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Seneca's Metamorphoses, from Chaucer to Shakespeare

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The Roman author of tragedies entered the Italian, French and English stages through the works of jurists. Lawyers, law and judgment played a significant part in his progress through the Middle Ages down to Shakespeare, down to us now through layers of time and critical approaches. How far Seneca influenced the English playwright, from the shrill calls for revenge of the early plays to the later debates on justice, in trial scenes performed before audiences playing judge and jury, that remains the question to be discussed here.

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Under the Tudor reigns, members of the Inns of Court presented the public with three works that made significant contributions to the shaping of Elizabethan drama: Edward Hall's *Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*, *The Mirror for Magistrates* by William Baldwin and fellow Inns members, and *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* collected by Thomas Newton. The earliest of these works, Hall's chronicle, provided material to the authors of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and decades later to Shakespeare's Henriads.

Inns Writers and Squeamish Readers

Jasper Heywood has just published *Troas* when he is requested in a dream by Seneca's ghost to translate more of his plays, and directs him to the Inns of Court where "finest witts doe swarme". His list of 'Minervaes men' ends with "Baldwyns worthie name / Whose Myrrour dothe of Magistrates procclayme eternall fame" (Heywood 1560). Of the eight young men he cites as deserving praise for their works of poetry and translation, Baldwin, North, Sackville, Norton,

Thomas Blundeville, Christopher Yelverton, William Bavand and Barnabe Googe, six were Inns members (De Vocht, ed. 1878). So were George Ferrers, Alexander Neville, John Studley, George Gascoigne, Francis Kinwelmarsh (Conley 1927, 133). And Heywood himself, who entered Gray's Inn in 1561.

That Seneca's plays should find translators, adaptors and admirers in the community of the Inns is no accident (Winston 2006). Several are explorations of cases, pleas *pro et contra* presented to the audience in expectation of their verdict: Medea, for one, puts her case "to the nurse, to Creon, to Jason, and above all to herself" (Costa in Seneca 1973, 9). A lawyer himself, Seneca perfected his talent for oratory in court, where he pleaded *pro bono* before his exile. He was also a counsellor whose advice went unheeded, as portrayed in *Octavia*. With a little mending his works could still act as "glasses of governance" in the present turmoils of Tudor monarchy. "The common law system was based on precedents imparting valuable and applicable lessons to the present", Michael Ullyot notes: in the uncertain early years of Elizabeth's reign, Norton and Sackville "had every reason to believe that the realm's peace and stability relied on the counsel of its common lawyers" (Ullyot 2008, 106, 110) when they presented the Queen with a historical subject set in the structure and mood of Senecan tragedy.

The early Elizabethan translators did not design Seneca's plays for performance, and did not immediately inspire playwrights, even though they may well have lit the way. Shortly after the publication of *Troas*, two co-authors of the *Mirror* made the leap from didactic literature to stage with the representation of the first Elizabethan tragedy, *Gorboduc*, "clyming to the height of Seneca his style" (Sidney 1595, sig. I4v.), in Sidney's tepid tribute, though sadly ignorant of Aristotle's principles. Sidney's learned circle were working at the time to promote the neo-classical plays of Robert Garnier, also a lawyer, King Henri III's advocate general at the Parlement de Paris. A member of the circle, Thomas Kyd, stood at the crossroads of cultural traditions, with a translation of Garnier's *Cornélie*, and his own popular *Spanish Tragedie*.

Seven plays, translated by four different writers, had already appeared in print when Newton published *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* in 1581, possibly "to serve as an English equivalent to collected continental editions of Seneca's tragedies" (Mayne 2019, 837). In his

Epistle Dedicatory, Newton mentions the "squeymish Areopagites" who judge and reject Seneca's plays on moral grounds, fearing infection. He requests the readers, as he would jurymen, "with no forestalled judgment, to mark and consider the circumstaunces, why, where, & by what maner of persons such sentences are pronounced", for then equity cannot but lead them to a more favourable resolution. Indeed, he pleads, Seneca's sublimity and loftiness of style, far from countenancing Vice, "beateth down sinne, loose lyfe, dissolute dealinge, and unbridled sensuality" and "bytingly layeth down the guerdon of filthy lust, cloaked dissimulation and odious treachery" (Newton in Seneca 1927, 4-5)[1].

Modern and post-modern scholars often sound equally squeamish when they look for philosophical, ethical or political motives to justify Seneca's gory theatre of cruelty. Curtis Perry works to unsettle "conventional wisdom about Shakespeare and early modernity", lashing at romantic-era criticism and other entrenched forces of the Shakespeare industry: "our understanding of Shakespeare's engagement with Seneca has been distorted by centuries of critical disdain", which made the Latin playwright "somewhat embarrassing as a potential resource for the bard" (Perry 2021, 2-3)[2]. The embarrassment was already patent among his early translators, and not restricted to Seneca, but extended to 'all things Italian' since the Reformation.

Heywood had made alterations to *Troas* because the work seemed to him "in some places unperfit, whether left so of the Author, or parte of it loste, as tyme devoureth all thinges". His Argument vows to recite in English the woes of Troy, rather than its ten years of siege, "For I the mothers teares must here complayne, / And blood of babes, that giltles have bene slayne" (Heywood, The Argument, *Troas*, in Seneca 1927, 7). The introduction to a nineteenth-century facsimile reprint of the *Tenne Tragedies* notes among the liberties taken by Heywood

1 Newton's Original Dedication to Sir Thomas Henneage of *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* (1581), reprinted with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (Seneca 1927). Unless otherwise stated, all references here are to this now rare edition, with grateful thanks to the Bibliothèque universitaire de Lorraine for lending me their copy at the request of the Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne.

2 Despite a declared interest in the evolution of European drama, his bibliography seldom extends beyond anglophone research.

the addition of Achilles' ghost, drawn straight from the legends in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, and in *Thyestes* of a soliloquy calling all the torments of hell on Atreus, full of "nauseous bombast, which not only violates the laws of criticism, but provokes the abhorrence of our common sensibilities" (Leigh ed., Seneca 1887, iv)[3].

T. S. Eliot, who attempts "what redemption of his fate is possible" had a simple explanation for Seneca's horrors: his plays were "admirably adapted for declamation before an imperial highbrow audience of crude sensibility but considerable sophistication in the ingenuities of language": many of his faults "which appear 'decadent' are, after all, merely Roman" (Eliot, Intr. to Seneca 1927, viii, ix, xii). A judgment presumably applicable to the Elizabethan readers of the *Tenne Tragedies*. Eliot is right in one respect: the worst horrors depicted in Seneca's plays, like those shown on the Elizabethan stage, could hardly out-Herod what the Roman arenas, or William Cecil's demurely called 'execution of justice' in the streets of London, offered to the crowds by way of spectacle.

Whether they were actually performed in imperial Rome has remained a moot point since Schlegel, who believed they were never meant to leave the rhetorical schools for the stage, and that Seneca had only deteriorated Attic tragedy (Schlegel 1815, 287-288), but an increasing number of productions around the world today strives to rehabilitate them (see Harrison 2000). The Latinist Florence Dupont for one is quite certain that they were indeed performed in Seneca's lifetime, with choral song and dance. The actability of her translations was brilliantly demonstrated in 2018 with a performance of *Thyestes* in the Avignon Cour d'Honneur under the direction of Thomas Jolly (after his eighteen-hour production of *Henry VI*), and a *Phèdre*, directed by Louise Vignaud at the Studio-Théâtre de la Comédie-Française (Dupont 2011, Dupont 2012).

Along with Seneca's "influence upon the *thought*, or what passes for thought, in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries", Eliot detects in various English plays, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Arden of Feversham*, *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello*, a "'thriller' interest", an affinity with modern detective drama, "which

3 *The Tenne Tragedies of Seneca*, printed for the Spenser Society from a copy in the library of its President, John Leigh.

owes nothing essential to Seneca". Lorna Hutson explains this popular interest in forensic drama by the participatory nature of jury trials which involved increasing numbers of individuals in the legal machinery. To Eliot, the taste for police enquiries was due to recent crimes committed in England, while the taste for sanguinary horrors came from the Italian drama, which is "bloodthirsty in the extreme". In *Titus Andronicus* for instance, "indeed one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written", definitely not by Shakespeare, "there is nothing really Senecan at all" (Eliot 1927, xxii, xxv, xxvii; Hutson 2007). Admittedly, the playwright found food for the Thyestean banquet in Ovid, yet it does taste of Atreus' dish: Colin Burrow finds "more than hints and flavours for its stew from Ovid's story", but thinks it "often impossible, and probably undesirable, to try to unpick a Senecan thread from a radial web of other influences". At the end of *Titus*, "Ovid and Seneca are all part of an intertextual concoction" (Burrow 2013, 165).

Eliot rightly supposes that the first Elizabethan dramatists had had "a smattering of Seneca" at school. "During this period, the fashions set at the Universities were followed at the Inns of Court" (Eliot 1927, xlvii). Classical plays were performed in Latin at Cambridge, somewhat later at Oxford. Kyd, Peele, Marlowe were acquainted with several languages, and their fellow dramatists could have read the translations when those first appeared. In the mid-fifteenth century, "Seneca was largely an academic's playwright" (Ullyot 2008, 99). Indeed, if we want to understand English revenge tragedy, Elizabeth Sandis reminds us, "we must keep Latin in the picture", or better still, "a common language which transcends the choice of Latin and English: the Thyestean language", used by the dramatists to compete with one another, as did Heywood, the first to see his translation printed, with the mention "Fellow of All Souls College in Oxford' on the title page" (Sandis 2021, 222, 226).

Medieval Seneca

Seneca was widely read throughout the Middle Ages. His early popularity is attested by numerous miniatures which represent him in various occupations, standing between Plato and Aristotle (MS Hunter 231), teaching under a canopy (MS Paulmy, Ars. 1085), reading at his desk (BnF Latin 17842), or dying in his bath under the eyes

of Nero in a manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose* (Harley 4425)[4]. He was included by Saint Jerome in the Christian corpus of virtuous men, on the basis of an apocryphal correspondence with Saint Paul, who was reputed to have converted him[5]. In the twelfth century, the *Metalogicon* of John of Salisbury ranked him with the highest pagan moralists. Yet the philosopher was often criticized for his excessive opulence, at odds with the principles of Stoicism, and his silence at Nero's matricide. Voragine's life of Saint Peter in the *Legenda aurea* included an account of Seneca's death, with an etymology of his predestined name, *se necans*: "though he was forced to do so, he died by his own hand" (Voragine 1993, 347).

It is worth recalling here that the stage history of Seneca began in Padua, a place visited by numerous English scholars, students of Greek, law or medicine as well as aspiring diplomats and educated travellers (Woolfson 2013, 572-87). Lovato de' Lovati, who had transcribed and commented Seneca's tragedies around 1290, stood at the centre of a literary circle composed of Paduan notaries and judges like himself, "scholars specialized in law and its daily practice owing to their mastery of grammar and rhetoric" (Frizet 2021, 7,19, my translation), forerunners of the Florentine humanists (Witt 2000, chs. III and IV). The first Senecan tragedy was the work of Albertino Mussato, identified by Del Virgilio as Lovati's poetic heir, and by Boccaccio as a close friend of Dante. His *Ecerinis* (1315), "indeed the first tragedy of Western theatre", was modelled on *Thyestes* but based on a recent historical event, the tyranny of Ezzelino III, a veritable Nero, and part of a patriotic engagement at a time of struggles for autonomy in the Northern city-states (Pastore-Stocchi 1973, 25): by order of the Commune, it was read publicly every year as a political antidote[6],

4 See the richly illustrated Lojkine 2019, 183-220.

5 Jerome writes in the *De viris illustribus*, cap. xii, that he would not have included him in his catalogue of Saints but for this correspondence, *nisi me illae Epistolae provocarent, quae leguntur a plurimis, Pauli ad Senecam, et Senecae ad Paulum*. In *Tableau des écrivains ecclésiastiques ou Livre des hommes illustres*, 1838.

6 See the commentaries of the grammarians Guizzardo and Castellano in Mussato 1900, 109. Anna Fontes' analysis of the play and its political context (Fontes 2012) stresses the importance of Boethius' *Consolatio* as its philosophical model, along with Seneca's literary model. Ezzelino da Romano ruled Padua from 1236 to 1259.

evidence that the writers' interest in Seneca extended beyond his literary talents.

It was at the request of Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, possibly after his encounter with Mussato at the Italian court of Emperor Henry VII, that the Dominican Nicholas Trevet (c.1260-c.1330), son of a justice in eyre, already notorious for his commentaries of Boethius' *Consolatio*, undertook to elucidate Seneca's tragedies (Dufal 2020). Designed as reading guides, Trevet's *expositiones* of the *Tragedies* constitute a vast critical apparatus of antique pagan and Christian literature, yet are often dismissed by critics as scholastic paraphrases[7]. Grace Wilson, for instance, does not believe that Chaucer knew them, since they are lacking in "moral as well as aesthetic remark": "Further decreasing the chance that Chaucer knew the plays through Trevet's commentaries is the nature of those commentaries themselves". They "seem quite mechanical", often telling where scenes divide, or which character makes which speech. "Their greatest strength lies in supplying synonyms and paraphrases, with many an 'id est' and 'scilicet'" (Wilson 1993, 143-144). Never mind the fact, attested by the numerous surviving manuscripts, that this very strength, and Trevet's vast erudition, made them useful to countless readers. His commentaries had a large circulation around the networks of scholars and writers in France, Italy, England. Boccaccio owned a copy, and used it repeatedly in his works (Mazza 1966, 55-56).

The story of Constance in Trevet's Anglo-Norman *Les Cronicles* is the source of Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale". Gower used the same story to illustrate envy in his *Confessio Amantis*[8]. With or without Trevet's help, Seneca's fame grew in England, among other media, via *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer, appointed justice of the peace for Kent in 1385, no doubt spoke from experience when he portrayed a corrupt 'maunciple' of the Temple, the lecherous judge Appius, a very Angelo, the Summoner who knows no Latin and only two or three legal terms, or a greedy sergeant-at-law – "al was fee symple to hym in effect" (Chaucer 1988, l. 319, 567-86). Discussing pre-

7 Dufal (96) notes, among many intertextual elements, a comparison between Boethius' *Consolatio* I, v, and the third chorus of *Hippolytus*, ll. 959-88.

8 See Correale 1991; Dauby 2011.

cedents, the Elizabethan recorder, William Fleetwood of Clifford's Inn, would observe "That Chawcer, sometimes a Speaker in this parliament howse, said well, *Elecet nos per implere omnem iustitiam*" (Hartley 1981, 358)[9].

Seneca is hailed as Nero's 'maister' in *The Monk's Tale*, "For of moralitee he was the flower". He was much dreaded by his pupil, "For he fro vyces wolde hym ay chastise / Discreetly, as by word and nat by dede", which suggests to some that his own conduct was not faultless, to others that he abstained from corporal punishment, though according to William of Aragon (c.1240-1300), a commentator of Boethius, at the fatal dinner Nero remembered being struck by Seneca when a boy (Taylor 1998, 111). Whatever his methods, Seneca taught Nero that "an emperour moot need / Be vertuous and hate tirannye", before he fell victim to it. Numerous story-tellers of *The Canterbury Tales* quote Seneca. The Manciple recommends the reading of Solomon, David and Seneca to prevent rash speaking, and ward off tale-tellers of perilous matter. An indignant Host, revolted by the lecherous justice in the Physician's tale, wishes "As shameful deeth as herte may devise / Come to thise juges and their advocats" (*Pardoner's Prologue*, Chaucer 1988, ll. 290-91).

Scholars vary hugely in their interpretations of these references, whether they should be taken as sound advice to the nobility or obvious parody. Grace Wilson notes that they are made by the most preacherly pilgrims, and create amusing contrasts with the actual behaviour of rogues like the Summoner and the Pardoner who quote *De ira*. Some at least of these quotations are clearly ironical. As so much else in Chaucer, they "would serve either straight teaching, parody, or (the most likely) "'simple' entertainment" (Wilson 1993, 139). Shakespeare who has Seneca's name mentioned only once, by the sententious and unvirtuous Polonius, may well betray a touch of Chaucer's irony. Like Chaucer's tales, his plays teem with minor judicial employees, clerks, notaries, scriveners occasionally denouncing unfair procedures like Hastings' trial in *Richard III*, and

9 On 16 May 1572, *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I* (Hartley 1981). The matter discussed was fraudulent conveyance. Perhaps the recorder had in mind their election when he forged the verb *elecere*. The exact quote, from the Vulgate, Matthew 3:15, is *sic enim decet nos implere omnem iustitiam*.

several major ones who run the gamut from unscrupulous Shallow to the Lord Chief Justice of *Henry IV*.

The Canterbury Tales took some inspiration from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and some of their material from his *De casibus virorum illustrium*[10]. Nero's downfall figures in the Monk's *de casibus* list between "the Erle Hugelyn of Pize" and "Oloferne, which Fortune ay kiste". The Monk had thought of telling the pilgrims a life of Saint Edward, "Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle". And since the word was not largely known in England, he offers a full definition:

> Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bookes maken us memorie,
> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
> (*Prologue to the Monk's Tale*, ll. 1973-77)

The first fall narrated is Lucifer's, who fell for his sin, and dragged Adam down into hell. Not fatal errors, as in Boccaccio, but sins, receive their due punishment. Thus Chaucer, who like the Wife of Bath "Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece", passed on to the Middle Ages the formula drawn from his own translation of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*: "What other thinges bywaylen the criinges of Tragedies. but only the dedes of fortune. that with an vnwar stroke ouerturneth the realmes of grete nobley" (Chaucer, trans. of Boethius, 1868, 35).

Tragic Mirrors

Boethius featured in Boccaccio's *de casibus* tales as victim of the barbarous tyrant Theodoric the Great, and was included by the Benedictine monk John Lydgate among the tragic figures of the *Fall of Princes*. The Prologue to the *Fall* traces the tradition to Seneca, also a victim of tyranny:

> Senek in Rome, thoruh his hih prudence
> Wrot tragedies of great moralitie. (Lydgate 1924, ll. 253-54)

10 On the extent of Boccaccio's influence, see Koff and Schildgen, eds, 2000.

Lydgate names as authors of tragedies Seneca, Tully, Petrarch, "who John Bochas told how Princes fell into distress", and gives praise to Chaucer, "who refined our language", along with a list of his remarkable works. The *Fall of Princes* was adapted from Boccaccio via Laurent de Premierfait's French translation. Lydgate's printer, John Wayland, aimed to continue "where as Bochas lefte, vnto this presente time, chiefly of suche as Fortune has dalyed with here in this ylande" (Baldwin 1938, 66).

A devoted servant of Henry VIII, Edward Hall of Gray's Inn was well attuned to the reversals that caused the downfalls of ambitious statesmen he had witnessed himself, for "suche is worldly vnstablenes, and so waueryng is false flattering fortune" (Hall 1809, 45). It was this major Senecan theme in his *Union of the two famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* that guided a group of Inns members to use its material when they undertook to write a sequel to the *Fall of Princes*, under the reign of Mary Tudor[11]. Their *Mirror for Magistrates* made several momentous innovations to Lydgate's model. Instead of reporting stories going back to the origins of humanity, the 'Tragedies', borrowed from Hall, spanned the same stretch of English history as his chronicle, and were told in the first person by the ghosts of eminent statesmen, returned from Hades. They also moved further away from Boccaccio by confessing their faults like criminals at the bar, whatever part fortune may have played in their downfall, rather than pitiful victims of fate. Later editions extended as far back as the British kings. The edition of 1587, closest in time to the writing of Shakespeare's first Henriad, includes thirty-four tragedies drawn from Hall. The *Mirror*'s Dame Fortune, a combination of God's will and fate, draws her main features, like Chaucer's, from Boethius.

Were Seneca's plays written as advice to Nero, or urges to unthrone him, no one knew for sure, but he had witnessed at first hand many a bloody deed, and managed to survive four emperors before falling victim to the fifth, which made him a reliable instructor on the growth of tyranny, the responsibilities of magistrates, the mutability of court life. To the historian Paul Veyne, the life and death of Seneca "are a true novel of Neronian times" (Veyne ed., in Seneca 1993,

11 See Lucas 1994, 31-54.

iii). Or of Tudor times, since his plots could offer interesting parallels with recent events in England.

The philosopher plays a brief role as Nero's mentor in *Octavia*, long erroneously attributed to him. When Seneca enters at the opening of Act II, he already knows that fortune smiled on him a while "To th'ende that I to honours court extold / From stately seate might have the greater fall" (*Octavia*. *The Ninth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 163). His advice, that a monarch should be obeyed out of love rather than fear, is fiercely rejected by his pupil. But the plot obliquely proves the counsellor right, when Nero's decision to divorce Octavia and marry his mistress Poppea causes a popular riot. Elizabethan admirers of Seneca could easily draw topical parallels, especially when England is brought into the picture by Octavia's nurse. Nutrix recalls the reign of Claudius, who "held the world in his precinct", and whose line is now doomed to extinction by fortune, as Nero's will be if he does not mend his ways:

> The Britaine Ocean coaste that long was free,
> He rulde at will, and made it to agree
> Their Romaine Gallies great for to embrace.
> (*Octavia*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 146-47)

Thomas Nuce dedicated his translation of *Octavia* to Robert Dudley, Elizabeth's closest favourite, whose wife Amy Robsart had just died in mysterious circumstances[12]. There is no evidence that he had any thought of Henry VIII, yet some at least among his readers must have remembered Queen Catherine of Aragon when Nutrix urges Octavia to bear Nero's infidelities patiently, "for such like paine, / The queene of gods was forced to sustaine", offering her "on earth Queene Junos princely place". Octavia's fears epitomized Catherine's fate:

> Into what banisht exiles place,
> Woulde Nero haue mee for to passe,
> Or fortune bids, with frowning face? (*Octavia. The Ninth Tragedy*, vol. II, 187)

12 The conclusion of the inquest that it was an accident did not stop the rumours accusing Dudley of having organized her death, a version developed in *Leicester's Commonwealth*. Nuce's translation was published in 1561 while he was a student at Cambridge.

Similar topical allusions could be detected in *The Winter's Tale*, which stages the trial of a foreign princess and the banishment of her 'bastard' daughter. The unfair trial of Hermione was performed by the King's Men in the Parliament Chamber of Blackfriars, the very place where the historical Queen Catherine had stood before the legatine court, a scene reenacted in *Henry VIII*.

Seneca had already provided Thomas More of Lincoln's Inn, Erasmus' friend, with lessons in political philosophy:

> When a comedy of Plautus is being played you propose to come on stage in the garb of a philosopher, and repeat Seneca's speech to Nero from the *Octavia*. Wouldn't it be better to take a silent role than to say something inappropriate, and thus turn the play into a tragi-comedy? (More 1975, 29)

Nero was one of More's models of tyranny when he wrote the *History of Richard III*, which would give material and food for thought to Shakespeare's witty villain. It was included in the Protestant Edward Hall's chronicle of the last Plantagenet reigns, the main source of Shakespeare's first Henriad. Roger Ascham, a staunch Protestant like Hall, had only mockeries for his "indenture English", but thought More's *History* so good that "if the rest of our story of England were so done, we might well compare with *Fraunce, Italy*, or *Germany* in that behalf" (Ascham 1904, 126). Ascham's distrust of foreign goods led him to proclaim England the new seat of classicism:

> Now, let Italian, and Latin itself, Spanishe, French, Douch, and Englishe bring forth their lerning, and recite their Authors, Cicero onelie excepted, and one or two moe in Latin, they be all patched cloutes and ragges, in comparison of faire wouen broade clothes. (Ascham 1968, 17 v°)

His textile metaphor would have numerous followers, among them Gascoigne and other Inns members who were torn like him between love of the classics and love of the nation.

Enter Shakespeare

Perhaps owing to Ben Jonson's famous comment on Shakespeare's little Latin and less Greek, literary tradition has long considered him ignorant of ancient tragedy beyond Seneca. If Shakespeare read the extant Latin versions, "he gained little from the experience", according to the Martindales, who dismiss Euripides in favour of Seneca whom the Elizabethans much preferred (Martindale and Martindale 1994, 41-44). Yet Shakespeare shows from the start traces of both influences. Various dramatic innovations attributed to Seneca, he could have found in Gascoigne's *Jocasta*. This play, which Gabriel Harvey aptly defined as "Quasi Synopsis Tragoediarum Omnium"[13], a compendium of all the extant Theban plays, has many elements that would be refined in the histories: fatal curses, hubris, revenge, ghosts, stichomythia (all of which were Greek before their adoption by Seneca), oath breaking, prophecies and soothsayers, and strong feminine figures (Goy-Blanquet 2008, 286-303). Distinctly Euripidean are Antigone's stance for equity against state law, Creon's dispute with Tiresias about divine justice, and the multiplicity of view points stressed by Gascoigne,

> How many men so many mindes,
> And that, that one man judgeth good and just,
> Some other deemes as deepely to be wrong.
> (*Jocasta*, I.ii.353-55)[14]

The play also shows a rare understanding of *hamartia*,

> So deepely faulteth none, the which unwares
> Doth fall into the crime he can not shunne:
> (*Jocasta*, I.i.134-35)

not a sin but a tragic mistake, where a majority of Elizabethan playwrights anticipated Vindice's view that "When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good" (*The Revengers Tragaedie*, III.v.199).

Richard III exhibits other more Senecan marks. The slanging match with Lady Anne definitely has some of the Ercles bite. When asked by

13 On the opening page of his copy. See Demetriou 2021.

14 See Gascoigne 1907.

the usurper Lycus what wedding gift she wants, Megara retorts: "Thine owne death els, or els the death of mee". But Lycus's blend of irony and insult in addressing her father-in-law Amphitryon – "To Jove thou gav'ste a wife, thou shalt nowe geve one to a king" – is not quite up to Richard's, and fails to move her (*Hercules Furens. The First Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 22). Clarence's nightmare carries faint echoes of Theseus' account of his trip to hell. Richard's offer to recreate Edward's children in their sister's womb recalls the incestuous Œdipus who "fils the haples wombe wherin himself did lie / With graceless seede" (Neville's translation, *Oedipus. The Fifth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 212).

Also Senecan are the long narratives peppered with mythological references that interrupt the action with sorrowful meditations on the tyrannies of life, Henry VI's pastoral nostalgia in the midst of battle, Richard II's hollow crown and Prince Hal's, who prematurely weighs its golden load of insomnia. The first Henriad abounds in choric speeches, spoken out of character by protagonists like Exeter who speak for all England, in character by the wailing queens. Margaret is both a dispossessed queen, mother, wife, and a raging Senecan figure of hatred. As in Seneca, the family feud extends over several generations. Richard, often read as the unknowing instrument of retribution, is also the distorted spawn of the century's civil wars. Increasingly introspective soliloquies become naturalized as part of their persona, from Richard III to Richard II and beyond. Richard II's deposition incorporates the tragic fall of medieval monarchy in his own tragedy.

The "Senecan soundbites", as Elizabeth Sandis likes to call them (2021, 227), if indeed designed as intensifiers, can be quite sparse. At the conclusion of *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora is killed before she utters a word, where Thyestes had hundreds. Shakespeare's Andromache is allowed only fifteen lines, against four long scenes in *Troas*. The fall of Troy looms in the near future of *Troilus and Cressida*, as it did in *Troilus and Criseyde*. It has already taken place at the opening of *Troas*, perhaps the oddest instance of Seneca's contribution to the canon. The two plays share several characters and events either staged or reported, yet could not sound farther apart. In Heywood's translation, Andromache dreams that the 'spright' of her loving husband urges her to save their son from the Greeks. Andromache has fearful dreams too, and vainly tries, Calpurnia like, to dissuade Hector from going to fight Achilles, but is sharply scolded by her spouse: "You

train me to offend you, get you in". With harsh lucidity, she reproves him for placing honour above his and his family's lives: "do not count it holy / To hurt by being just". His last words to her – "Andromache, I am offended with you: / Upon the love you bear me, get you in" – show little love in return (*Troilus and Cressida*, V.iii.4, 19-19a, 74-75)[15]. The mention at I.ii that after being struck down by Ajax, "He chid Andromache and struck his armourer", has already smeared the epic portrait of the hero, a treatment inflicted to the whole unheroic cast. Like reason and love, honour and justice keep little company together.

Astyanax does not appear in *Troilus and Cressida*, but reminiscences of his fate are audible in *King John*, Constance's passionate pleas on behalf of her son, Arthur's begging "Good my mother, peace", the proleptic speculations of King Lewis and Pandulph around his fall. Arthur leaps from the walls of the castle as Astyanax did from the walls of Troy: "In midst of Pryams land (alas) the child leapt downe to ground". The Messenger who reports Astyanax's and Polyxene's deaths in *Troas*, the horrendous wounds on their bodies, the complex reactions of the watchers, and his conclusion, "Each people wept", Greeks and Trojans alike (*Troas. The Sixth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 50, 52), may have led Shakespeare to experiment with the emotional power of a narrative, when he has Tyrrel report the murder of Edward's children.

While thus sparing the audience one more gory scene, Shakespeare may also have been inspired to test the classical dictum, that a dramatic poet needs to discern what should be told and what can be shown, by Seneca's ineffability *topos*:

> I am ashamed my destinies fowle (O Queene) to thunder out,
> And openly to blaze my feare my trembling minde doth doubt:
> Yet out it goes. (*Oedipus*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 193)[16]

For Horace and Aristotle, the procedure ensures against ridicule and dispenses with the representation of ugly or tedious scenes. But Shakespeare's recourse to narrative is not necessarily guided by decorum or convenience. *Henry VI Part Two* both shows and narrates

15 All references are to *Shakespeare, Œuvres complètes*, bilingual edition, ed. by Jean-Michel Déprats and Gisèle Venet (Shakespeare 2002-2016).

16 Blandine Le Callet, n. 19 to *Œdipe* (Le Callet 2022, 142-43), lists the uses of this '*topos* de l'indicible' in six of Seneca's plays.

the Duchess of Gloucester's arrest. In *Part Three*, the audience witnesses the Duke of York's death, then hears the messenger's report to his sons. Warwick's threats against Edward at the French court are repeated word for word in the next scenes. Sometimes explained away by 'revision' theories, these doublets suggest that Shakespeare is testing the resonances of each mode. They are deliberate when he tries both manners in the same scene as if to establish which is more effective, and explores the emotions released by a story well told. The enemies of the captured York watch his sufferings with no sign of compassion, until he predicts how the tale of his tortures will affect future audiences. Where the raw event performed before their eyes has failed to awake pity or fear, now one of the watchers is moved by his words: "What, weeping-ripe, my Lord Northumberland?"[17].

Atreus' servant, Medea's and Clytemnestra's nurses, the chorus, are there to recall the rules of humanity to masters devoured by a *furor* leading them from *dolor*, a despair that triggers the action, to a *nefas* beyond the limits of human achievements (Dupont and Letessier 2011, ch. 4). They advise moderation, virtue, piety, and remain unheeded, a constant in Seneca's plays, who himself failed to influence Nero, as would so many Tudor mentors. Gorboduc seeks the advice of his counsellors and after listening to them for some two hundred lines, sees no reason to change his plans. Their speeches have no effect on the action, again a strong difference with Shakespeare's, but dispense well-meaning political or ethical lessons. Additional stanzas inserted here and there by Seneca's translators could stress moral teachings, and give the last word to Christian justice. As Robert Miola points out, after speeches in the high Senecan style, *Gorboduc* comes to the un-Senecan conclusion that Jove is the author of all just requital. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare "struggles with the challenge of moulding classical, Christian and native traditions into coherent and forceful drama" (Miola 1992, 31). The crucial point of challenge is the place of *jus*, the Latin name of a Roman creation, in an unchristian society. *Hercules Oetaeus* paints a heaven filled with the monsters that the hero has killed, only to see the jealous Juno turn them into constellations. Dramatic irony comes full circle when he is poisoned by the Hydra's blood. Yet his request to Jove, "Now show thy valiaunt sonne his sire, or set him in the clowd-

17 *Henry VI Part III*, I.iv.172, *Histoires* I, Déprats 2008.

es" (*Hercules Oetaeus. The Tenth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, 19), is granted at the end: "from heaven where I am set, / You heare my voyce" (The Fifthe Acte, in Seneca 1927, 256)[18]. Thus, the last of the *Tenne Tragedies*, whether wholly Seneca's work or not, provides a more hopeful end to the Elizabethan sequence.

The Senecan plays show unresolved tensions between capricious fortune and vengeful retribution: kings "are but dust", subject to "waveryng welth", yet they suffer the penalty of their own faults. This contradiction, which still raises many academic questions[19], did not greatly trouble medieval readers of Boethius: his *Consolatio* depicted a cyclical regularity, a strong moral law, a superior Providence, behind Fortune's apparent vagaries. A form of divine justice will at long last be executed on the guilty characters, as promised by Thyestes' appeal to the gods, or Cassandra's prophecy in *Agamemnon*. Theseus repents his hasty condemnation of Hippolytus, owns himself guilty and calls on his own head the worst tortures endured in Hades by former hubristic offenders: "Now with thyne owne hands on thy selfe due vengeaunce do bestow" (*Hippolytus. The Fourth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 182). Doubts about the providential order of the world would mature with the years into major tragedy, at some distance from the Inns, yet Theseus and Hercules may well have stood as potent models for Othello's or Richard III's standing at the bar of their own guilty conscience.

New Words, New World

To Thomas Nashe, "Seneca let blood line by line and page by page at length must needs die to our stage" (Preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, Nashe 1958, 316). In Burrow's opinion, confirmed by Nashe's ironical comments on "English Seneca read by candlelight", the style of the *Tenne Tragedies* must have seemed old-fashioned to the new generation of playwrights: Heywood probably thought his own *Troas* a modish and modern affair, but throughout the translation, "he echoes the neo-medieval idiom of *The Mirror for Magistrates*" (Burrow 2013, 172). To put it kindly, as Ker and Winston do, "Heywood carefully unpacks the

18 Scholars since Daniel Heinsius have doubted this was fully Seneca's work, and still disagree on its authorship.

19 Winston 2006, 49, quotes Frederick Kiefer and Bruce Smith on this point.

Latin in a way that fully exploits its semantic potential" (Ker and Winston 2013, 43). Shakespeare would have his work cut out if he aimed to renovate old English Seneca and give it dramatic energy, while providing his actors with lines they could actually pronounce on stage. Indeed, rereading him after Heywood's surfeit of alliteration, padded lines, Latinate word order, is a welcome relief. How could one weep for Hecuba when she laments that "The rest are lost and this alone now doth me mother call" (*Troas*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 45), or share Lycus'glee, "chaunce geven hath to us a place alone", when he plans to conquer Megara's hand? (*Hercules Furens*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 19).

Heywood's Thyestes opened his final speech with a thunderous appeal to

> O Kyng of Dytis dungeon darke, and grysly ghosts of hell,
> That in the deepe and dredfull denns, of blackest Tartare dwell.
> (Heywood's original soliloquy for *Thyestes*, 1560, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 93)

Not content with exhuming Thyestes' ghost from "the darkened dens, which Ditys low doth keep", in *Agamemnon* Studley further stresses the continuity by surpassing Heywood's alliterative feast:

> The flashing flames and furious force of fiery fervent heate,
> Outraging in my boyling brest, my burning bones doth beate.
> (*Agamemnon. The Eighth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 107)

Newton is not to be outdone: Syllanus, Octavia's first husband, is made "A carkasse colde pore soule, and curelesse corse" (*Octavia*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 151). But neither translator follows the liberties taken by their pioneer. Considering that in *Troas* "the names of so manye unknowen Countreyes, Mountaynes, Desertes, and Woodes, shoulde have no grace in the English tongue", and be too tedious to explain, Heywood wrote another beginning to the Third Chorus, omitting the forty places where the Trojan women are to be exiled (Heywood, "To the Reader", *Troas*, in Seneca 1927, vol. II, 4)[20]. Even learned readers may have had a hard time deciphering Studley's

20 The latest French translation of the tragedies, by Blandine Le Callet (Le Callet 2022), helps readers with a 185-page-long dictionary of mythological characters and places at the end of the volume.

convoluted periphrases – "Phrygian Prophet' for Cassandra, 'Phoebus prelat Sminthicall" for Chryses (*Agamemnon*, Seneca 1927, vol. II, 109-110) – and references to minor mythological characters like Cygnus. The Chorus's "*grandaevi lassique senes*" is lavishly rendered as "The olde and auncient men well stept and grown in years, / Whose feeble trembling age procureth hory hayres" (*Agamemnon*, Seneca 1927, vol. II, 115). Indeed, to quote Eliot again, "The *Tenne Tragedies* must have shown conclusively to the most sensitive contemporary ears that the fourteener had had its day", no need to look much further for the "Ercles bombast, ridiculed by Shakespeare, Jonson and Nashe" (Eliot in Seneca 1927, l, xxxiii).

In moments of extreme stress, the characters of *Titus Andronicus* express their anxiety through borrowed fragments from Seneca, Vergil, Horace or Ovid. Why they speak garbled Latin has been variably explained. If they are the erudite Peele's work, as Brian Vickers thinks, they must be deliberate adaptations (Vickers 2002, 148-243)[21]. Why they quote the original Seneca, instead of the contemporary *Tenne Tragedies*, is another matter. At II.i, Demetrius' exit lines make direct reference to Seneca: *Sit fas aut nefas* (be it proper or improper, just or unjust, permitted or forbidden…). *Per Stygia, per manes vehor* is a free rendering of Phaedra's passionate vow, *Per Styga, per amnes igneos amens sequar* (through Styx, through rivers of fire I shall madly follow, *Phaedra*, l. 1180), perhaps because the Styx had dropped out of Studley's translation: "through burning fire runne after thee I shall" (*Hippolytus. The Fourth Tragedy*, in Seneca 1927, vol. I, 161). At IV.i, Titus's *Magni dominator poli, / Tam lentus audit scelera, tam lentus vides* ? takes another leaf from Seneca's Hippolytus: – *Magne regnator deum / Tam lentus audit scelera, tam lentus vides* ? – rather than wordy Studley's: "O Souveraygne Sire of Gods, dost thou abide so long to heare / This vile abomination? So long dost thou forbeare / To see this haynous villany?" (*Phaedra*, ll. 671-72; *Hippolytus*, Seneca 1927, vol. I, 160)[22]. The next quote, *Terras Astrea reliquit* (IV.iii.4), deplores the flight from the earth of Astrea, goddess of justice, which marked the

21 So does Chaudhuri 2014 who argues that the play's fascination for dismemberment reflects the nature of its collaborative authorship.

22 Sandis points out this line as a moment of heightened drama, "when the sound of Seneca rings out" (Sandis 2021, 227).

beginning of the Iron Age in *Metamorphoses*, and in the *Roman de la Rose* translated by Chaucer[23]. As Nuce's Seneca puts it, "The Starry specked virgin flower of skies, / Which Justice hight, [… *etc. etc.*] Each earthly stound is fled" (*Octavia*, Seneca 1927, vol. II, 165). The maxim, "*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice" (I.i.283), which draws its origin from Justinian's *Institutiones*, winks at the Inns of court students in the audience (Nuttall 2021).

Young Shakespeare is peacocking, Peter Stein commented while directing *Tito Andronico* in Italy. Shakespeare does indeed, out-kydding Kyd, quoting Seneca from the original, but he wears his Latin culture with a difference (Goy-Blanquet 1993). Hippolytus accused himself, he did not invoke the gods like Titus who sends them desperate arrows. Still, both Hippolytus and Titus are amazed at man's capacity for evil, Miola points out, both protest against divine silence, a protest echoing throughout the period, up to *Lear* and *Pericles*. To Amphitryon's question, "Who is the rector there of ryght, and judge of equity?" Theseus explains that several gods, each ruling over a separate place of judgment, are appointed to the task, "and guilt to th'author theare / Returnes, and th'hurtfull with their owne example punisht bee". He then unrolls the pains suffered by the "Gylty Ghosts" of Ixion, Tantalus and their ilk. Yet Juno can freely unleash her fury on the guiltless Hercules, driving him to murder his family. The sun disappears at noon, plunging the world into darkness, as it will Thyestes', and Macbeth's Scotland (*Hercules Furens*, Seneca, 1927, vol. I, 32-34). When he comes to his senses, Hercules wants revenge, then understands he is the killer:

> THESEUS
> Who ever yet to ignoraunce hath geven name of cryme?
> HERCULES
> Full oftentymes did errour greate the place of gylt obtayne.
> (*Hercules Furens*, The Fifth Acte, 49)

In the Latin original, Amphitryon pleads that Hercules' error is not a crime: *Quis nomen usquam sceleris errori addidit?* and receives this an-

23 Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, a partial translation of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung's allegorical poem, is mentioned by the narrator in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women.*

swer: *Saepe error ingens sederis obtinuit locum*, madness is no excuse. In the translation, the argument over the nature of the tragic fault is nipped in the bud. Theseus begs "Of this one only cryme I do a pardon of thee crave", and Hercules allows himself no extenuating circumstances: "Shall he geve pardon to himselfe, that to none els it gave?" (*Hercules Furens*, Seneca 1927, vol. I, 50)[24]. He is resolved to execute his own sentence by suicide, as will the Elizabethan heroes of revenge tragedies.

Hercules' fate, Medea's, and other victims' turned criminals, raises a central question. Could the silence of the gods, or their active meanness, give license to the taking of justice into one's hands? There was no easy way out of the dilemma for Christian lawyers trained to abide by the law, no ambiguity about its Pauline terms: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"[25]. Where Shakespeare's difference grows most significant is on the highly popular theme of revenge. In one of his early plays, we saw three sons burn with proper Senecan hatred after the murder of their fathers, and vow destruction to the murderer's kin:

> Westmoreland
> Plantagenet, of thee and these thy sons,
> Thy kinsmen and thy friends, I'll have more lives
> Than drops of blood were in my father's veins.
> (*3 Henry VI*, I.i.95-97)
>
> Clifford
> The sight of any of the house of York
> Is as a Fury to torment my soul;
> And till I root out their accursed line,
> And leave not one alive, I live in hell.
> (*3 Henry VI*, I.iii.30-33)
>
> Richard
> I cannot weep, for all my body's moisture
> Scarce serves to quench my furnace-burning heart;
> Nor can my tongue unload my heart's great burden,
> For selfsame wind that I should speak withal
> Is kindling coals that fires all my breast […]

---

24 In the Latin text, ll. 1237-38.

25 Epistle to the Romans, 12:19, King James Bible.

Richard, I bear thy name: I'll venge thy death,
Or die renowned by attempting it.
(*3 Henry VI*, II.i.79-83)

A new note is struck when Macduff is informed that his wife and children have been killed:

MALCOM
Be comforted:
Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.
MACDUFF
He has no children. All my pretty ones?
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?
MALCOM
Dispute it like a man.
MACDUFF
I shall do so.
But I must also feel it as a man.
(*Macbeth*, IV.iii.214-22)

Three sons, again, are expected to avenge their fathers in *Hamlet*. Claudius the fratricide knows his sins cannot be absolved if he continues to enjoy their benefits. Hamlet does not kill him yet, but waits in the wings with further explorations of conflicting imperatives. To Burrow, he is haunted "by a whole range of classical actions and modes of speech that threaten to absorb him"; his self-berating soliloquy "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I" is a modernized Senecan pastiche of Atreus' *Ignave, iners, enervis* (*Thyestes*, l. 176), possibly "directed against earlier Elizabethan Senecan heroes who talk big and act bloody". Thus Hamlet's inaction is "partly a consequence of his troubled and hybrid inheritance" (Burrow 2013, 174-177)[26].

Eliot's diagnosis, remember, was that Hamlet was dominated by an emotion in excess of the facts as they appear (Eliot 1921, 101).

26 Burrow also notes Hamlet's refusal to let "the soul of Nero enter this firm bosom", a rhetorical exercise "done in a grand guignol manner" (175). Here Perry (2021, 80) notes an awareness of both Latin text and translation, proof of a rich intertextual mine.

Did Shakespeare so mishandle his material, or is this inaction the mark of his developing thought, away from the typical avenger? Laertes on being told that Hamlet killed his father, vows "To cut his throat i' the church", with Claudius's unreserved approval: "No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize". Fortinbras has "Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes" to recover his inheritance. But Hamlet ponders, and wonders whether a solitary act of vengeance, or even taking arms against a sea of troubles, can put the world back on its hinges. Measured against Laertes' rash behaviour, or Fortinbras's cold unprincipled determination, the hero's "sceptical variation" on the theme of revenge places him on a higher ontological level. His death, like Brutus's, like Lear's, leaves the world poorer. After Horatio, Edgar mourns this tragic loss at the conclusion of Lear's progress from tyrannical old man to crucified victim: "The oldest hath borne most; we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long"[27].

Perry thinks it possible to imagine Shakespeare's development from *Richard III* to *Hamlet* "as operating in concert with an ongoing interest in Seneca rather than as jettisoning him". Not only does Hamlet deliberate in terms close to *De ira* (I.xii, 1-2), he is also "Senecan in his emotional turbulence and competitive aggressiveness", and has no qualms about killing protagonists who spy on him (Perry 2021, 18, 81, 87-88). Here one might object that they are hoist with their own petard, justly killed by their own treachery, a recurrent theme in the play. Seneca may well be the source of Hamlet's deliberative habits, and mimetic rivalry with Marston a significant element in Shakespeare's design, but its originality is the inclusion of revengers determined to execute a form of justice made to appear by comparison as archaic as the honour killings denounced today by Iranian women.

In reopening the case of Peele's part in *Titus* and *King John*, Jonathan Bate identifies a familiar pattern: whether Shakespeare was revising or dramatizing others' works, he "tended to begin by following his principal source quite closely then to veer ever further from it as he developed the action and the characters in his own distinctive

27 *Hamlet*, IV.vii.123-24, I.i.98, *Tragédies* I, Déprats 2002, *King Lear*, V.iii.300-301, *Tragédies* II, Déprats 2002.

manner" (Bate in Shakespeare 2018, 133)[28]. This applies equally well to Seneca's part in his plays. "What passes for thought, in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries" has gradually grown into a confident, singular (with due respect to Perry), mature reflection on human justice. At both ends of the poet's writing career, from *The Comedy of Errors* to *Cymbeline*, harsh princely authorities declare themselves unable to show mercy – they "may pity, though not pardon", their hands are tied by the law of the country. The first of many trial scenes in the canon is Elinor of Gloucester's in *Henry VI Part Two*, a mockery of justice designed to bring down her husband, the Lord Protector. Richard II, Hermione, Queen Catherine will be made to stand before equally unfair courts of law, whose verdict is prewritten. Ulysses' sycophantic eulogy of hierarchy,

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark what discord follows: […]
> Force should be right, or, rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too…
> (*Troilus and Cressida*, I.iii.104-13)

is actually a warrior's call to arms: "Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength" (I.iii.132). Informal courts are held in *Julius Caesar, King Lear*, where the audience stand as jury. In *Measure for Measure*, Angelo reminds them that

> The jury passing on the prisoner's life
> May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two
> Guiltier than him they try […]
> (*Measure for Measure*, II.i.19-21)

thus bidding everyone to reflect on their own faults. Before inner courts of conscience, Clarence's murderers, Richard III, Claudius, Othello, like prisoners at the bar plead "Guilty! Guilty!" Where the wronged Tamora's fury could never be sated, Isabella demands "justice, justice, justice, justice!" from Duke Vincentio, yet when pressed by another innocent victim, she begs forgiveness for her

28 Bate's interest in the stage history of the play does not extend beyond Deborah Warner's RSC production in 1989.

offender (*Measure for Measure*, V.i.29; V.i.434-52). Thanks to her plea, and thanks to an amazing conjunction of tricks, disguise, faith that only the theatre, like Providence, can create in a post-lapsarian world, the 'renegade' tolerance so fiercely denounced by staunch Calvinists wins the day.

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