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Introduction

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At the close of Act 1 of Henry Chettle's extravagantly gory tragedy *Hoffman, or the Revenge for a Father* (probably performed 1603, printed 1631), Hoffman contemplates the hanged corpses of his pirate father, and of Charles, the prince he has just slaughtered. He declares to himself and to the audience:

> He was the prologue to a Tragedy,
> That, if my destinies deny me not,
> Shall passe those of Thyestes, Tereus,
> Jocasta, or Duke Jasons jealous wife.[1]

Embracing his role as a tragic antagonist, Hoffman swears revenge on his father's enemies, and emphasizes both the weight of his circumstances, and the scale of his coming retribution, via pointed references to well-known Greek and Roman tragic figures. Hoffman's pronouncement is both chillingly forthright and strangely ambiguous. It is perhaps deliberately unclear whether it is Charles or Hoffman's father who constitutes this 'prologue', and likewise, Hoffman seems not to mind whether the tragic figures he invokes are perpetrators of crimes (Tereus, and Jason's wife Medea), victims (Jocasta), or both

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[1] Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, edited by J. D. Jowett (Nottingham, 1983), 1.iii.379–82. On the date of performance, see *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, edited by Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, 9 vols to date (Oxford, 2012-), V, 7.

(Thyestes). What is clear, though, is that he specifically links these figures with the genre of 'Tragedy' (though one, Tereus, is more immediately associated with classical epic, namely Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). He also draws a parallel between such notorious stories and his own self-consciously meta-theatrical revenge, stressing to the audience that his situation constitutes a 'Tragedy', and suggesting as he does so a profound and competitive connection between classical and early modern incarnations of that genre.

Hoffman's promise that his 'Tragedy' will not only emulate but 'passe' such famous stories allows Chettle to suggest his own easy familiarity with classical plays and poems, and, by association, enables him to enhance the cultural capital of his play and to emphasize his ability as a playwright. Having been commended for his skill in comedy by Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), by 1603 Chettle might have been keen to demonstrate that he also knew and could invoke the more august and revered genre of classical tragedy.[2] Hoffman's vow additionally allows the playwright to signal the kind of production this will be, for the allusions to violent classical tragedies would have served to whet the appetites of an audience, and to promise the bloody excesses which Gordon Braden argues were typically associated with tragedy in early modern England and Europe.[3] Moreover, the playwright is not simply name-dropping: as he has Hoffman wreak his terrible revenge, Chettle is very conscious of the classical tragic models he invokes, and also aware of specific early modern responses to these models. For instance, Hoffman's slaughter of Prince Charles by way of a burning crown, which he accomplishes during the play's opening scene, recalls both Italianate revenge tragedy, with its often bizarre and extravagant methods of murder, and the punishment Medea (to whom Hoffman alludes in the above-quoted lines) metes out to her

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[2] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (London, 1598), fol. 283^{v}.

[3] See Gordon Braden, 'Tragedy', in the *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, Vol. 2: *1558–1660*, edited by Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie (Oxford, 2015), pp. 373–94 (p. 374).

rival Creusa (or Glauce), in both Seneca's and Euripides' versions of her tragedy. The gory specificity with which the Prince describes his dying torments (1.i.212–20) also seems indebted to John Studley's 1566 English translation of Seneca's play (which had been reprinted in Thomas Newton's 1581 collection *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*). Studley gleefully expands on Medea's prediction of Creusa's suffering, in a way that is typical both of the embroidering Elizabethan approach to translating Seneca and of his personal preference for such embellishment across his various translations of the dramatist.[4]

Despite his apparent use of Studley, Chettle's play is, of course, only a 'translation' inasmuch as it carries across names, plot devices, and a certain classicizing style and flavour from the corpus of classical plays and poems circulating in early modern England. Shakespeare's earlier tragedy *Titus Andronicus* drew inspiration from the revenge plots of Seneca's *Thyestes* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (and self-consciously invoked these stories to excite horrified anticipation in audiences) while also constituting an original drama in its own right. This does not mean, though, that Chettle's and Shakespeare's plays should not be considered responses to Senecan tragedy, or even 'translations' in the more figurative sense of the term. Jessica Winston's work on the early modern English reception of Seneca shows how the English translations of complete tragedies, produced in the late 1550s and 1560s by Studley, Jasper Heywood, Alexander Neville, and Thomas Nuce, gave way to a more allusive use of his plays by the 1590s, with authors appropriating and repurposing Seneca's style and plotting in their own original works, as Chettle does in *Hoffman*.[5] In an influential essay

[4] On Chettle's use of Studley at this point in the play, see my *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558–1688* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 112–13.

[5] See Jessica Winston, 'English Seneca: Heywood to *Hamlet*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485–1603*, edited by Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford, 2009), pp. 472–87, and Winston, 'Early "English Seneca": From "Coterie" Translations to the Popular Stage', in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Senecan Tragedy: Scholarly,*

prefacing a modern edition of Newton's *Tenne Tragedies*, T. S. Eliot pointed to the line of influence between actual and more figurative 'translations' of Seneca in the sixteenth century, arguing for the translations as 'an embryonic form of Elizabethan tragedy'. He sees Heywood's translations, in particular, as indicating 'a nascent interest in a new vernacular drama to vie with classical drama'.[6] At first glance, it might seem counter-intuitive that translating a classical play could signal a writer's commitment to 'new vernacular drama', but Eliot's phrasing neatly demonstrates the balance between fidelity to the originary model, and an apparently paradoxical desire to produce something new, which characterizes these translations and English tragedy more broadly. Eliot invites his readers to see translation as subordinate to Elizabethan tragedy, a kind of necessary building block. Setting these two forms of engagement with classical tragedy side by side, though, as Winston and Eliot do, encourages us to think of them as fundamentally interrelated, and to consider the more selective and allusive attitude to Seneca at the end of the sixteenth century as an evolution of the more comprehensive approach of the earlier translations, distinct from this previous work on Seneca, but simultaneously reliant on what has come before.

Moreover, though they are not translations in any literal sense, both *Hoffman* and *Titus* demonstrate that, for early modern authors, audiences, and readers, to think of tragedy was often to think of classical examples of the genre, and to use them as a kind of touchstone, whether these were Greek and Latin originals, or English intermediary versions such as Studley's. The seven contributions to this special issue explore points of contact between classical and early modern English tragedy from a wide variety of perspectives, some

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Theatrical and Literary Receptions, edited by Eric Dodson-Robinson (Brill, 2016), pp. 174–202.

[6] T. S. Eliot, 'Introduction', in *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into English, edited by Thomas Newton*, 2 vols (London, 1927), I, v–liv (pp. xlix, xlvi). All quotations from the *Tenne Tragedies* are from this edition, cited by volume and page as 'Newton'.

concentrating on specific English versions of Latin and Greek dramas by Studley and his contemporaries, and others thinking more figuratively about how the essence of such tragic models, their characters and themes, were adopted and transformed by later English tragedians. Drawing on such a variety of perspectives is in some ways a matter of necessity, for Braden points to the essentially fragmented nature of early modern English drama's engagements with classical tragedy, arguing that rather than 'any controlling theory', what we find instead is mainly 'response, some of it quite scattered, to the specifics of available classical texts'.[7] These differences in response might be discerned between the various English translations of classical tragedy, or seen in the varied ways in which authors of original plays brought such tragedies to bear on their own writing. This special issue of *Translation and Literature* seeks to make a virtue out of the disparate and individualized nature of early modern English responses to classical tragic models, positing such differences as provocative and intriguing, and capable of sparking debates, both now and in their own age, rather than shutting them down.

Eliot begins his introduction to Newton's *Tenne Tragedies* by insisting that 'No author exercised a wider or deeper influence upon the Elizabethan mind or upon the Elizabethan form of tragedy than did Seneca.'[8] Several of the following essays reflect this dominance, whether by concentrating on specific Elizabethan translators such as Studley, or by highlighting how Senecan elements were brought to bear on the period's tragedy, both Elizabethan and later (for Braden argues that Seneca retained his position of influence over English tragedians until Milton's day).[9] This collection also engages with the body of current research on the early modern English reception of Greek drama, with various contributions showing how authors sought to bring their works closer to Greek models, or else worked

[7] Braden (n. 3), p. 376.

[8] Eliot, in Newton, I, v.

[9] Braden (n. 3), p. 377.

intertextually, combining elements from Seneca and Euripides, or from biblical stories and Sophocles.[10] The essays collected here shed new light on little-understood authors and plays, highlight the profoundly intertextual nature of early modern translation projects, and explore the myriad and sometimes surprising ways in which authors might align their works with Greek and Latin models, or decline to adopt these models comprehensively (for instance, by reshaping them to better accord with the interests of early modern audiences and readers).

Unsurprisingly, because authors were often keenly aware of the activities of their contemporaries and competitors, different approaches to classical tragedy could manifest themselves in division and dispute. Not everyone was as keen as Chettle and Shakespeare to draw their audiences' attention to the classics. Jeanne H. McCarthy has outlined how playwrights and critics of the late sixteenth century, including Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Thomas Kyd, and John Lyly, differed over the extent to which classical models or approaches ought to be allowed to influence the public stage, noting that at this time 'there was as yet little agreement about the value or necessity of a classical reform of English theater'.[11] One way in which the classics might be thought to reform English drama was via the influence of Aristotelian theories of tragedy which were gaining ground on the Continent, but Braden suggests that though some playwrights, such as Ben Jonson, did acknowledge Aristotle's theories (while feeling that they were often unworkable on the English stage), neo-

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[10] On the Greek influence on early modern English drama, see recently Tanya Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages* (Oxford, 2017), and Pollard and Tania Demetriou's special issue of *Classical Receptions Journal*, 9 (2017), 'Homer and Greek Tragedy in Early Modern England's Theatres'.

[11] Jeanne H. McCarthy, 'Classicism on the English Stage during Shakespeare's Youth and Maturity: Popularizing Classical Learning', in *The Routledge Research Companion to Shakespeare and Classical Literature*, edited by Sean Keilen and Nick Moschovakis (Abingdon, 2017), pp. 215–26 (p. 220).

Aristotelian ideas enjoyed ‘at most a spectral presence’ in English tragedy.[12] Even a spectral presence can tell us something about how English authors thought of their work in relation to classical models, though, and in his research on the English reception of the *Poetics*, Micha Lazarus argues that it is in the period’s plays and poems, rather than in its treatises and commentaries, that we might find new evidence of the influence of Aristotle’s work in early modern England.[13]

Much more immediately visible, and so more vulnerable to criticism, were the efforts of certain playwrights to import the rhetoric, imagery, and plots of classical tragedy onto the English stage. Such strategies were most famously attacked by Nashe. In his often-quoted dismissal of ‘English *Seneca* read by Candle-light’, which was printed in 1589 in the preface to his friend Robert Greene’s romance *Menaphon*, Nashe asserts that he will ‘talke a little in friendship with a few of our triviall translators’, before complaining with withering contempt that vernacular versions of classical plays are mined for ‘many good sentences, as *Blood is a begger*, and so forth’, and will yield ‘whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of Tragicall speeches’.[14] Nashe pours scorn on playwrights who employ extravagant pseudo-Senecan rhetoric, complaining that they figuratively murder the writer who has afforded them such bloodthirsty material, so that ‘*Seneca*, let blood line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our Stage’ (p. 316). With its clear reference to the staging of classically inspired tragedy, the passage is often taken as an attack on Kyd, who might have authored an early version of *Hamlet*, and who moreover had his most famous protagonist, Hieronimo, quote

[12] Braden (n. 3), pp. 375–6.

[13] Micha Lazarus, ‘Aristotelian Criticism in Sixteenth-Century England’, *Oxford Handbooks Online* (2016), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.013.148.

[14] Thomas Nashe, ‘To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities’, in *Works*, edited by Ronald B. McKerrow, 5 vols (London, 1904–10), III, 311–25 (p. 315).

various Senecan plays as he laid his plans in *The Spanish Tragedy* (*c.*1587).[15] For instance, Hieronimo borrows (and slightly garbles) line 115 of *Agamemnon*, part of a speech by Clytemnestra, announcing 'per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter' ('the safe way to crimes is always through crimes'), before proffering his own interpretation of her assertion, and applying it to himself: 'Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offered thee; | For evils unto ills conductors be'.[16] Nashe mercilessly lampoons the playwrights who turn to vernacular versions of Seneca for such sensational speechifying, but in apparent contrast, via his request to 'talke a little in friendship' with 'a few of our triviall translators' (p. 315), he seems to separate out these men from those who are making this sort of clichéd and overblown use of their works by the end of the century. In terming them 'triviall translators', though, he simultaneously mounts a veiled attack on the purveyors, as well as the appropriators, of 'English *Seneca*'. The dedications, prefaces, and commendatory verses attached to individual English translations of the Senecan tragedies in the 1550s and 1560s often betray an anxiety verging on paranoia about how these vernacular versions might be received by English readers. Such paratexts communicate the translators' concerns that readers might look askance on their youthful presumption, or lack of poetic skill. They were right to worry that they were making themselves vulnerable, for they are belittled en masse by Nashe in 1589, and elsewhere their efforts were even being appropriated to raise a laugh in Elizabethan audiences. For instance, although Shakespeare could certainly make serious, tragic use of the Elizabethan Seneca, Robert Miola and M. L. Stapleton have identified parodies of both Studley's *Hercules Oetaeus* and Neville's *Oedipus* in *A Midsummer Night's*

[15] See P. J. Davis, *Seneca: Thyestes* (London, 2003), pp. 93–5, for a discussion of how Hieronimo employs Senecan tragedies to spur himself to revenge.

[16] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, in *Four Revenge Tragedies*, edited by Katharine Eisaman Maus (Oxford, 1995), 3.xiii.6–8. The translation of Hieronimo's Latin is by Eisaman Maus.

Dream, in particular in the ridiculous rhetoric of Bottom, who proudly claims that he can speak in 'Ercles' vein' (1.ii.29).[17]

The available English translations of the Senecan tragedies were reissued in Newton's 1581 collection (to which he added his own version of the *Phoenician Women*, printed under its alternative title of *Thebais*), but translating complete tragedies fell from fashion as the sixteenth century progressed, though extracts (particularly choruses) were still rendered into English.[18] For all Nashe's vitriol, however, the enthusiasm for importing the rhetoric and motifs of classical tragedies into English drama was undimmed, though this enthusiasm manifested itself in a breadth of response that might be attributed to a range of factors. When early modern English authors adopted and adapted elements of classical tragedy, their approaches might well reflect which plays were most easily available to them, as Braden suggests.[19] Seneca's *Medea* was rather more accessible to English readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than Euripides', having been translated into English by both Studley (1566, reprinted 1581) and Edward Sherburne (1648, reprinted 1701), and this visibility is one reason that his heroine exerted a powerful sway over early modern English representations of murderous and vengeful women.[20] Individual responses to tragedy might

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[17] On the parody of *Hercules Oetaeus* see Robert Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 180–1, and on the parody of *Oedipus*, M. L. Stapleton, *Fated Sky: the 'Femina Furens' in Shakespeare* (Newark, DE, 2000), pp. 26–7. On both, see further Patrick Gray, 'Shakespeare vs. Seneca: Competing Visions of Human Dignity', in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Senecan Tragedy*, edited by Dodson-Robinson, pp. 203–30 (pp. 206–7).

[18] For selections of such partial translations, see Don Share, *Seneca in English* (London, 1998), and Stuart Gillespie, 'Seneca ex Thyestes: A Collection of English Translations 1557–1800', *T&L*, 24 (2015), 203–18.

[19] Braden (n. 3), p. 376.

[20] On the influence of the Senecan *Medea* (in Latin and English) see Heavey (n. 4), Chapters 2 and 3. For early modern editions of Greek plays, including Euripides' *Medea*, in

also be shaped by early modern tastes, though, which are not always the same as our own. Seneca's Medea seems to have appealed to Elizabethan and Jacobean writers because his incarnation of the sorceress, described by E. M. Spearing as 'almost a raving maniac', is more bloodthirsty and ruthless than Euripides', and so much better suited to the revenge tragedies in which she was frequently invoked.[21] Over ensuing centuries, though, any English preference for Seneca's version fell away, and today Euripides' *Medea* is far more likely to be the version that is translated, adapted, and performed, probably because of his relatively empathetic treatment of his heroine, and his more sensitive contextualizing of her final awful crime.[22] In their discussions of Greek tragedy in this issue, Carla Suthren shows that the period's authors and commentators might be drawn to classical plays that are not among the most well-known or admired today, such as Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, while Lucy Jackson argues that George Buchanan and Thomas Watson presented their readers with two startlingly critical portraits of Sophocles' Antigone, whom we applaud today for her brave refusal to conform to Creon's cruel decrees. Examining such early modern responses, which might deviate markedly from our own interests or sympathies, invites us to consider what it is that we value in classical tragedy, and when and why attitudes to characters such as Antigone and Medea, or plays like the *Phoenician Women*, began to change.

Greek, Latin, and vernacular translations see Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women* (n. 10), pp. 232–69.

[21] E. M. Spearing, 'The Elizabethan "Tenne Tragedies of Seneca"', *MLR*, 4 (1909), 437–61 (p. 456).

[22] On the growing interest in Euripides' *Medea* from the eighteenth century onwards, see Edith Hall, '*Medea* on the Eighteenth-Century London Stage', in *Medea in Performance 1500–2000*, edited by Hall, Fiona Macintosh, and Oliver Taplin (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 49–74, and Hall, 'Medea and British Legislation before the First World War', *Greece & Rome*, 46 (1999), 42–77.

Different responses to classical tragedy might also be traced to variables such as the particular editions from which authors were working, to their place in a network of fellow translators or tragic dramatists, supporters or competitors, or to the specific contexts and audiences for which they were producing work. In his work on the staging of classically inspired plays, Mark Bayer reminds us that 'the transposition of classical literary texts to the stage entailed considerable risks and, therefore, required a strategic consideration of what specific playgoers at different theaters might tolerate'.[23] In his discussion of *Progne* in this issue, a Latin play attributed to James Calfhill and no longer extant, but apparently performed before Queen Elizabeth on her visit to Oxford in 1566, Curtis Perry speculates on how Calfhill might have adapted both Senecan and continental models so as to engage and please his royal spectator. Other authors wrote with larger and more diverse audiences in mind, and they might inflect their material accordingly. Comparing Thomas Heywood's 'wildly popular' *Ages* plays (*The Golden Age*, *The Silver Age*, *The Brazen Age*, and the two parts of *The Iron Age*, written and performed *c.*1610–13) and Ben Jonson's famously scorned *Sejanus* (first performed 1603), Bayer notes that 'the two dramatists were working with largely incommensurate understandings of classicism and its embodiment on the stage, leading to vastly different plays and responses from playgoers'.[24] Heywood wrote his cycle of mythological plays, which culminated in the fall of Troy, the return of the Greek forces, and the subsequent deaths of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Orestes, for the Red Bull theatre. This was a venue that, as Bayer notes, 'reputedly catered to raucous and relatively uneducated audiences who lacked significant background knowledge in the classics', and

[23] Mark Bayer, 'Popular Classical Drama: The Case of Heywood's *Ages*', in *The Routledge Research Companion to Shakespeare and Classical Literature*, edited by Keilen and Moschovakis, pp. 227–35 (p. 233).

[24] Bayer, pp. 227, 229.

Heywood produced lively and episodic dramas that were full of spectacle.[25] In contrast, Bayer shows that Jonson, in composing a work that was performed first at court and then at the Globe, opted to emphasize the stateliness and complexity of his language, and to stress the poetic rather than the dramatic richness of his work.[26]

Heywood and Jonson have something interesting in common, in that neither of them look automatically to Greek and Roman tragedy in order to write tragedies on classical themes. For his two-part *Iron Age*, Heywood draws on sources including William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Hystories of Troye*, and on Homer's *Iliad* in both its Greek and English forms, while, as Leon Grek and Aaron Kachuck show in their contribution to this issue, Jonson makes his tragedy out of material drawn from classical epic and invective, by authors including Lucan and Claudian.[27] Nevertheless, though both playwrights prompt us to think about the flexibility and permeability of generic boundaries as they make stage tragedy out of a variety of classical and intermediary sources, their orientation of their material is very different. In writing a play like the *Iron Age*, a sprawling collection of well-known Trojan War-related narratives, Heywood thinks carefully about what will most successfully grab and retain the attention of his audience.[28] By contrast, in *Sejanus* Jonson favours a kind of top-

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[25] Bayer, p. 227, and on Heywood's use of spectacle, pp. 229–30. Charlotte Coffin has recently argued that Heywood's use of Homer in the *Ages* plays suggests that the Red Bull audience was more varied, and more mythologically literate, than has traditionally been thought. See Coffin, 'Heywood's *Ages* and Chapman's Homer: Nothing in Common?', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 9 (2017), 55–78 (pp. 72–6).

[26] See Bayer, p. 229.

[27] On Heywood's classical and vernacular sources, see Bayer, pp. 232–3; Coffin, pp. 55–78; and Charlotte Coffin, 'The Not-so-classical Tradition: Mythographical Complexities in *1 Iron Age*', in *Thomas Heywood and the Classical Tradition*, edited by Janice Valls-Russell and Tania Demetriou (Manchester, forthcoming).

[28] On Heywood's strategies to engage his audience in these plays, see Callan Davies, 'Losing the Plot: Audiences, Scraps of Performance, and Selective Participation',

down approach, giving his audience and subsequent readers what he thinks they should value in a classicizing tragedy, rather than what they might like, and meeting with much less success in the process.

Even where a modern reader might reasonably hope for harmony and similarity in early modern responses to classical tragedy, we are confronted by difference. Grek and Kachuck show how Jonson's attitude to the Aristotelian tragic precepts that were in vogue on the Continent, and to neo-Senecan flourishes such as malevolent ghosts, changed appreciably in the space of the few years that separate *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. Moreover, in her recent work on Newton's compilation *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*, Emily Mayne has followed James Ker and Jessica Winston in challenging the critical tendency to see the Elizabethan translations of Seneca as working towards a shared goal, or with a unified understanding of Seneca and his plays. In their modern edition of Jasper Heywood's *Troas* and *Thyestes*, and Studley's *Agamemnon*, Ker and Winston argue that we should remain alert to the differences and idiosyncrasies of the various translated plays, rather than regarding them as a kind of single entity, since 'each one was shaped by separate circumstances and styled to meet specific aims, and each one responded in new ways to the challenges of translating Senecan drama into English'.[29] As well as being linked by their association with the Inns of Court and universities, these translators were well aware of one another's works, and they had a tendency to praise one another's efforts fulsomely across the various prefaces and dedications to the translations, praise that, as Winston usefully notes elsewhere, 'facilitates social

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https://beforeshakespeare.com/2018/04/06/losing-the-plot-audiences-scraps-of-performance-and-selective-participation/.

[29] *Elizabethan Seneca: Three Tragedies*, edited by James Ker and Jessica Winston (London, 2012), p. 3. See also Winston, 'Early "English Seneca"' (n. 5) for a discussion of individual translators' approaches to Seneca.

networking'.[30] They were also retrospectively associated with one another by Newton, when he gathered the translations together in a single volume. Mayne, however, presents Heywood, translator of *Troas* (1559), *Thyestes* (1560), and *Hercules furens* (1561), as a case study to shed light on the idiosyncratic nature of Elizabethan Seneca, and points out that his choices differentiate him from his fellow translators, but moreover serve to distinguish his works from one another. She explains that his *Hercules furens* originally appeared as a facing-page translation with the Latin, and this, combined with his literal approach to translating Latin words and syntax, 'points to the expository and pedagogical functions' of this play in particular, its intended use as a guide for schoolboys learning Latin; Heywood makes quite different decisions in his other two translations.[31] She thus responds to the argument that Heywood translated Seneca to offer advice to princes,[32] and she reminds us that an author's approach to classical tragedy can never be regarded as fixed, but might change over time, across different works, or in response to the interests of different audiences.

With regard to Newton's collection, Mayne emphasizes that 'the *Tenne Tragedies* was Newton's own specific venture, for self-advancement in learned circles, or patronage, or for didactic purposes, or some combination of motivations, rather than a project, ideal or actual, between all the authors whose work it contains', and that 'we should not assume that there is an automatic commonality of approach to Seneca even between Newton's volume and its constituent translations'.[33] Although his collection undoubtedly increased the visibility of the translated plays for new generations of Elizabethan authors, the essentially individual nature

[30] Winston, 'English Seneca: Heywood to *Hamlet*' (n. 5), p. 482.

[31] Emily Mayne, 'Presenting Seneca in Print: Elizabethan Translations and Thomas Newton's *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*', *RES*, 70 (2019), 823-46 (p. 842), and for her discussion of Heywood's *Hercules furens*, pp. 839-45.

[32] See Jessica Winston, 'Seneca in Early Elizabethan England', *RQ*, 59 (2006), 29–59 (pp. 41–7), and Mayne, p. 842. Winston's discussion here focuses on Heywood's *Troas.*

[33] Mayne, p.827.

of Newton's project is demonstrated by his inability to successfully shape the way in which these newly interested readers and authors responded to Seneca. Mayne notes that in his preface, Newton cautions against reading Seneca piecemeal for *sententiae* (an approach also mocked by Nashe in 1589).[34] Nevertheless, William Cornwallis' *Discourses upon Seneca the tragedian*, printed in 1601, adopts just such an approach, gathering together quotations (in Latin) from Senecan tragedies, and dissecting each one to proffer lengthy philosophical reflections on matters including the nature of government.[35] Nor was this selective treatment of tragic plays confined to the works of Seneca. In her contribution to this issue, Suthren shows how George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh exaggerate the sententiousness of their Euripidean adaptation, *Jocasta* (performed 1566–7), in line with this fashionable method of reading the dramatist, and that by 1600, Robert Allott was including instructive excerpts from their play in his printed commonplace book, *Englands Parnassus*. Plainly, readers and authors stubbornly continued to respond to classical tragedy in the way they preferred, despite the efforts of authors like Jonson, Nashe, and Newton to corral them and impose uniformity.

For all these differences, though, it is certainly possible to discern some commonalities in early modern approaches to classical tragedy, which are brought out in the various contributions to this issue. For instance, early modern tragedies might adopt particular motifs from prior examples of engagement with classical drama. Yves Peyré shows that Lodovico Dolce's imagery of alarming fecundity and unrestrained natural growth is exaggerated in Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta*, and re-emerges in later tragedies such as *Hamlet*. Alternatively, as Tanya Pollard and Lucy Jackson suggest in their respective discussions of Orestes and Antigone, preceding versions of a tragic character might influence

[34] Mayne, p. 824.

[35] William Cornwallis, *Discourses upon Seneca the tragedian* (London, 1601).

subsequent characterizations, so that we find multiple early modern representations of Orestes as taken over by powerful emotions and forces beyond his control, or intriguing commonalities between critical presentations of Antigone. But the most basic similarity between different versions of classical tragedies in England is simply that different authors often (though not always) translated or adapted these works for the same sorts of reasons. For instance, in their prefaces, the Elizabethan translators of Seneca often take the common approach of explaining that they have rendered the work into English for the first time for the benefit of readers who do not understand Latin. [36] Especially given the praise that certain of the prefaces heap on other translations, it is a fair assumption that they are deliberately echoing one another's strategies, perhaps in an effort to win similar admiration. Moreover, this kind of educative justification for translating or commentating is not confined to versions of Latin tragedies. Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta* was advertised as a translation of Euripides, and Pollard shows elsewhere that the play's afterword explains its commentary was produced for the benefit of an unnamed gentlewoman, who 'understode not poetycall words or termes'.[37]

The instructing instincts of the translators and adapters of classical tragedy might also extend in other common directions. Although translations of Seneca might, as Mayne has shown, be produced for other reasons (for example to assist in language-learning), such translations were used to communicate lessons to rulers, and this tendency can also be perceived in neo-Senecan drama, and other kinds of engagement with Seneca, such as Cornwallis' *Discourses*, or Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*.[38] In the latter work, Sidney

[36] See for instance Studley's preface to *Medea* (1566), and Heywood's poetic preface to *Thyestes* (1560).

[37] See Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women* (n. 10), p. 20.

[38] On the use of Seneca to deliver political lessons, see Winston, 'English Seneca: Heywood to *Hamlet*' and 'Early "English Seneca"' (both n. 5), and on neo-Senecan drama,

asserts that, handled properly, tragedy ‘maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours’, a pronouncement he chooses back up with a quotation from Seneca’s *Oedipus*, lines 705–6, ‘Qui sceptra saevus duro imperio regit, | Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit’ (‘The savage tyrant who sways his scepter with a heavy hand fears the subjects that fear him, and fear returns upon its creator’).[39] Nor was it only rulers who might learn from Seneca: Newton announces in his preface to the *Tenne Tragedies* that Seneca’s plays can be conveniently grouped together to warn more ordinary readers against misbehaviour, since

> I doubt whether there bee any amonge all the Catalogue of Heathen wryters, that with more gravity of Philosophicall sentences . . . or greater authority of sou[n]d matter beateth down sinne, loose lyfe, dissolute dealinge, and unbrydled sensuality: or that more sensibly, pithily, and bytingly layeth doune the gue[r]don of filthy lust, cloaked dissimulation and odious treachery: which is the dryft, whereunto he leveleth the whole yssue of ech one of his Tragedies.
>
> (Newton, I, 5)

Newton surely overstates himself in his insistence that the tragedies as Seneca produced them have a common ‘dryft’ towards teaching these kinds of lessons, but various Elizabethan translators did adopt a common strategy, of carefully revising Seneca’s drift to impose more ‘satisfactory’ Christian morals on the plays, thereby suggesting the ‘beating down’ of sin that

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Dermot Cavanagh, ‘Political Tragedy in the 1560s: *Cambises* and *Gorboduc*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, edited by Pincombe and Shrank, pp. 488–503.

[39] Sir Philip Sidney, ‘The Defense of Poesie’, in *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, edited by Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit, MI, 1962), pp. 432–3. Translation Gilbert’s.

Newton insists can be found in the original tragedies, if only these are read carefully enough.[40]

Similarly, while characters like Chettle's Hoffman or Kyd's Hieronimo gesture towards the sensationalizing potential that various dramatists saw in classical tragedy, and might invoke these tragedies to spur themselves to greater heights of violence, they are not permitted to escape unpunished like the antagonists to whom they allude. Any audience for *Hoffman* in 1603 would be aware that Chettle's anti-hero damns himself as much as his enemies with his invoking of classical precedents, and such an audience could scarcely have been surprised when he perishes by means of yet another burning crown, more hapless Creusa than victorious Medea. Meanwhile, though Hieronimo clearly knows Seneca's *Agamemnon*, P. J. Davis notes that Kyd complicates the Senecan situation when he has Hieronimo invoke Clytemnestra's proclamation at line 115 of the Latin play, 'per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter':

> In their context, Clytemnestra's words . . . form part of a self-exhortation to the murder of Agamemnon, since for the adulterous queen the killing of her husband is the only course of action which offers safety. For Hieronimo these words are a reminder that Lorenzo is in a similar position: he may resort to crime to conceal his

[40] For Studley's moralizing conclusion to his *Medea*, see Heavey (n. 4), pp. 56–7; for the rather more heavy-handed approach of Neville in *Oedipus*, see Frederick Kiefer, *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (San Marino, CA, 1983), p. 69, and Winston, 'Seneca in Early Elizabethan England' (n. 32), pp. 50-1. For early modern moralizing approaches to *Thyestes*, see Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven, CT, 1985), pp. 110, 244.

murder of Horatio . . . To act is preferable to patience, to leaving vengeance to heaven, for that may lead to his own death.[41]

Like Hoffman, Hieronimo is both victim and plotter, and significantly, his interpretation of the quotation, 'Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offered thee; | For evils unto ills conductors be', carefully omits Clytemnestra's suggestion of securing safety through crimes, which is present in both his version of the Latin ('per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter'), and in Studley's English translation of the play. The appropriation and subtle reworking of Seneca thus signposts Hieronimo's bloodthirsty ambition for revenge, and the danger posed to him by Lorenzo, but also Lorenzo's death, and his own, both of which run counter to Clytemnestra's fate at the conclusion of the Senecan *Agamemnon*, but would be entirely in line with an early modern audience's expectations of tragedy.

Overt connections between the classical tragedies' treatment of sin, and the conduct of early modern audiences and readers, can also be found in more surprising places. In a series of sermons printed in 1614, the preacher Thomas Adams urges his audience to call to mind the horror they feel at the excesses of tragic anti-heroes, and to direct this same revulsion towards the devil and his tricks:

> As no spectator at those horrid Tragedies, where *Oedipus* is beheld the Incestuous Husband of his owne Mother, or *Thyestes*, drunke with the blood of his owne Children, or at any of the bleeding Bankets of the *Medea's*, can receive those horrours at the Windowes of his senses, without terrour to his bowels, and trembling to his bones: so when you heare the relation of the Devils cheare, all the flattering, petulant, insidious, nature-tickling dishes of delight: the rarities of Impietie, the surfets of the

[41] Davis (n. 15), p. 93.

World, Horse-leaches to the blood, Witches to the affections, Devils to the Consciences of men; thinke that they are related, that they may be rejected.[42]

Adams invokes the visceral effect of ‘horrid Tragedies’, by which he might conceivably mean English translations, or Latin or even Greek originals (his apparent reference to more than one version of the *Medea* suggests he may not be thinking solely of Seneca). His use of the grisly crimes that characterize such tragedies to persuade his audiences to respond differently to worldly sins (‘thinke that they are related, that they may be rejected’) is a remarkable testament to the visibility and popularity of such classical plays in early modern England, and to the educative potential of their bloody horrors.

The Jacobean preacher seems positively to relish his piling up of classical sins, and the more everyday transgressions of which his seventeenth-century audience might be guilty. His copiousness echoes that of the various Elizabethan translations of Seneca, as well as the neo-Senecan bombast of Chettle’s Hoffman or of Shakespeare’s Bottom. This aspect of the Elizabethan translations of Seneca was vulnerable to parody by later writers like Shakespeare, as we have seen. Moreover, it has struggled to attract the admiration of critics: so G. K. Hunter scornfully dismisses these early translators as ‘totally incapable of sharpness or compression’, while C. S. Lewis complains of their ‘yokel garrulity’, and memorably describes the *Tenne Tragedies* as a ‘bog of verbiage’.[43]

If certain Elizabethan translators of Seneca might be charged with using ten words where one would do, though, they might also expand on their originals in other ways, via additions and interpolations that reflected their own tastes and the breadth of their reading. In her contribution to this volume, Janice Valls-Russell demonstrates Studley’s eagerness to

[42] Thomas Adams, *The Devills Banket* (London, 1614), p. 42.

[43] G. K. Hunter, ‘Seneca and English Tragedy’, in *Seneca*, edited by C. D. N. Costa (London, 1974), pp. 166–204 (p. 187). C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 254, 256.

work across various Senecan plays as he translates, and moreover to fold into his translations the works of other classical authors, to demonstrate his own grasp of the classics, or to further the enjoyment or understanding of his readers. Modern translators or adapters of classical tragedy might also work intertextually, employing a range of intermediary works (such as translations) and a variety of classical tragedies. For instance, the Scottish playwright Liz Lochhead, author of *Medea* (2000) and *Thebans* (2003), has been open about the influence that English versions of the Greek tragedies have had upon her work, explaining that she particularly favours 'unspeakable old Victorian [translations] with lots and lots of footnotes on the Greek'.[44] Her *Medea* is described in its subtitle as being 'after Euripides', but in the case of *Thebans*, her work across classical drama is particularly pronounced, the play drawing as it does on five different classical tragedies: Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*. In Lochhead's play, such work across texts is a strength, and a deliberate and clearly advertised artistic decision, one which Lochhead explains was made 'for the specific theatrical task at hand', and which allows the finished work to tell a much more complete, complex story.[45] If we allow ourselves to view the Elizabethan translations of Seneca in the same light, then we might be able to see their expository expansions and alterations as justified and admirable, reflecting not just the translators' interest in an impressive range of source material, but also their concern with their readers, who might benefit from such additional details.

The discussions which follow in this volume focus on the sixteenth century and early decades of the seventeenth century, but the interest in classical tragedy continued through the Civil Wars and after the Restoration, though the emphasis of such engagements might

[44] Liz Lochhead, *Thebans: Oedipus Jokasta Antigone* (Glasgow, 2003), p. iii.

[45] Lochhead, p. iii.

change. Authors continued to produce original tragedies on classical themes, but they might take pains to distance themselves from the efforts of earlier dramatists, sometimes by a more sustained use of classical tragedians: for example, John Dryden prefaces his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) with an explanation of how he has altered and improved on Shakespeare's Trojan play, specifically, as he states, by recourse to Euripides' *Iphigenia*. Tastes also altered: Paulina Kewes shows how 'by the end of the seventeenth century, Seneca's reputation as a dramatist was in eclipse', whereas in the eighteenth century 'the tragic triumvirate of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides . . . steadily grew in stature', such that 'by the mid-1780s their entire *œuvre* was accessible to the English reader'.[46] We continue, however, to see individualized and idiosyncratic approaches to the translation of tragedy. For instance, although Kewes notes that Seneca was largely out of fashion by the closing decades of the seventeenth century, he did have an 'indefatigable champion' in the poet and translator Edward Sherburne (1616–1702).[47] Introducing his English translation of *Troades* (i.e. *Troas*) in 1679, almost a century after the appearance of the *Tenne Tragedies*, Sherburne insists on the value of Seneca:

> If the Reflection upon other Misfortunes, may afford at any time Diversion, or Improvement, by minding us of the Signal Vicissitudes of Humane Affairs; these Tragical Scenes, which we now offer to publick view, (exhibiting a serious, yet withall, delightful Representation, of one of the most splendid Calamities that

[46] Paulina Kewes, 'Drama', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English,* Vol. 3: *1660–1790*, edited by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford, 2005), pp. 241–52 (pp. 243, 241).

[47] Kewes, p. 243.

> Antiquity hath transmitted to Posterity) may peradventure be look'd upon as no unpleasing Entertainment.[48]

Sherburne seems likely to have come into contact with Seneca's works early in life (his childhood tutor was the classical scholar Thomas Farnaby, who had produced an extremely popular annotated Latin edition of the tragedies, first printed in 1613). His was a lifelong interest in Seneca: he had produced a translation of *Medea* (1648), and in 1701 the two tragedies would be reprinted together, alongside another Senecan translation, *Phaedra and Hippolytus*. The tragedies were here augmented with a preface in which Sherburne reiterates his earlier argument about the 'delightful' impact of tragic scenes, explaining that Seneca's skill as a playwright had been to realise that 'Representation of the most funestous Events that could befal Humanity, might beget in the Spectators something not unplausibly delightful.'[49]

In commendatory verses prefacing Sherburne's 1648 *Medea*, the poet Thomas Stanley declares 'Though change of Tongues stolne praise to some afford, | Thy Version hath not borrowed, but restor'd'.[50] Here, Sherburne's effort is judged against his Latin original, and also, perhaps, against the Elizabethan *Medea* of John Studley, whom Stanley might slyly criticise here in his allusion to inferior writers who can only win 'stolne praise' for their translations. Certainly, Sherburne's translating style is very different from the typical approach of his Elizabethan predecessors. For instance, he favours lengthy explanatory notes as a way of clarifying things for the reader, and proudly advertises these on the title-pages of his translations. This was an approach that had been specifically rejected by Jasper Heywood in his Elizabethan translation of *Troas*: the earlier translator explains that he has elected to

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[48] Edward Sherburne, *Troades* (London, 1679), sig. A3^{r}.

[49] Edward Sherburne, *The Tragedies of L. Annaeus Seneca* (London, 1701), sigs A5^{r-v}. Hereafter '*Tragedies*'. 'Funestous': 'fatal' or 'disastrous'.

[50] E. S. (Edward Sherburne), *Medea* (London, 1648), sig. A3^{r}.

alter the third chorus to the play, 'for as much as nothing is therein but a heaped number of far and strange countries', since if he had remained faithful to the original, he would have had to 'expound the histories of each one', an undertaking that he deems 'far too tedious'.[51] Sherburne is more than willing to expound in such a way, and moreover he demonstrates a scrupulous fidelity to Seneca that would have mystified his Elizabethan predecessors. Like Heywood, Studley gaily announces in his preface to *Medea* (1566) that he has jettisoned a Senecan chorus (in this case the first), substituting something quite different, because he was confident the original could hold no possible interest for his audience. By contrast, Sherburne is so committed to communicating a 'correct' Seneca to his readers that he refuses to translate a passage from the chorus to Act 3 of *Medea*, explaining in a note to the 1648 edition that he deems it the spurious interpolation of a 'Poetaster' (p. 93). (Here, as in various other places in his *Medea*, Sherburne may have been influenced by Farnaby's Latin notes, for his erstwhile tutor registers the critical doubts about the passage in question, although he does include it.)[52]

Sherburne does have some things in common with earlier adapters. Like Studley and Heywood, he translated multiple plays, and like Newton, he collects these for his 1701 volume, thereby encouraging the reader to consider them as a single body of work. Like Heywood, too, he announces that he cannot be pinned down to just one translational approach. Heywood explains in 'The Preface to the Readers' which introduces *Troas* (1559) that he has 'endeavoured to keep touch with the Latin', but does not translate 'word for word or verse for verse' (p. 72), but in the 1561 *Hercules furens*, as Emily Mayne has discussed, he does precisely this. Sherburne claims to move in the same direction, so that the unsigned

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[51] Jasper Heywood, 'The Preface to the Readers', in *Elizabethan Seneca*, edited by Ker and Winston (n. 29), p. 72. Quotations from Heywood's prefaces to *Troas* and *Thyestes* are from this edition.

[52] Farnaby's note on this passage was printed in various editions of his work, for example *L. et M. Annæi Senecæ Tragœdiæ*, edited by Thomas Farnaby (London, 1634), p. 24.

prefatory address to the 1648 *Medea* explains that the work 'is not by him stil'd a *Translation*, but a *Paraphrase*' (sig. $A2^{v}$), but in 'A Brief Discourse Concerning Translation', which forms part of the prefatory material to his 1701 collection, he rejects the term that was so familiar to late seventeenth-century translators, explaining that he has not produced a 'preposterous Paraphrase' but 'the genuine Sense of Seneca . . . by a close Adherence to his Words as far as the Propriety of Language may fairly admit' (*Tragedies*, sig. $c3^{v}$). He also uses his prefaces to emphasize the enjoyable and educative benefits of Senecan tragedy, both of which had been well-known to sixteenth-century authors, and like them, he sees the plays as offering lessons to rulers: in his 1701 dedication to his nephew, he explains that together, his three tragedies 'seem to offer this Political Lesson, That the hidden Malice of revengeful (though seemingly reconcil'd) Enemies, together with the flagitious, unbridled Lusts of dissolute Princes, have been the Ruin of most flourishing Kingdoms' (*Tragedies*, sig. $A7^{r}$).

Most importantly for our purposes, though, Sherburne sees a profound connection between Seneca, and the drama of an earlier age – specifically the tragedies of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. In the preface to his 1679 version of *Troades*, he quotes Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668), repeating his admiration of the scene in which Andromache attempts to protect her son Astyanax:

> There (says he) you have the Tenderness of a Mother so represented in Andromache, that it raises Compassion to a high Degree in the Reader, and bears the nearest Resemblance of any thing in the Antient Tragedies, to the excellent Scenes of Passion in Shakespeare, or in Fletcher.
>
> (sig. $A3^{v}$)

Here, Sherburne is being more than a little disingenuous in an effort to justify his translation of Seneca's play; he credits this argument in praise of the scene in question to 'one of the most Eminent Modern Masters of Dramatick Poesy among us, Mr Dryden' (sig. $A3^{v}$), then

the Poet Laureate and one of the most admired literary figures in Restoration England, with no mention of the fact that the speaker, Eugenius, is just one of four debaters, and moreover is generally identified with Charles, Lord Buckhurst, rather than with Dryden himself (whose attitude to Seneca was rather more ambivalent than Sherburne suggests here).[53] Sherburne emphasizes the emotive effect of Seneca's tragedy, as he would also do in his 1701 preface. But, via his ventriloquizing of Eugenius, who argued that, by and large, English drama outdoes the efforts of ancient poets, Sherburne also proffers Senecan tragedy as a treat for those who enjoy the tragedies of Shakespeare and Fletcher. He goes so far as to suggest that the Andromache scene is primarily valuable in that it allows the reader to discern in an ancient text those elements that they most relish in the plays of two English authors. His curiously tempered praise of Seneca, via the words of a speaker who prefers English tragedy, is a decidedly odd way to introduce a translation, for Sherburne here inverts the model of *Hoffman* or *Titus*, whereby early modern English tragedy might become more – more gruesome, more memorable, more exciting – by invoking its classical predecessors. Instead, Sherburne seems to suggest that the *Troades*, and Seneca, benefit from being read through the lens of English dramatists. Sherburne's version of this ancient tragedy thus becomes an act of reception, one that relies on and is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge of chronologically later texts, in much the same way that Yves Peyré has shown that the choices made in a modern translation of *Agamemnon* or *Hercules furens* can demonstrate a translator

[53] On the identification of the four speakers, see the Commentary to the *Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, in *The Works of John Dryden,* edited by H. T. Swedenberg Jr *et al*., 21 vols (Berkeley, CA, 1956–2000), XVII, 327–87 (pp. 352–6). Quotations from the *Essay* (pp. 2–81) are from this edition. On Dryden's attitude to Seneca, see Share (n. 18), p. xvii.

'rediscovering Seneca in the light of Shakespeare' (specifically, in this case, in the light of *Macbeth*).[54]

Sherburne's praise of these early modern tragedians as akin to and even superior to Seneca recalls Francis Meres' famous pronouncement in *Palladis Tamia* that the best of classical comedy is to be found in Plautus, and of tragedy in Seneca, but that those readers seeking the best of either genre in 1598 need turn only to Shakespeare.[55] Sherburne's admiration of Shakespeare and Fletcher is particularly striking, though, because he does not feel able to accord such praise to his contemporaries. Dedicating his 1701 edition of the tragedies to his young nephew, he tells the boy that he will find in Seneca

> such Ornaments of exalted Elocution, such sparkling Sentences, and such pertinent Precepts of fair Morality, as among the late Tragedies exhibited in our Modern Theatres . . . not any, nor all of them together, are able to shew such elevated Ideas in each kind.
>
> (*Tragedies*, sig. A4v)

In the *Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, Dryden's Eugenius had made a similar (though much less sweeping) admission about the inferiority of contemporary drama. Despite arguing for modern plays as generally superior to ancient examples, he concedes that

> though I never judg'd the Plays of the *Greek* or *Roman* Poets comparable to ours; yet on the other side those we now see acted, come short of many which were written in the last Age: but my comfort is if we are orecome, it will onely be by our own Countrey-men.

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[54] Yves Peyré, ' "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece": Senecan resonances in *Macbeth*', in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, edited by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 141–55 (p. 141).

[55] Meres (n. 2), fol. 282r.

Sherburne's praise of Seneca's 'exalted Elocution' and 'sparkling Sentences' runs counter to what Share calls the 'enduring view' of Seneca, in Dryden's day and later, as 'the corrupter of Roman eloquence'.[56] It recalls the Elizabethan admiration for the dramatist's 'loftinesse of Style', espoused by authors including Newton in the preface to the *Tenne Tragedies* and Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie.*[57] Moreover, through his prefaces, Sherburne extends Eugenius' admission about the shortcomings of contemporary plays in comparison to those of the 'last Age', suggesting a hierarchy of drama, with his own period at the bottom, Senecan tragedy as superior in style and in its 'fair Morality', and Shakespeare and Fletcher as a refinement of the most affecting and emotive moments in the Latin tragedies. Creative and critical engagements with classical tragedy in the context of the English Civil Wars, Interregnum, and Restoration deserve an issue of their own, not least because, as Sherburne's 1701 preface makes clear, during and immediately after devastating civil instability, authors and translators continued to see such tragedies as holding a 'political lesson' for those in authority. The following essays instead reflect the special symbiosis that Sherburne saw between classical tragedies and the plays of what Eugenius called 'the last Age', here roughly taken as the years between 1559 (when Jasper Heywood's *Troas*, the first of the Elizabethan translations of Seneca, appeared in print), and 1633, the publication date of Thomas Goffe's *Orestes*.

Dryden's Eugenius damns classical tragedy for its deadening familiarity, complaining that, in the case of Oedipus, for instance, an ancient audience knew what would happen as soon as he appeared, and yet was forced to sit 'with a yawning kind of expectation, till he was to come with his eyes pull'd out, and speak a Hundred or more Verses in a Tragick tone, in

[56] Share, p. xvii.

[57] See Newton (n. 6), I, 5. Sidney (n. 39), p. 449.

complaint of his misfortunes' (p. 24). Nashe's 1589 barbs about 'English *Seneca* read by Candle-light' and its 'handfulls of Tragicall speeches' (p. 315) show that English authors might be charged with a similar predictability with regard to their use of classical tragedy, but these contributions seek to show that early modern translators and tragedians alike hoped to reshape and reinvigorate the classical models on which they relied. The introduction has emphasized the diversity of early modern engagements with classical tragedy, as well as tracing the common themes of some of these approaches. The seven essays that follow also strike a balance between showing on the one hand, the individuality of an author's approach, and on the other, the way that such an author inevitably writes in the context of previous models, however they might choose to approach these.

The first essay, by Janice Valls-Russell, focuses on John Studley, one of the early translators of Seneca who has featured most prominently in this introduction. Valls-Russell sees Studley as operating as part of a web of influences that extends beyond the Senecan tragedies he renders into English. In her consideration of Studley's translations of *Agamemnon* and *Hippolytus* (more commonly known today as *Phaedra*), she shows how the Elizabethan translators, and their admirers such as Thomas Blundeville, legitimize one another's efforts at translation, via their effusive prefatory poems. Moreover, she reveals how, in his expansive and expanding approach to translating these plays, Studley interpolates details apparently drawn from a range of sources, including other Senecan tragedies, Greek tragedies by Aeschylus and Euripides, Ovid's *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Ars Amatoria*, and the 1541 Gryphius edition of Seneca, from which he seems most likely to have worked.

In the preface to Jasper Heywood's *Thyestes*, the author describes Seneca presenting him with the translator's equivalent of the Holy Grail, the absolutely correct version of the ancient text, endorsed as such by the Roman dramatist himself, who tells Heywood 'This book shall greatly thee avail to see how printers miss | In all my works, and all their faults

thou may'st correct by this' (p. 149). He names Gryphius as one such error-prone printer, which is an especially bold criticism, given that in his translation, he actually 'followed Gryphius's text in almost every instance'.[58] Like Valls-Russell's, Yves Peyré's essay demonstrates how an early modern adaptation of a classical tragedy might be shaped by the specific printed edition or editions an author is using. Peyré focuses on Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta*, a play that was contemporaneous with the early Elizabethan translations of Seneca, but that was proudly advertised on its title-page as a translation of a tragedy 'written in Greke by *Euripides*', that is, his *Phoenician Women*.[59] Despite the authors' framing of it as a translation from Greek, the play is often taken to be an English version of Lodovico Dolce's Italian *Giocasta*. Via sustained close reading, though, Peyré shows that departures from Dolce's model suggest that Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh may have been using Dolce's own source (Rudolphus Collinus' Latin translation of Euripides) alongside the Italian play.

Carla Suthren's essay also discusses *Jocasta*, and again argues for the play as being closer to Greek models than has previously been accepted, though in quite a different way. Suthren presents a detailed survey of printed commonplace marks in early modern editions of tragedy and comedy, Greek and Latin, to show that such marks are overwhelmingly associated with printed versions of Greek tragedy, especially those produced by the Aldine press. Such printed commonplace marks are also to be found in *Jocasta*, and Suthren shows how the play and its commonplacing tendency demonstrate both the early modern fondness for identifying (and expanding on) *sententiae* in Euripides, and a desire to make *Jocasta*, as it appeared on the printed page, look more like Greek tragedy, and thus closer to the model claimed by its English authors.

[58] *Elizabethan Seneca*, edited by Ker and Winston (n. 29), p. 280.

[59] George Gascoigne, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (London, 1573), p. 71.

The interest in importing Greek models into tragedies and translations can also be discerned in other, more figurative ways. Lucy Jackson's piece shows that authors might incorporate classical figures into texts where we might not expect to find them, by 'proximate translation'. She argues that George Buchanan's play on John the Baptist, *Baptistes*, which was probably written between 1539 and 1543 and printed in England in 1577, weaves into its biblical story a sustained critique of Sophocles' heroine Antigone, who is subtly invoked in order to be contrasted with the Baptist. Moreover, she suggests, Buchanan's unusually disapproving representation of Antigone may have influenced the esteemed English poet Thomas Watson when he translated the Greek tragedy into Latin for publication in 1581. Tanya Pollard's essay, on Orestes in early modern England, demonstrates the fascination that this figure held for early modern English playwrights, including Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, Marston, and Thomas Goffe. She argues that, because of his tendency to be overcome by powerful emotions, invoking or staging Orestes enabled English authors to reflect the essence of the Greek tragic heroines whose plays were circulating in England and on the Continent (women like Antigone, Jocasta, and Iphigenia), but to transpose the most affecting elements of these women onto male characters.

Pollard argues that one reason English playwrights were drawn to Orestes, rather than electing to stage Greek tragic women, was that male leads provided a vehicle for the talents of the most popular adult actors of the day. The final two contributions also address this question of staging tragedy, and particularly of how classical material might be tailored to the demands or interests of an audience. Curtis Perry's essay discusses James Calfhill's lost play *Progne*, suggesting it as a neo-Senecan drama that was influenced by a continental model (Gregorio Correr's fifteenth-century Latin play *Procne*, which does survive), but also by the specific circumstances of its performance. Apparently staged at Christ Church, Oxford, on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1566, Perry suggests that Calfhill's play might

have been tailored to offer flattery or counsel to the monarch, as Senecan tragedy of the period often did. Correr's *Procne* shows that a play might be both classical and tragic, and admired as such by early modern audiences, without having to draw on a real ancient drama, for as Chettle's Hoffman suggests, and Shakespeare's villainous Demetrius and Chiron also understand, all kinds of classical tales, including that of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, might be accommodated in early modern tragedy. Likewise, the essay by Leon Grek and Aaron Kachuck shows that Jonson's tragedies *Sejanus* and *Catiline* draw on, and in some cases closely adapt, a wide range of ancient sources outwith tragic drama, including the poetry of Lucan and Claudian, while also demonstrating Jonson's conflicted and shifting attitude to English Senecanism. These two plays were described by T. S. Eliot as constituting 'an attempt, by an active practising playwright, to improve the form of popular drama by the example of Seneca; not by slavish imitation but by adaptation, to make of popular drama a finished work of art' (Eliot, in Newton, I, xx–xxi). Grek and Kachuck show how Jonson negotiated with his tragic models, both dramatic (Seneca) and theoretical (Aristotle), attempting to revise the approach that had been so unsuccessful in *Sejanus*, but preserving the balance between imitation and originality that characterizes so many of the early modern approaches to classical tragedy that are discussed in the following pages. The essays are rounded off with Micha Lazarus' review of Jonathan Bate's *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, which traces the profound influence of a wide range of ancient texts upon Shakespeare's poetry and drama.

Note on the text

Throughout this issue, i/j, u/v, and long s have been modernized when quoting early modern English works. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Shakespeare are from the *Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Macmillan, 2008).

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