on stage and shouts, "No, princes, know I am Hieronimo,/ The hopeless father of a hapless son" (4.4.83-4). Such a line would not be possible without the nunc sum (Med 910) of Seneca's Medea. The self-identification occurs again once more, this time as an even stronger pronouncement: "And, princes, now behold Hieronimo,/ Author and actor in this tragedy" (4.4.146-7). Hieronimo has become a Senecan playwright: controlling, ambitious, proud, poetic, extreme, and fully grown into his newly constructed character and authorship.

"Author" appears seven times in The Spanish Tragedy, four times to describe murderers or deceivers, once by Isabella as an epithet for time, and twice by Hieronimo during his final revenge.[124] Excepting for a moment Isabella's "Time is the author both of truth and right" (2.5.58), "author" has a consistently sinister and powerful connotation. The greatest authors of Kyd's play are not necessarily poets, but those who are able to manipulate and shape situations to their own advantage, those who can author their own fate and actions. Hieronimo and Isabella

124 Used by Revenge at 1.1.87; Villuppo at 1.3.53; Isabella at 2.5.41, 58; and Hieronimo at 2.5.39; 4.3.3; 4.4.147

desire to discover the "author of his endless woe" (2.5.39) when they discover Horatio's body, following Hieronimo's entreaty to discern the "savage monster" (2.5.19) who has murdered his son. The association of author with monster is unsettling and hints at the constructed horrors Act 4 will bring. The devastated husband and wife seek the man who has planned, acted, and carried out a plot, in other words, an author.[125]

Likewise, when Revenge tells Andrea, "thou shalt see the author of thy death" (1.1.87), it is revealing to the ghost the originator and instigator of his demise.[126] Perhaps Revenge is being a tad facetious in giving the doltish Balthazar such authorial agency, but the Portuguese prince did bring about Andrea's death as he created and acted out the military action. The Portuguese Villuppo self-identifies as an author in his malicious attempt to deprive Alexandro of the social status he covets: "My sovereign, pardon the author of ill news" (1.3.53). His account of Balthazar's "death" is completely manufactured and fictional; he is truly an author in that he has invented a story.

Isabella's labeling of time as "author both of truth and right" is naive and deluded. As the play continues, we learn that time will never bring justice or right to Hieronimo. Action and revenge, however, will. Kyd has Isabella articulate such a sentiment to show the futility of her preliminary trust in natural justice and passive authorship. Her eventual suicide results from her gained consciousness of time's failure. Before she stabs herself, Isabella puns on "garden plot" and "complot" (4.2.12-3), now aware of authorial plotting, and in her final words, urges her husband to become an author himself. The natural course of time has failed to provide relief and release, so now human action must be hastened ("Make haste, Hieronimo…/thou does delay their deaths,/ Forgives the murderers of thy noble son" (4.2.30-3)). In his revenge, partially

125 C.f. Lorenzo's "I lay the plot…I set the trap" (3.4.40-1)

126 N.B. This point supports Empson's theory that Balthazar was involved in a plot to murder Andrea before the battle had begun.

because of Isabella's death, Hieronimo becomes the epitome of Kyd's "author." He physically writes tragedy, constructs plots, achieves justice, "writes off" the lives of other actors, and then turns his pen upon himself. Once seeking the authors of his son's death, Hieronimo has now become his own author, his own playwright, and his own authority.

Hieronimo's claim of authorship at 4.4.147 is validated by the biting out of his own tongue after being captured by the audience.[127] His self-mutilation is a direct result of his previous statement that his "tongue is tuned to tell his latest tale" (4.4.85). With that story told, he "[has] no more to say" (4.4.152). To explain more would be to relinquish his command over language and autonomy, and to surrender to what is no longer a higher authority. He follows Megara's assertion that cogi qui potest nescit mori [one who can be forced does not know how to die] (HF 426). With the power of authorship comes the ability to speak, but almost as importantly, the ability not to speak. Perhaps the greatest achievement gained by his enactment of Senecan revenge is this defiance against the social and legal system in which he had so completely trusted. With his own mouth, he stops his tongue and his words. Adding to Hieronimo's authorial autonomy is his method of suicide. By stabbing himself (and Castile) with a physical representation of textual manipulation, Hieronimo dies an author's death.

In his Senecan and directorial fervor, Kyd's revenger is so disengaged from normalcy that Horatio's body becomes part of the "show," the "spectacle" (4.4.89; 113). The lines between reality and play are blurred, then completely destroyed, and playwright's rhetoric reflects his chaos. Hieronimo relieves his discovery of the crime, remembers the screaming and despair. The recounting of his wrongs flows out garbled and frantic:

> But hope, heart, treasure, joy, and bliss
> All fled, failed, died, yea, all decayed with this.
> From forth these wounds came breath that gave me life;

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127 For discussions on the tongue removal see McMillin, "Book of Seneca," 208; Dunn, "Gestural Politics," 50; Empson "ST (I)," 28; Hyde, "Identity and Acting," 101.

They murdered me that made these fatal marks. (4.4.94-7)

The monosyllabic lines are bitter charges against the king, Castile, the viceroy, their sons, and this system which has betrayed him. They did not in fact kill him as he claims ("they murdered me"), but murdered his past selfhood, security, and life. To Hieronimo, this was far worse than destroying his body. As for any Senecan character, the instability and insecurity that comes with such loss propels what was once a good man into plots of murder, death, and vengeance from which there is no turning back. Innocence becomes a frantic hunger for ascendancy and reconstruction that manifests in frenzied control over language. Hieronimo cannot sustain such fervor and appropriately uses a textual tool to deliver the final blow.

I have stated that Hieronimo must die for his actions, that his character cannot sustain the rhetorical and theatrical extremes demanded by Seneca and thus he must die. While this is true, Revenge itself does not have to end here. Kyd could have chosen to finish his play with Andrea and his guide, pleased with the results their influence has caused, returning to the underworld, satisfied and content. Instead, Andrea becomes fully and insatiably Senecan. Although the actual revenger of The Spanish Tragedy does not live past his revenge, Revenge itself does survive, and even thrive, to "begin [the] endless tragedy" (4.5.48).

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Kyd closely followed Seneca's formula for revenge. He begins his play with a ghostly frame containing a character with the potential to become an English Tantalus or Thyestes. Andrea watches over the entire play; observations of Hieronimo's actions fuel his own vengeance while his and his companion's invisible presence infects the main plot. Hieronimo experiences a devastating self-loss and destabilization in the murder of Horatio which is comparable to the destruction of Senecan selfhood. With his rhetoric increasingly frenzied and his actions carefully calculated, Hieronimo develops into a Senecan revenger and author. His metamorphosis is complete with the production of his play in sundry languages. Like Atreus displaying his nephews and Medea standing above the Corinthians holding the corpses of her children, Hieronimo declares himself to be "actor and author," his vengeance giving him agency and a newfound temporary security. There is no fear, no hesitation in Hieronimo at the end. He is an Elizabethan Atreus, a masculine Medea. Yet his revenge is more real to us than Senecan characters', for he is not an ancient man of myth, but the respected lifelike Knight Marshal of Spain. Thus his ascent into the extremes of Seneca is almost more terrifying and threatening than Kyd's original sources. If a man charged to uphold the justice system so miserably fails to receive aid and so destroys the world upon the stage, are we, the audience, safe from Senecan violence?

Conclusion: Fiam Hamlet

The purpose of my study thus far has been to determine first the principal components of the Senecan revenge formula and then to analyze the application and development of that formula in Kyd's play. We have seen the newly formed English ghost, the introspective and self-addressing rhetoric that transforms internal anguish into psychical violence, and the metatheatrical ultimate revenge. By the end of The Spanish Tragedy, Hieronimo, imbued with the self-fashioned autonomy of Senecan restorative vengeance, has filled the role of Seneca's extreme revengers. But both his initial naive faith and his death at the conclusion of his revenge revolutionize Seneca's template.

Seneca's revenges are almost thought experiments exploring the effects complete personal devastation will have on the minds of those predisposed to excessive violence. The behavior of the characters he selects as his revengers is not entirely unexpected. Their pasts and families are already tainted by nefas and scelus: uterque tanto scelere respondet suis:/ est hic Thyestae natus, haec Helenae soror [Both show themselves true to family by crime: he is Thyestes' son, she is Helen's sister] (Ag 906-7). Indeed, much of Seneca's undertaking is dependent on the past misdeeds of his subjects, as he develops his characters' self-consciousness of their position in the overall mythological and literary corpus. His three revengers grow into their preexisting potential for the extreme reactions exhibited by their literary predecessors. In this process, they surpass their models and become more violent and threatening. Seneca acts as a psychologist, assembling these anomalous case studies of revenge, concentrating his survey on the end result of extreme destabilization. The culmination of his undertaking produces a collection of madmen, captured, overwhelmed, and enslaved by furor.

But missing from Seneca's project is a full expression of the entire process of deterioration, of the moments and stresses leading up to the final break with normalcy. The metamorphoses that exist in his dramas are changes from internal to external, emotion to action, without significant shifts of character. Kyd, however, having identified the classical revenge formula, takes Seneca's case studies and molds their psychological intricacies to his own purposes. The elements of Seneca's revenges which are compressed in the Latin to at most 1344 lines[128] are drawn out, expanded, and augmented in The Spanish Tragedy. The final revenger of Kyd's endeavor looks very much like Atreus, Medea, and Clytemnestra, but he does not initially emerge on the stage as such. Kyd first gives his audience the innocent, self-assured Hieronimo to explore more intently the psychological impact of the acting of revenge. With rhetoric, images, languages, and themes mirroring his classical influence, Kyd dilates the Senecan venture and brings the revenger to England. The creative, dramatic minds of the Elizabethan Renaissance prove to be fertile land for this seed of vengeance, and Hieronimo grows into Hamlet.

But before addressing the revenger's future in Hamlet, let us return to Seneca's comments on imitation and art discussed in my introduction to determine how, if at all, Kyd has fulfilled Seneca's definition of good imitatio by using the classical tragedian's own plays. In Epistle 84, Seneca stipulates that sources must be gathered and properly digested in order for the resulting product to be of worth. But even after this process has been carried out, it is not undesirable that its origins still be visible:

> in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit, unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est, appareat.
>
> (84.5)

[we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.]

128 Hercules Furens

Seneca himself has now become part of the varia libamenta [several flavours] which together form a delicious result. His influence is perceptible in The Spanish Tragedy, but instead of detracting from the effect of Kyd's creativity, the present elements of Senecan tragedy amplify the success of the Renaissance drama. Kyd has taken Seneca's plays, along with other classical, native, and foreign sources, and blended them into a new, innovative, Anglicized revenge. The components of Senecan drama apparent in Kyd's play add to the effects of Hieronimo's destabilization and reactions. In other words, Kyd has been a very busy bee.

Along with his methods of creative manipulation, Kyd's preoccupation with textuality and his concerns with textual evidence find support in Seneca's epistle:

> Nec scribere tantum nec tantum legere debemus; altera res contristabit vires et exhauriet, de stilo dico, altera solvet ac diluet. Invicem hoc et illo commeandum est et alterum altero temperandum, ut quicquidd lectione collectum est, stilus redigat in corpus. (84.2)

[We ought not to confine ourselves either to writing or to reading; the one, continuous writing, will cast a gloom over our strength, and exhaust it; the other will make our strength flabby and watery. It is better to have recourse to them alternately, and to blend one with the other, so that the fruits of one's reading may be reduced to concrete form by the pen.]

Hieronimo transcribes Senecan quotations and pens the drama he and the others perform, taking the entire experience of reading and thinking and making it tangible and definable. He describes himself as an author because he gains the power to write his own ending and the endings of those who have wronged him. He ends his life with a pen both figuratively and literally.

But Shakespeare's Hamlet is not a writer like Hieronimo; he is not able to render his thoughts concisely in corpus. He is able neither to find nor create concrete definitions in his world. When describing Hieronimo's death, I used the metaphor of a brick being pulled from the foundation of a skyscraper, sending the entire structure tumbling to the ground. For Hamlet, this skyscraper of possible Senecan stability collapsed before he even stepped foot on the stage, and what Shakespeare does is construct a tragedy from the various pieces already on the ground.

Hamlet staggers through the past destruction, desperately gathering the pieces of stone and rubble that once comprised a complete structure. But as his character hopelessly piles up the debris, Shakespeare leads us to the realization that, for Hamlet, the destruction is too great and reconstruction is not possible. This futility lies at the heart of Hamlet's psychology.

Shakespeare, a more successful imitator in the Senecan sense than Kyd, takes both Kydian and Senecan source materials, along with other influences as well as history's example, and creates from them a sapor [compound] of his own.[129] T.W. Baldwin remarked of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors, "I would consider [it] one of the most thoroughly Italianate plays of the time, yet I can't put my finger on a thing specifically Italian in it." While I do believe there to be specifically Senecan details in Hamlet, Baldwin accurately describes Shakespeare's imitative genius. The playwright is able to manipulate the themes, language, psychology, and imagery of past literature into an entirely new form, thus becoming the talented imitator described by Seneca. His plays transcend their sources because, in Senecan terms, "[imago vera] omnibus, quae ex quo velut exemplari traxit, formam suam inpressit, ut in unitatem illa conpetant" [a true copy stamps its own form on all the features which it has drawn from what we may call the original, in such as way that they are combined into a unity] (Ep. 84.8).

Hieronimo never loses sight of his obtainable goal: the punishment of those he considers guilt of the murder of Horatio. But Hamlet's purpose is not as clear. His transformation from potential to actual vengeful action is even more full of chaos and failure than Hieronimo's. A central question to be asked of Hamlet, then, becomes what does Hamlet want? When a similar question is asked of Hieronimo, his answer is easy: revenge upon those who murdered Horatio,

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129 Ep. 84.5. For a discussion of the historical sources for Hamlet, see e.g. Julie Maxwell, "Counter-Reformation Versions of Saxo: A New Source for Hamlet," Renaissance Quarterly 57 (2) (2004). See G. Bullough, "The Murder of Gonzago," The Modern Language Review 30 (4) (1935) for the historical context of The Murder of Gonzago.

or, even more specifically, death for all those involved in his son's death. When the question is put to Seneca's revengers, the response is even more clear: complete annihilation of their enemies' psychological and physical security. But for Hamlet, there is no concrete answer. This is no mistake by an amateur playwright, but perhaps the greatest triumph of the play. Hamlet himself has no conclusive response to this question. His revenge is not only an attempt to punish but to restore the impossible past.[130]

There are no stable definitions for Hamlet in Elsinore. His dead father is alive, his uncle becomes his father, his friends act as surveillance, his love grows cold. A young aristocrat with every advantage, including the future throne, becomes a fugitive, madman, and murderer. Not only has Hamlet lost his father, but everything that grounded his existence is taken from him. The death of Old Hamlet and new marriage of his mother disrupted his conception of self before the play began, but the revelation that his uncle committed that murder severs all of Hamlet's ties to normalcy. His experience of self-loss is the most extreme of those explored in this study. For with the destruction of his past, comes the complete hopelessness of his future, for Hamlet can find no purchase in his world whatsoever.

It comes as no surprise then, that Hamlet becomes "delicate and highly nervous"[131] as a result of the destabilization of his identity and that he turns to revenge like the Senecan characters before him. Yet revenge will hold no reconstruction for the devastated prince. Mercer describes Shakespeare as "breeding radical contradiction," and goes on to characterizes the domain of Hamlet:

> We might almost say that Shakespeare has created for his tragedy of revenge a world so inherently resistant to the fierce simplifications of such an action, so unresponsive to that

130 See Kerrigan, Revenge Tragedy, for his excellent analysis on the theme of memory in Hamlet.

131 William Witherle Lawrence, "The Play Scene in Hamlet," The Journal of English and Germanic Philology 18 (1) (1919): 4

> unique extravagance of passion and rhetoric, a world, in the end, so acutely aware of the clear distinction between reality and art, that it is hard to see how any revenger could impose upon it the murderous artifice of his ritual death.[132]

Hamlet will fail where Hieronimo and Seneca's revengers have succeeded, but in doing so, he will find a peace which eludes his predecessors.

In order to demonstrate both Seneca and Kyd's influence in Hamlet, I have isolated three elements of the original revenge formula that are explored in depth by Shakespeare: the ghost, the play, and the revenger's end, here his death. Hamlet desperately attempts to work in Senecan channels as Hieronimo did before him, to become the Senecan revenger. But though he takes what seems to be all the right steps, he is met with failure at every turn, before he transcends the end of the revengers before him.

THE GHOST

While Kyd and Seneca (in Thyestes and Agamemnon) begin their revenge plays with the all-important arrival of the ghost, Shakespeare delays the physical appearance of Old Hamlet for 124 lines and his words for five scenes. If the ghost is such an essential part of beginning a revenge tragedy and plays such a critical role in Hamlet, why does Shakespeare detain his presence and his speech? He clearly acknowledges the merits of a specter's influence to initiate the process of revenge, for the dead king is in his first act and appears once again in Act 3. Yet the first actor on the stage is not the ghost, but a sentinel, and the first reference to the apparition is as an unidentified and doubted "thing" (1.1.20).[133] An audience educated in the ways of revenging ghosts would expect Barnardo's first line of "Who's there?" (1.1.1) to be answered by a mysterious phantom, but the responder is the very mortal and very ordinary Francisco.

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132 : Mercer, Acting of Revenge, 121-2

133 : All quotations from Hamlet are taken from the 2006 Arden edition.

By postponing the arrival of his ghost and the expectation of the audience, Shakespeare achieves three significant results. First, the audience begins to anticipate the appearance of "this thing." While not yet seeing the ghost, they imagine it as it appears elsewhere on the Elizabethan stage: raving, violent, and the result of Senecan imitation. They await a Tantalus or an Andrea, an expectation that will both be met and complicated. Secondly, because the spirit is delayed, acknowledgment of its physical existence occurs three times, first by the soldiers, then by Horatio, then finally by Hamlet. Horatio acts as a corroborating witness to the first sighting which transpires before the beginning of the play. When he first doubts, then substantiates the others' claims, the apparition emits a greater sense of realism. This ghost is not a vision only to Hamlet's and the audience's eyes, but is seen and recognized by others on stage.

Old Hamlet is an Anglicized version of a classical spirit, coming from the depths of the fearsome underworld to call for retributive action. The sentries, having read or heard Seneca and the like, push Horatio forward as their representative. He is educated and therefore is determined to be the most likely able to communicate to the apparition: "Thou art a scholar— speak to it, Horatio" (1.1.41). Barnardo and Marcellus also consider Horatio to the the most qualified to identify the spirit as well: "Looks 'a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio" (1.1.41). The men fixate on Horatio's apparent aptitude for ghostly knowledge because he is the most well-read of those on stage and because he presumably speaks Latin, which is, as everyone here knows, the standard language of ghastly visitors. These simple men believe that the spirit speaks in the language of Senecan ghosts. They understand that they do not have access to its motivations and desires. Only Horatio has a chance, but the ghost resists even his attempts at dialogue. Surprisingly, even the representative's command which invokes a Christian authority proves useless in preventing an exit: "By heaven, I charge thee speak" (1.1.48). The ghost still turns away.

The final and most important result of delaying is that Shakespeare isolates his protagonist in Senecan-like introspection and inwardness, by limiting his ghost's speech to only Hamlet. The apparition will not speak with Horatio and his company; he will not even speak with us. When Andrea enters the stage with Revenge, he pontificates out over the audience, intending for all to hear and consider his past. Thyestes and Tantalus do the same, as their violent reactions to their reemergence in the mortal pulls us into their stories. But Hamlet's ghost's first appearance on the stage is silent and exclusionary. Although Horatio and his fellows believe that he wishes to communicate ("It was about to speak when the cock crew" (1.1.146)), this ghost has no intention of interacting with anyone other than his son. He spreads his arms (1.1.125.1) to call Hamlet to him, not as the beginning of a speech.

It is significant, however, that Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo are able to see the ghost, and are the ones to whom he first appeared. Although Old Hamlet is visible to all, excepting Gertrude in Act 3, his apparent universality by no means makes him more accessible; it has the opposite effect. Shakespeare gives to the men and to us the first and second silent sightings of the spirit to demonstrate the ghost's extreme preference for Hamlet. Without Hamlet on stage, he remains mysterious and undefined. Even those of us who speak the language of revenging apparitions cannot hear the message of this specter. Hamlet is the only audience he seeks and so the burden of true recognition and response falls to the son.

This ghost is also unique in that he qualifies Hamlet's revenge. While reappearing in Act 3 to revitalize Hamlet's passion, he saves Gertrude from the ferocity of his son:

> Do not forget! This visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
> But look, amazement on thy mother sits!
> O step between her and her fighting soul.
> Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
> Speak to her Hamlet. (3.4.106-111)

This unexpected moment of what seems like marital tenderness comes as a surprise to those familiar with the conventional Senecan ghost. The spirit simultaneously orders revenge and affection. While urging the sharpening of vengeful action, he paradoxically calls for compassion. Excepting his delayed entrance, Old Hamlet has thus far behaved largely as a Senecan figure. He comes to the mortal world from "sulphurous and tormenting flames" (1.5.3), while he binds his listener to revenge, relying on his presence to "whet...purpose" (3.4.107). His hell is that of the Senecan ghosts although he is not permitted to speak of its horrors. Like Andrea, he initially differentiates between this and his past life ("if thou didst ever thy dear father love— /...Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.24-5)), which makes the sentiments in Act 5 so surprising.

Trapped in the introspective prison of meditation, Hamlet attempted to make Gertrude face the same internal demons which plague him: "You go not till I set you up a glass/ Where you may see the inmost part of you" (3.4.18-9). Like the Senecan revengers, Hamlet becomes obsessed with perceived emotional pollution in others.[134] He desires to project the "inmost part" of his mother's soul outside her body to force in her the self-confrontation he himself is undergoing. Then, with Senecan action, Hamlet leaps suddenly forth, stabbing the unidentified body behind the curtain. This movement from internal to external, passive to active, should have pleased the ghost. Indeed, similar action on the part of Hieronimo delighted Don Andrea. But instead, Old Hamlet implies by his sword-sharpening imagery[135] that Hamlet has made a mistake, that Polonius' death was never part of the plan.

Hamlet is taken aback by this reaction. As he struggles to live in a world that no longer provides definition and substance, he lands upon revenge as grounding objective. But now, the

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134 See, for example, Atreus' unyielding assertion that Thyestes is attempting to seize his throne (Thy 288-94).

135 "This visitation/ Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose" (3.4.106-7)

very impetus of that revenge offers contradictory instruction. Confused and lost, Hamlet cries to the ghost:

> Do not look upon me
> Lest with this piteous action you convert
> My stern effects! Then what I have to do
> Will want true colour, tears perchance for blood. (3.4.123-6)

What Hamlet strives for is "true colour," a new vibrancy and meaning in existence. Since the death of his father, his world has been painted black.[136] The colorless transparency of tears replaces the vitality of blood red. Hamlet believes the revenge for which he has been summoned will return color to his world and the act itself will inspire and require newly rejuvenated vigor. Yet his father's "piteous action" could potentially sway his resolve and what he thought was a directed course of behavior. If not even the ghost who inspires revenge remains consistent, what hope is there for a defined resolution of that revenge? Old Hamlet is supposed to be a Senecan spirit, anchoring his play in revenge, yet instead he pushes Hamlet further into himself and into confusion.

THE PLAY

Like Hieronimo and the Senecan revengers before him, Hamlet conceives of, plans, and executes a "Mousetrap" drama designed to expose and exploit the guilt of those he wishes to punish. Just as Medea desires to see the grief and despair on Jason's face, so Hamlet rivets his eyes to his uncle (3.2.81). Equivalent to the theatrics of Atreus and Hieronimo, this performance itself is nothing compared to the reaction of the intended audience. The production of The Murder of Gonzago allows Hamlet the chance to become an author, director, and revenger.

But the scope of Hamlet's ambitious project far outweighs his reality and even his ability. In desperation, Hamlet attempts to take up the roles of actor, director, chorus, and audience, an

136 E.g. "my inky cloak...customary suits of solemn black" (1.2.77-8)

impossible range of responsibilities.[137] Whereas Hieronimo found success, though death, in playing both "actor and author" (ST 4.4.147), Hamlet does not have the capacity to execute successfully so many roles. He has not received the hyperbolic strength of a Senecan revenger, for the process that is seen through in Hieronimo never comes to fruition in Hamlet. The Danish prince is too irreparably caught in the confusion between states of being. After interacting with the ghost in Act 1, Hamlet never manages to remain at either extreme of Senecan victim or Senecan revenger. Instead, he constantly vacillates between the two, spending most of his time in the chaotic space of indecision. His "to be or not to be" represents a decision whether to become like the women of Troades, "suffer[ing] the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," or to inherit the furor of Medea, "tak[ing] arms against a sea of troubles/ And by opposing end them" (3.1.55-59)— a decision he never fully makes.

In the midst of the extreme confusion and personal disorder that plague him since the ghost's appearance, Hamlet welcomes the arriving players like family, greeting them as a whole and even individually. Paradoxically, these people who make their living pretending to be what they are not are the most secure companions for Hamlet, for the roles they assume are concrete, definable, and temporary. When Polonius remarks, "These are the only men" (2.2.337-8), commenting on the players' superior acting abilities, his comment holds a deeper meaning for Hamlet.[138] In his agitated state, the prince believes actors to be the only men who could possibly comprehend his personal anxiety. When even humanity can be a mask, Hamlet turns to those who deal in disguises.

137↑ See his dramatic recitation at 2.2.388-402; his addition to the play at 2.2.476-8; Ophelia's "You are as good as a chorus, my lord" (3.2.238); and his watching of Claudius (3.2.81).

138↑ It is also worth noting that the line could be modifying his prior "Seneca cannot be too heavy not Plautus too light" (2.2.335-6), calling Seneca and Plautus the only playwrights worth imitating. Miola remarks that such a reference to Seneca "would have required no gloss" in Shakespeare's day (Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy, 3).

Thus, Hamlet excessively welcomes the actors to Elsinore as "old friend[s]" (2.2.473-4), even before they enter on stage (2.2.307-313). Their forthcoming appearance gives him the confidence to articulate a moment of clarity to his former friends:

> HAMLET: … But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.
>
> GUILDENSTERN: In what, my dear lord?
>
> HAMLET: I am but mad north-north-west. When the
> wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw. (2.2.312-6)

The arrival of the actors reassures Hamlet that acting has the potential to relieve his condition, that from the chaos of his disordered confidence can come a pointedly formed and executed dramatic plan to restore balance. In this temporary moment of public self-possession, Hamlet has the boldness to identify the royal couple as he now sees them. Gertrude and Claudius have become a perverted amalgamation of his past and present, but one that can be deceived by his acting abilities. All concealment is a form of drama, and Hamlet reveals that his madness is but a timely act. While a full exploration of the truth of Hamlet's madness would be far too lengthy for these pages, it is enough for now to note that here Hamlet believes, in spite of his internal turmoil, that events will occur that will allow him to "know a hawk from a handsaw" and once more to be able to perceive order and definition in his world.

Having settled upon drama as a solution to his anxiety, as Hieronimo and Atreus did before him, Hamlet begins to act. He asks for a speech from the players, but then supplies the words himself. As the prince recites from memory a classical account of one "neutral to his will and matter" (2.2.419), Polonius praises his "good accent and good discretion" (2.2.404-5). Pleased with his dramatic skills thus far, Hamlet then begins to play director, instructing the first actor to include a "speech of some dozen lines, or sixteen lines" (2.2.477) into the The Murder of Gonzago, a speech that would arguably have extreme significance for Hamlet.

Scholars, however, have been unable to identify this passage definitively.[139] I believe this to be because the promised speech is not in the play at all. Hamlet cuts his "Mousetrap" too short by revealing his hand too soon. His constant commentary on the performance and to the performers builds to a crescendo that cannot be ignored by Claudius. The prince encourages Lucianus: "Begin,/ murderer: leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come,/ 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge'" (3.2.245-7). But there not yet revenge to be had. There has not even been a murder. By calling for revenge so early, Hamlet does not let his audience watch the drama unfold as Hieronimo does. His exclamation preempts the acting of his addition to the play, spoiling both the revenger's surprise and his own intentions as he breaks in onto the scene.

Claudius, though he must have realized Hamlet's knowledge of the murder from the acting of the dumb show,[140] abruptly rises as the prince almost shouts the moral of the story:

> 'A poisons him i'th' garden for his estate. His
> name's Gonzago. The story is extant and written in
> very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the
> murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife. (3.2.254-7)

With this declaration, Hamlet directly challenges Claudius. What he does not seem to understand is that now is not the time for such direct confrontation. It is only Act 3; a director's reveal similar to Hieronimo and Thyestes' should not come until the end. He has not yet had time to become a successful Senecan revenger. Trapped between extremes and struggling to find definition, Hamlet botches his Senecan play.

Hamlet's attempts to find stability in the words of the ghost and in the acting of revenge have utterly failed. Having been called to vengeance by his father's "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!" (1.5.25), Hamlet tries to assume the role of a Senecan revenger, finding relief

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139 See, for example, Lawrence, "The Play Scene."

140 For a notable assessment of the dumb show and its place in the play as a whole, see Lawrence, "The Play Scene."

in the theatricality for which a Senecan retribution calls. Yet he is so unsteady, so volatile and desperate, that he cannot commit to following the rules. Instead he misjudges his actions and ultimately fails as a theatrical revenger.

THE DEATH

And so we have arrived at the death of one of the most beloved and perplexing characters of the English stage, a death Eleanor Prosser describes as "profoundly moving" in its simplicity.[141] Even though the character played a role in the deaths of five people, actively murdering three,[142] Shakespeare still convinces us that Hamlet dies a victim rather than a revenger. This ending is wholly unique to Hamlet. Through the course of The Spanish Tragedy, Hieronimo is pitied, applauded, and encouraged, but it is difficult to endorse fully his end. Like those of Medea, Atreus, and Clytemnestra, his revenge goes so far beyond the bounds of morality and expectation that the audience is left with the tragedy of the play, not the character. But as Hamlet is faced with the conclusion of his drama, he needs not fly away in the chariot of the sun or defiantly bite out his own tongue. Instead, he simply says, "Had I but time (as this fell sergeant Death/ Is strict in his arrest)— O, I could tell you—/ But let it be. Horatio, I am dead" (5.2.320-2). Then, "The rest is silence" (342). He now relaxes between the extremes that have plagued him since the death of his father, finding peace in his ultimate submission.

What makes Hamlet so intriguing and daunting, the "Sphinx of modern literature,"[143] is that at its center is Hamlet's Senecan devastating confusion. A play built on anxiety can hardly be an easy thing to decipher, and indeed, it is not. Perhaps critics and audiences alike try too

141 Eleanor Prosser, Hamlet and Revenge, (1976. 2nd Ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 238

142 Obviously Polonius, Laertes, and Claudius, but I am also including Gertrude and Ophelia since Hamlet's actions, well-intended or not, lead to their deaths as well.

143 D.J. Snider, "Hamlet," The Journal of Speculative Philosophy 7 (1) (1873): 91

hard to pin down the meaning behind Hamlet's soliloquies, to define his thoughts and actions in terms of morality and rationality. The confusion we feel while watching a man try to find meaning among the madness of the world brings us closer to Hamlet, and through him to Hieronimo and Medea and the rest. At the heart of the revenge tragedies I have explored in this study is the psychological instability that is the condition of humanity. But Hamlet is the only character who is able to find peace at the end of his play because he alone allows "the rest [to be] silence." He alone, in his final minutes, realizes the peace that can be derived from accepting the condition of humanity.

With Hamlet's submission comes the passing of the authorial torch to Horatio. The prince no longer struggles to assert Senecan-like supremacy and so allows Horatio speak for him: "report me and my cause" (5.2.323) and "tell my story" (5.2.333). Paradoxically, by relinquishing control over his future, Hamlet achieves ascendancy. For the prince, death is not a cessation of life, but rest. He finally finds a median between "to be and not to be."

Prosser comments on Hamlet's end, "We do not think. We only feel,"[144] but the sentiment could be applied to the play as a whole. If we were to think, to attempt truly to understand Hamlet's thoughts, we would be plunged into the same psychological confusion that he experiences. The Senecan formula so clear in Kyd's play is not fully delineated in Hamlet because Shakespeare muddies the waters of his tragedy, reflecting the inherent turmoil of his character. Nothing is clear in Hamlet; nothing is stable. With source materials including Seneca and Kyd, Shakespeare's play undergoes such a significant transformation as to reshape entirely what it means to be a revenger. But if instead of attempting to categorize and quantify Hamlet's disorder, we allow Shakespeare to guide us, we too will arrive at the tranquility of Hamlet's death. While relying on the process of imitatio defined by Seneca and the psychological

144 Prosser, Hamlet and Revenge, 238

progression of characters before his Hamlet, Shakespeare produces an extraordinary work that allows his revenger and that revenger's audience to obtain the peace sought for so many centuries.

Shakespeare manages to put an end to the continuation of revenge found in Seneca and Kyd's tragedies. Hamlet's death represents the psychological evolution of the Senecan revenger. The fierce self-assertion and compensation exhibited by Seneca's characters which is echoed by Hieronimo develops into Hamlet's submission. As the genre of revenge progressed, the hyperbolic expressions and actions of Medea, Atreus, and Clytemnestra no longer achieve the autonomy that they intended. Hieronimo still manages to cast himself as a Senecan revenger, but his necessary death at the conclusion of his play uncovers the underlying revenger's paradox. The Renaissance playwrights take Senecan example and apply psychological devastation not to a character originating in nefas, but to a good man, one with whom an audience cannot help but relate. These admirable victims, forced by situation and circumstance, turn to established Senecan revenge as a solution to their distress and to author themselves, only to become what they despise. Only Shakespeare reverses this polarity once again, giving Hamlet a final silent and calm tranquility. While Hieronimo is sated in his violence, Andrea pleased by the bloodshed, Medea confident in restoration of her pudor, and Atreus secure on his throne, only Hamlet achieves the inner stability that is the goal of all those who no longer find comfort in their own minds. Senecan revenge is a successful defense, but only for paradoxically those ready to abandon their previous selves and all hope of a peaceful end.

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