

## TABLEAUX AND SPECTACLES: APPRECIATION OF SENECA TRAGEDY BY EUROPEAN DRAMATISTS OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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Did Sophocles or Seneca exercise a greater influence on Renaissance drama? While the twenty-first century public might assume the Greek dramatist, in recent decades literary scholars have come to appreciate that the model of tragedy for the Renaissance was the plays of the Roman Seneca rather than those of the Athenian tragedians. In his important essay on Seneca and Shakespeare written in 1932, T.S. Eliot wrote that Senecan sensibility was ‘the most completely absorbed and transmogrified, because it was already the most diffused’ in Shakespeare’s world.<sup>1</sup> Tony Boyle, one of the leading rehabilitators of Seneca in recent years, has rightly said, building on the work of Robert Miola and Gordon Braden in particular, that ‘Seneca encodes Renaissance theatre’ from the time that Albertino Mussato wrote his neo-Latin tragedy *Ecerinis* in 1315 on into the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The present essay offers a complement and supplement to previous scholarship arguing that Seneca enjoyed a status at least equal to that of the Athenian tragedians for European dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My method will be to examine two plays, one in French and one in English, where the authors have combined dramatic elements taken from Seneca with elements taken from Sophocles. My examples are Robert Garnier’s play, staged and published in 1580, entitled *Antigone ou La Piété (Antigone or Piety)*, and the highly popular play by John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee entitled *Oedipus, A Tragedy*, staged in 1678 and published the following year.

In both cases, it has been widely assumed that Sophocles must have exercised the greater influence on the later playwrights.<sup>3</sup> This is mistaken: Seneca’s presence is irresistible and irrefutable. In particular, I suggest that the early modern playwrights share Seneca’s world view: they have the same taste for the presentation of static tableaux and amazing spectacles. Tableaux and spectacles are integral to the Roman *mentalité*, whereas their role is much more limited and

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1. Eliot (1950), 139.

2. Boyle (1997), 141. This approach to Seneca was pioneered by Cunliffe (1893) and developed by Lucas (1922), Charlton (1946), Jacquot (1964a), Braden (1985), Miola (1992), Boyle (1997), esp. 141–66, Davis (2003), and Ker and Winston (2012).

3. Thus George Steiner (1984), although he asserts that Seneca exerted a very powerful influence on Garnier (pp.138–43), is obsessed with the presence of Sophocles. Xanthopoulou (2008) in her 100 page study of Garnier’s *Antigone* and Racine’s *La Thebaïde* as avatars of Sophocles (p.95) barely mentions Seneca (on just three pages). And even when scholars clearly see Seneca’s merits, they can deprecate Seneca in the same breath as affirming his importance, for example, in her valuable study *Robert Garnier and Political Tragedy* (1969), Gillian Jondorf falls foul of the precise fault with which she taxes others.

constrained in Greek tragedy.<sup>4</sup> I will first show how Garnier used Seneca's tragedies to construct his play. For Garnier, as for Seneca, speech is more powerful than action.<sup>5</sup> As a result, during the first two acts, the portion of the play which contains the most similarities with Seneca, Garnier presents a series of static scenes, endowed with rhetorical debates and moral dilemmas. In the case of Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, I will explain, much more briefly, how the authors transformed the Sophoclean drama by appropriating material borrowed from Seneca, particularly the more spectacular moments of the Latin play. Both plays offer cases of *contaminatio* of the classical originals in which Sophocles and Seneca stand shoulder to shoulder.

I begin with Robert Garnier, the principal French playwright of the Renaissance, who has plausibly been named the father of French tragedy.<sup>6</sup> This said, in her 2006 book Florence Dobby-Poirson deplores the neglect or ignorance of sixteenth century tragic theatre in general and of Garnier's work in particular. She points out Garnier's depreciation at the hands of scholars, who criticise him for his 'excessively static action, his lack of psychology, his crushing weights of rhetoric'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, she writes: 'It is regrettable that the Comédie Française waited until 2005 to record in its repertoire this author who comprises part of our national heritage and whose works need to be revived.'<sup>8</sup> The criticisms of Garnier resemble those that were regularly directed towards Seneca until recently. There is a good reason for this: Garnier is a profoundly Senecan playwright. Why is this important? Because Garnier has established a Senecan

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4. I am not denying the presence of spectacle or tableaux in Greek tragedy; Aristotle includes spectacle as one of the six essential elements of tragedy (*Poetics* 1450a10) and at *Poetics* 1455b.32 he makes spectacle the last of four types of tragedy ('Tragedy has four species, the complicated, whose entire nature depends on *peripeteia* and recognition, the tragedy of *pathos*, for example those about Aias and Ixion, the tragedy of character, for example the *Phthiotides* and the *Peleus*, while the fourth is spectacle, like the *Phorcides* and *Prometheus* and any set in hell' (assuming that the suggestion ὄψις is the correct restoration in the textual crux here); similarly, for the role of tableaux in Greek tragedy, the title of Chapter 7 in Oliver Taplin's *Greek Tragedy in Action* (1978) is eloquent: 'Tableaux, noises and silences'. Rather, my claim is that these features are quintessential in Roman tragedy and as such affect Renaissance theatre profoundly.

5. By contrast, Aristotle in the *Poetics* attributes the utmost importance to action in his analysis of Greek tragedy.

6. Thus Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1898). This is not quite exact, since Étienne Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive* (1552) and Jean de la Taille's *Saül le furieux* (1572) preceded Garnier's activities. For an outline of the beginnings of French tragedy see Charlton (1946), 94-105; he remarks on the close familiarity of these early dramatists (103): 'In the critical years of its youth French Senecan tragedy was thus almost inevitably the product of a small exclusive group, appealing to a narrow circle of scholars'; he identifies Garnier as the end of this phenomenon of exclusivity (104).

7. Dobby-Poirson (2006), 9: 'action trop statique, manque de psychologie, poids écrasant de la rhétorique.'

8. Dobby-Poirson (2006), 8: 'Il est regrettable que la Comédie-Française ait attendu 2005 pour inscrire à son répertoire cet auteur qui fait partie de notre patrimoine et dont les œuvres ne demandent qu'à revivre.'

framework and language for French tragedy, which in turn profoundly influenced the tragedians of the ‘Grand Siècle’, notably Corneille and Racine.<sup>9</sup>

Garnier wrote seven tragedies during the fifteen years from 1568 onwards: *Porcie*, *Hippolyte*, *Cornélie*, *Marc-Antoine*, *La Troade*, *Antigone ou La Piété*, and *Les Juifves* (‘The Jewish Women’). From this list, even at first glance, one can see that Garnier was very interested in things Roman: three of his tragedies are inspired by Roman history, while three others take their subject matter from Senecan tragedies, and the last, *Les Juifves*, combines material from the Hebrew Bible with elements from Seneca’s *Troades* and *Thyestes*. Garnier quickly met with great success: thirty complete editions of his works were published between the years 1583-1620.

The play under consideration here is entitled *Antigone ou la Piété*. In this play, Garnier unfolds the complete story of Antigone, the daughter of Edipe and Jocaste. He begins with the moment when she is guiding Edipe, her blind father, into exile from the city of Thebes. Then we see the fatal battle between her brothers, Étéocle and Polynice, in fulfilment of Edipe’s curse, followed by the suicide of her mother Jocaste. Antigone then wishes to bury the corpse of her brother Polynice, which is forbidden by the new king Créon, but she is arrested. At the end of the fourth act, Antigone kills herself. In the fifth act, Garnier shows us the repercussions for Créon in the death of his son Hémon and of his wife.

This is the only play by Garnier equipped with a subtitle; that should alert us to pay attention to it.<sup>10</sup> I contend that Garnier built his conception of the role of Antigone primarily on Seneca’s tragedy entitled *Phoenician Women* and on the Roman idea of *pietas*. Of course, Garnier was also inspired by Greek tragedies including Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* as well as Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*, but the Roman influences far outweigh the Greek. In order to understand this, we need to forget our conception of Antigone as a figure of defiance against authority, a conception which comes from a tradition of presentations and adaptations developed during the twentieth century in works which took Sophocles’ *Antigone* as model. We must replace this conception with one of Antigone as a figure of devotion. As Simone Fraisse said in her book *Le mythe d’Antigone*, during the twentieth century, ‘Antigone n’est plus avec, elle est contre’ (‘Antigone is no longer “with”, she is “against”’).<sup>11</sup> But for the eras of the past, Antigone was above all a figure of devotion, devotion towards her father and devotion

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9. See Dobby-Poirson (2006), 8. Cf. Charlton (1946), 102, who identifies in late sixteenth century France a ‘trend...for a more and more academic Senecanisation of classical tragedy’. Jacquot (1964a), 291, quotes Alexandre Hardy, the early seventeenth century French dramatist, as recommending ‘le style du bon Sénèque suivi par Garnier’ (‘good Seneca’s style followed by Garnier’).

10. Stone (1974), 94, also draws attention to the sub-title: he observes that Garnier preferred to bypass a unified plot in order to bring out the quality of piety through the series of confrontations presented in the play.

11. Fraisse (1974), 16.

towards her brother. Garnier has linked these two aspects of Antigone's devotion and this is what is referred to in the subtitle '*La Piété*'.

Before embarking on an analysis of Garnier's play, a few words concerning Seneca's *Phoenician Women* are in order. It is incomplete, it lacks choruses, and it consists of two or perhaps three heterogeneous episodes.<sup>12</sup> The first (1-362), which takes place in the countryside outside of Thebes, is a dialogue between Oedipus and Antigone consisting of long speeches in which both characters strike positions. In the second (363-664), Jocasta is first located on the ramparts looking down at the battlefield while an attendant and Antigone urge her to go down and intervene. Then Jocasta moves down to the battlefield and is depicted standing between her two sons; she delivers lengthy speeches to dissuade them from fighting and then engages in shorter bursts of dialogue first with Polynices and then with Eteocles. At this point the text breaks off.

Only true Senecaphiles have even read this play. But, as we all know, preferences can change through time. George Steiner observes in his book *Antigones* that Seneca's *Phoenician Women* was 'one of the most often imitated texts in the history of western drama'.<sup>13</sup> After Seneca, as Steiner says, 'epic or rhetorical-dramatic variants on the Theban cycle, such as in the twelfth-century *Roman de Thèbes*, in Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and its two English imitations, Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale' and Lydgate's 'The Story of Thebes', contain distant elements of Sophocles, but derive primarily from the *Phoenician Women*.'<sup>14</sup> Equally, according to Simone Fraisse, the play 'opens with a grandiloquent dialogue between Oedipus and Antigone, a scene which created a strong impression on Renaissance humanists and from which Robert Garnier derived some fine effects.'<sup>15</sup> I will now identify the elements present in Seneca's drama which attracted Garnier and in particular show how Seneca's and Garnier's plays are constructed as a series of static tableaux within which the characters engage in debates with one another, or at times with themselves. I propose that the incomplete nature of *Phoenissae* emphasises the impression of a series of static debate scenes which inspire Garnier's construction of his play as a series of tableaux.

The first act in Garnier's play begins with Antigone leading Edipe, her blind father, as in Seneca's *Phoenician Women*. This scene lacks action motivated by the dramatist, but has an abundance of dialogue. The majority of the speeches are imitations of the Senecan tragedy. In both plays, Edipe begins by asking Antigone to leave him, and he states his desire to go to Cithaeron, the mountain where he was born. In order to understand how Garnier blends translation and imitation, let's consider the following example. Seneca writes:

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12. See Frank's introduction to her commentary ([1995a], 1-16) for discussion. Ginsberg's 2015 article and her essay in this volume are welcome in asserting the relevance and importance of the play.

13. Steiner (1984), 139.

14. Steiner (1984), 181.

15. Fraisse (1974), 15: 's'ouvre sur un dialogue grandiloquent entre Œdipe et Antigone, scène qui a fortement impressionné les humanistes de la Renaissance et dont Robert Garnier a tiré de beaux effets.'

ibo, ibo, qua praerupta protendit iuga  
 meus Cithaeron...  
 mortem, Cithaeron, redde, et hospitium mihi  
 illud meum restitue, ut exspirem senex,  
 ubi debui infans. recipe supplicium uetus.  
 semper cruenta, saeue, crudelis, ferox,  
 cum occidis, et cum parcis: olim iam tuum  
 est hoc cadauer: perage mandatum patris,  
 iam et matris.

(Sen. *Pho.* 13f.; 31-37)

I'll go, I'll go where my Cithaeron stretches out  
 his shorn-off crags...  
 [there follows a list of mythological events located on Cithaeron]  
 Cithaeron, give me back my death, restore to me  
 that lodging-place of mine, so that as an old man I can die  
 where I should have as a baby. Recuperate the punishment of old.  
 Ever bloody, savage, cruel, ferocious,  
 when you kill and when you spare, this corpse of mine  
 was yours already, long ago. Carry out my father's order,  
 now my mother's too.<sup>16</sup>

And here is Garnier's text:

J'iray sur Cithéron aux longs coustaux touffus...  
 Il me demande encore, il me faut là tirer.  
 C'est luy, c'est Cithéron, que je doÿ désirer:  
 C'est mon premier séjour, ma demeure dernière.  
 Je veux mourir viellard où je fus destiné  
 De mourir enfançon, si tost que je fus né.  
 Redonne-moy la mort, rens-moy la mort cruelle,  
 La mort qui me suivoit tiré de la mamelle,  
 O meurtrier Cithéron: tu m'es cruel tousjours,  
 Et mes jours allongeant et retranchant mes jours.  
 Pren ce corps qui t'est deu, ceste charongne mienne.  
 Exécute sur luy l'ordonnance ancienne.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 23 and 27-37)

I'll go to the long bushy ribs on Cithaeron...  
 He calls for me again, I must head for there.  
 It's him, Cithaeron, that I must long for:

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16. Translation by Braund, forthcoming in the Chicago Seneca series.

That's my first abode, my last stop.  
I wish to die an old man where I was destined  
To die a babe, as soon as I was born.  
Give back to me my death, give me my cruel death,  
The death that's followed me since being taken from the breast,  
O murderous Cithaeron: you are ever cruel to me,  
Both stretching out and cutting short my days.  
Seize this body that's owed to you, this carcass of mine.  
Carry out on it the ancient decree.<sup>17</sup>

In both plays, Antigone answers that nothing will separate her from her father; she wants to die with him:

S'il vous plaist de mourir, et qu'une mort soudaine  
Seule puisse estoufer vostre incurable peine,  
Je mourray comme vous.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 76-78)

If you wish to die, and if only a sudden death  
Can stifle your irremediable pain,  
I shall die along with you.

But she finishes her speech with an appeal to her father:

Mais ployez, je vous pry, cet obstiné courage;  
Surmontez vostre mal, surmontez vostre rage.  
Où est de vostre cœur la générosité?  
Voulez-vous succomber sous une adversité?

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 80-83)

But bend, I beg you, this stubborn bravery;  
Overcome your evil, overcome your rage.  
Where's the nobility of your heart?  
Do you wish to succumb to misfortune?

Let's compare Seneca's words:

sed flecte mentem, pectus antiquum aduoca  
uictasque magno robore aerumnas doma;  
resiste; tantis in malis uinci mori est.

(Sen. *Pho.* 77-79)

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17. My translation, with welcome assistance from Juliet O'Brien.

## TABLEAUX AND SPECTACLES

Come, change your mind, and summon up that heart of old,  
and overcome and tame your troubles with your mighty courage.  
Fight back: in such enormous trials to die is to surrender.

This debate continues throughout the scene until it transforms itself into a supplication scene, a familiar and powerful frame for Garnier's audience,<sup>18</sup> when Antigone touches her father's knees:

Par vos cheveux grisons, ornement de vieillesse,  
Par cette douce main tremblante de foiblesse,  
Et par ces chers genoux que je tiens embrassez,  
Ce mortel pensement, je vous prie, effacez  
De vostre âme affligée, et laissez cette envie  
De mourir, ou le sort trop cruel vous convie.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 361-66)

By your greying hair, emblem of old age,  
By this gentle hand trembling with frailty,  
And by your beloved knees that I hold in my embrace,  
Remove, I implore you, this deadly thought  
From your afflicted soul, and let go of this wish  
To die, or else fate too cruel will invite you.

Antigone succeeds; Edipe yields to his daughter and vows to continue to live. He responds:

Ma fille, lève-toy; tu me transis le cœur.  
Ton louable désir sera du mien vainqueur.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 367-68)

Stand up, my daughter; you pierce my heart.  
Your commendable wish will conquer mine.

And so we see that, in the first act, Garnier has presented a tableau which appears to lack physical movement but which is full of powerful words and ideas and which displays Antigone's piety at every turn, the quality which Garnier underlines for us in this play's subtitle.<sup>19</sup> In addition, as Marie-Madeleine Mouflard has

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18. See Dobby-Poirson (2006), 475-81, for discussion of Garnier's deployment of scenes of supplication which especially feature elderly or very young characters.

19. I realise that in production the director can introduce any amount of physical movement into scenes consisting of long speeches; my point is that there is nothing in the text that motivates movement and, on the contrary, there is material that encourages the characters to strike and maintain particular frozen dramatic poses.

said, from a psychological standpoint, Garnier has derived nothing from Sophocles: 'Son Edipe est celui de Sénèque.'<sup>20</sup>

In much the same way, the second act closely follows Seneca's *Phoenician Women*. Garnier's Jocaste climbs up on the city ramparts and there deplors the destruction of Thebes and the war between her own two sons, Étéocle and Polynice. When the messenger arrives and urges her to go onto the battlefield to save her fatherland, she laments in helplessness and agony. Antigone offers to join her, once again demonstrating her piety. It is at this point that Garnier gives Jocaste an internal debate with herself concerning her inability to interfere in the quarrel between her two sons.

Finally, she agrees to attempt to stop the conflict and goes alone to the battlefield. Here is Seneca's text:

quis me procellae turbine insanae uehens  
uolucer per auras uentus aetherias aget?  
quae Sphinx, uel atra nube subtexens diem  
Stymphalis, auidis praepetem pennis feret?  
aut quae per altas aeris rapiet uias  
Harpyia, saeui regis obseruans famem,  
et inter acies proiciet raptam duas?

(Sen. *Pho.* 420-26)

What whirling wind will carry me through airy breezes,  
transporting me in the mad storm's maelstrom?  
What Sphinx or what Stymphalian bird, its black cloud  
curtaining the daylight, will take me flying high on greedy wings?  
What Harpy, watching over the cruel king's hunger,  
will race me through the high paths of the air  
and hurl me down between the battle-lines?

Garnier translates it like this:

Quel tourbillon de vent me portera par l'air?  
Quel stymphalide oiseau fera mon corps voler?  
Quel Sphinx, quelle Harpye à la gorge affamée  
Ira fondre au milieu de l'une et l'autre armée,  
Me portant sur le dos pour à temps m'y trouver,  
Et vers mes fiers enfans ma prière esprouver?

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 588-93)

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20. Mouflard (1963), 233. Cf. her opinion of Garnier's character Jocaste, 234: 'Garnier a négligé la Jocaste du théâtre grec, s'est inspiré de Sénèque et de Stace.'



What whirlwind will carry me through the air?  
 What Stymphalian bird will make my body fly?  
 What Sphinx, what Harpy with its hungry gullet  
 Will swoop down right between the two armies,  
 Conveying me on its back so I find myself there straightaway,  
 To try my prayer on my two children?

In both plays, we see in real time the rapid movement which transports Jocaste from the ramparts down onto the battlefield: *uadit furenti similis, aut etiam furit* (Sen. *Pho.* 427; 'She moves like someone crazed—or maybe crazed she is') and 'Elle court furieuse...', (Garnier 594; 'She races in a frenzy...').

While the Latin play, which entirely lacks choruses, immediately proceeds to depict Jocasta on the battlefield, standing between the two armies and between the two brothers, Garnier inserts a chorus before he continues his imitation of the *Phoenician Women*. In order to provide this chorus, Garnier resorts to another Senecan tragedy, his *Oedipus*. He inserts a prayer addressed to Denys [Dionysus] which is inspired by the chorus in praise of Bacchus which follows the second act in Seneca's *Oedipus* (403-508).

In Seneca's *Phoenician Women* the next episode begins in the following fashion:

in me arma et ignes uertite, in me omnis ruat  
 unam iuuentus...  
 ...ciuis atque hostis simul  
 hunc petite uentrem, qui dedit fratres uiro.  
 (Sen. *Pho.* 443f., 446f.)

Point your weapons and fires at *me*, let all the warriors  
 as one make *me* their target...  
 ...citizen and enemy together  
 shoot this belly, which gave my husband brothers.

Garnier produces a very faithful imitation:

Tournez vos yeux vers moy, magnanimes guerriers.  
 Dressez vers moy vos dards et vos glaives meurtriers.  
 Sacquez-les dans mon sein, dedans cette poitrine  
 Qui coupable a porté la semence mutine  
 De ces maudits combats...  
 Estrangers, Citoyens, pesle-mesle visez  
 A moy, qui ay produict ces frères divisez,  
 Qui les ay engendrez de mon enfant, leur frère,  
 Encore dégoûtant du meurtre de son père.  
 (Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 665-76)

Turn your eyes towards me, great-hearted warriors.  
 Steer towards me your spears and your deadly swords.  
 Plunge them in my womb, inside this breast  
 Which, guilty, bore the mutinous seeds  
 Of this accursed conflict...  
 Strangers, citizens, in confusion look  
 At me, mother of these divided brothers,  
 Who conceived them from my son, their brother,  
 Still loathsome from his father's murder.

Then we see Jocaste, in another supplication tableau, situated between her two warring sons. Following Seneca's example, Garnier gives Jocaste a long speech addressed to Polynice, her son who has come back from exile in order to take possession of Thebes. The mother calls upon her son to show his piety, but Polynice reveals himself to be essentially a tyrant greedy for power. This entire scene is closely based on Seneca's words and Garnier has framed it as another supplication scene.

It is at this point that Seneca's text breaks off. Garnier therefore sought inspiration elsewhere for the remainder of the plot of his drama. The third act begins with a narrative of the two brothers' deaths which is imitated from Statius' *Thebaid* (11.497-573), the epic poem written a generation after Seneca and influenced significantly by Seneca's tragedies.<sup>21</sup> Garnier's final two acts borrow elements from Sophocles. Nevertheless, Garnier continues to frame his scenes as Senecan-style tableaux in which words are more important than actions.

Thus the third act begins with a long narrative in which the messenger relates the brothers' deaths, each at the other's hand: Polynice appears to have killed Étéocle, but when he draws near to the corpse, Étéocle suddenly delivers the final blow, and the two brothers die together. This is a spectacle at second hand, such as those provided by Seneca in the majority of his plays in the messenger speeches and other extended spectacular narratives. Next, Garnier shows us the reactions of Jocaste and Antigone. Jocaste wishes to die and produces a dagger. Her desire presents Antigone with a difficult choice:

*Ant.* Voulez-vous que j'approuve une chose mauvaise?

*Joc.* Voulez-vous réprouver un dessein qui me plaise?

*Ant.* Je ne vous puis complaire en ce mortel désir.

*Joc.* Rien que la seule mort ne me donne plaisir.

...

*Ant.* Hé! que feray-je donc? O l'étrange destresse!

Je ne puis estre à l'un que l'autre je ne laisse.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 1262-65, 1292f.)

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21. For discussion of Statius' engagement with Senecan tragedy see Boyle (2011), xc-xciii.

*Ant.* You wish that I give my consent to something wicked?

*Joc.* You wish to dissent from a plan that pleases me?

*Ant.* I cannot join you in liking this death wish.

*Joc.* Nothing but death alone can please me now.

...

*Ant.* Alas! What then shall I do? What strange anguish!

I cannot belong to one without abandoning the other.

The daughter once again finds herself forced to try to convince a parent not to die, as in the first act. This is Antigone's great dilemma, according to Garnier: she realises that to die with her mother is to desert her father. Nevertheless, she decides in favour of life. At this moment, Jocaste kills herself on stage, in exactly the same manner as in Seneca's *Oedipus*: in a very masculine way, that is to say, with a weapon. By contrast, in Sophocles' play, Jocasta kills herself offstage by hanging herself. This is the more usual method employed by women in Greek literature, as Nicole Loraux affirms.<sup>22</sup> In Garnier's handling of Jocasta's death, there are no Sophoclean elements; rather, the Senecan influence is clear.

So far, we have seen how Garnier reproduces the characteristics of Seneca's *Phoenissae* as it survives, particularly his taste for tableaux in which characters engage in incisive debates.<sup>23</sup> The first three acts have provided us with three debates between paired characters—Edipe and Antigone, Jocaste and Polynice, and Jocaste and Antigone—and two internal debates, Jocaste's in the second act and Antigone's in the third act. The two final acts follow suit. Without undertaking a detailed analysis, suffice it to say that in the fourth act there are three debates, between Antigone and her sister Ismène,<sup>24</sup> between Antigone and Créon, and again between the two sisters, and that the fifth act starts with a long messenger speech concerning the funeral of Polynice, described in very Roman terms. Then follows another narrative concerning the death of Hémon, Antigone's lover and Créon's son, who has killed himself over Antigone's body. The play closes with the picture of Créon destroyed by his son's and his wife's suicides. The chorus give him a harsh moral in the final words of the play:

Vos pertes, vos malheurs que vous avez soufferts  
 Procèdent du mépris du grand dieu des Enfers:  
 Il le faut honorer, et tousjours avoir cure

22. Loraux (1987), esp. chapter 1.

23. Seneca's debates of course bear a relationship to the *agōnes* of Greek tragedy, but I suggest that for the Roman dramatist they are a more important tool and one deployed more often. Seneca's training in adversative rhetoric thanks to his father, author of the *Controversiae*, is only the most obvious aspect of his tendency towards binarism.

24. See Mouflard (1963), 239, on Garnier's Ismène, who is definitely more feisty than Sophocles'.

De ne priver aucun du droit de sépulture.

(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 2738-41)

Your losses, the misfortunes you have suffered  
 Come from the scorn of the great god of Hell:  
 One must honor him, and always take care  
 To deprive no one of the right of burial.

In short, Garnier has performed a *contaminatio*, a combination of all that survives of Seneca's *Phoenician Women* with the ending from Sophocles' *Antigone*, but he has done significantly more than that.<sup>25</sup> In his hands, the dramatic structure starts and finishes at the points where the leaders of the Labdacid family have been struck by fate, with Édipe responsible for his father's death and Créon responsible for his son's death. Both suffer horribly.<sup>26</sup>

So far I have indicated how Garnier shares Seneca's dramatic vision: for both dramatists, the delivery of telling words is more important than action. But we can go further: Garnier has actually borrowed many Senecan elements in his language too:<sup>27</sup> *sententiae*, figures of speech, notably exclamations and rhetorical questions, and the repetition of certain particular words. Among Garnier's favourites are *coeur*, *sang*, *sein*, *poitrine*, and *fer*, which, by no accident, are derived from the Latin words *cor*, *sanguis*, *sinus*, *pectus*, *ferrum*. As Schmidt-Wartenberg observed over 120 years ago: 'Seneca's tragedies are the dictionary from which Garnier drew his language of pathos.'<sup>28</sup> Here is one striking example of how Garnier reacts to Seneca's compressed and sententious style, where in the Latin play Oedipus describes himself *nefastus incestificus exsecrabilis* (223: 'monstrous and incestuous and accursed'):

*Ed.* J'ay ma mère espousée et massacré mon père.  
*Ant.* Mais vous n'en sçaviez rien, vous ne le pensiez faire.  
*Ed.* C'est une forfaiture, un prodige, une horreur.  
*Ant.* Ce n'est qu'une fortune, un hasard, une erreur.  
*Ed.* Une erreur qui le sang me glace quand j'y pense.  
*Ant.* Ce n'est vraiment qu'erreur, ce n'est qu'une imprudence.  
*Ed.* Quel monstre commit donc telle méchanceté?

25. Beaudin (2010), 33, understands this very well when he writes that this method of contamination allowed Garnier to give his play greater scope than the Greek tragedy, by using the figure of the pious Antigone to unify the drama, through her devotion to her father (Act 1), to her mother (Acts 2 and 3), to her brothers and to the divine laws about respect towards the dead (Acts 4 and 5). On Seneca's *contaminatio* of multiple Greek sources in his *Oedipus*, see the paper by DeBrohun in this volume.

26. Dobby-Poirson (2006), 225. She uses the phrase 'misère extrême.'

27. Dobby-Poirson (2006), 225.

28. Schmidt-Wartenberg (1888), 18: 'Les tragédies de Sénèque étaient le dictionnaire duquel Garnier a tiré son langage pathétique.'

*Ant.* Personne n'est méchant qu'avecques volonté.  
(Garnier, *Antigone ou la Piété*, 128-35)

*Ed.* I have married my mother and slaughtered my father.

*Ant.* But you knew nothing of this, you didn't mean to do it.

*Ed.* *It's a sin, a prodigy, an outrage.*

*Ant.* *It's only luck and chance and a mistake.*

*Ed.* A mistake that freezes my blood when my thoughts go there..

*Ant.* It's not truly a mistake, only unwariness.

*Ed.* What monster ever committed such wickedness?

*Ant.* No one is wicked except with intent.

Two lines here consist of three key words, and the stichomythia leads up to a striking *sententia* uttered by Antigone. Both of these features are absolutely characteristic of Seneca.

To conclude my discussion of Garnier, Senecan drama clearly offered many attractive elements for a playwright situated in his particular context. We must remember that prior to the emergence of neoclassical drama, the European theatre staged miracles, mysteries, and morals; we must also consider that with Garnier, we have not yet arrived at the theatre of the seventeenth century. We can say with confidence, along with Jacquot fifty years ago, that for Garnier, theatre was 'a succession of tableaux rather than a dramatic progression'.<sup>29</sup> This is one reason why he was content to draw so heavily on Seneca's *Phoenician Women* for his *Antigone*. There are other reasons, too, which I have not explored here, but which have been discussed by other scholars. These include Garnier's embrace of the ideas of Ronsard of La Pléiade, according to which tragedy ought to be 'instructive' ('didascalique et enseignante').<sup>30</sup> In his *Antigone ou la Piété*, Garnier is happy to borrow the Virgilian conception of *pietas* and to Christianise his character of Antigone, to make his drama as instructive as possible.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, in explaining Garnier's apparent dependence upon Seneca, we should remind ourselves that the period during which Garnier was writing was the period of religious wars (1562-93), marked, as George Steiner said in his book *Antigones*, by the horrors of civil war:<sup>32</sup> 'Unburied bodies, fratricidal encounters, the extirpation of ancient families, were no literary-academic trope in late-sixteenth century France, but a matter of everyday experience.' Many of the same phenomena were to the forefront of the Roman consciousness during the early years of the Principate and they manifest in the horrors and lack of moral

29. Jacquot (1964a), 290: 'une série de tableaux pathétiques plutôt qu'une progression dramatique.'

30. Lebègue (1964), 88.

31. For valuable discussions of Garnier's Christianisation of his Roman source material, see Lebègue (1964) and the apt remarks of Jondorf (1969), 72f.

32. Steiner (1984), 138.

compass that we see in Seneca's tragedies, as well as in other texts from this period.<sup>33</sup> I therefore suggest that Garnier found in Seneca's tragedies a kindred perspective upon the world, a world in the process of dissolution, and that in his works, he found a language suitable for the expression of this perspective.

At exactly the same time that Garnier produced his *Antigone* in France, Seneca's prestige in England reached its zenith with the publication in 1581 by Thomas Newton of translations of the tragedies, as *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into English*.<sup>34</sup> This volume was a compilation of translations done during the years 1559 and 1567 and it reflects the interest in Seneca as a model that is datable to the first English tragedy, *Gorboduc* by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville. *Gorboduc*, written in 1560-61, borrowed its opening scene from the *Octavia*, the Roman historical drama transmitted in the A tradition of manuscripts of Seneca's tragedies, and reworked elements from *Phoenissae*, *Troades* and *Thyestes*.<sup>35</sup> Seneca's influence on English drama from that point onwards was palpable if sometimes oblique. In the words of Ker and Winston,

It is difficult to find a later Elizabethan or early Jacobean tragedy without some echo of Seneca—in the five-act division of the play, in a character's bombastic speech, in a scene of sparring dialogue, in the presence of a ghost, or in a call for revenge. In two tragedies, characters carry copies of Seneca with them onto stage, quoting Latin lines from the plays and prose as they plot revenge.<sup>36</sup>

As the seventeenth century progressed, Seneca began to be overshadowed by growing interest in Sophocles as well as Euripides, but he returns with a vengeance in the hands of John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee. Their *Oedipus, A Tragedy* was written and staged in 1678 and remained in the repertoire of English theatre for more than seventy years. Its popularity suggests that it fed the appetites of the Restoration theatre audience. I propose here that many of those appetites were quintessentially Senecan and that the Senecan element in this play has been significantly underestimated until recently.<sup>37</sup>

In the preface to the play the authors praise Sophocles and imply that they are following him closely, when all the while they are heavily indebted to Seneca (and also to Corneille) for some of the most memorable and successful elements

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33. Ginsberg in this volume treats precisely the topic of civil war thematics in Seneca's *Phoenissae*.

34. The volume includes the *Hercules Oetaeus* and the *Octavia*.

35. On the opening scene see Wilson (2003), 2. On reworkings of Senecan material see the judicious position taken by Bacquet (1964). On the complexity of *Gorboduc*'s Senecanism see Miola (1992) 11f.

36. Ker and Winston (2012), 58.

37. A.J. Boyle's discussion of the English play in his edition of Seneca's *Oedipus* (2011), c-civ identifies as particularly Senecan features the ghost scenes, the 'verbal pyrotechnics,' the focus on nature and its inversion, fate, and 'fate's revelation through spectacular preternatural events.' For a fuller version of the material here see Braund (2016), 108-16.

in their play. Dryden and Lee position themselves as successors to Sophocles, whose *Oedipus*, his ‘Masterpiece’, ‘was the most celebrated piece of all Antiquity’. They condemn Corneille’s version as being a ‘Copy... inferiour to the Original’. They are still more critical of Seneca:

Seneca on the other side, as if there were no such thing as Nature to be minded in a Play, is always running after pompous expression, pointed sentences, and Philosophical notions, more proper for the Study than the Stage: The *French-man* follow’d a wrong scent; and the Roman was absolutely at cold Hunting. All we cou’d gather out of *Corneille*, was, that an Episode must be, but not his way; and *Seneca* supply’d us with no new hint, but only a Relation which he makes of his *Tiresias* raising the Ghost of *Lajus*: which is here perform’d in view of the Audience ... *Sophocles* indeed is admirable everywhere: And therefore we have follow’d him as close as possibly we cou’d.

Clearly, the dramatists felt that they would gain reflected prestige from asserting kinship with Sophocles and that it would be to their detriment to admit their debt to Seneca. But their assertions do not correspond accurately to the nature of the play, as I shall shortly show, after a few preliminaries.

Significant differences from both of the classical plays in Dryden and Lee are the greater number of characters, the obligatory sub-plot (as demanded by the dramatic norms of the time) and the absence of the chorus. In Dryden and Lee, the sub-plot is a love story between Adrastus, prince of Argos, and Eurydice, an entirely fictional daughter of Laius; this is the ‘Episode [that] must be’ that they have taken from Corneille, who had inserted a different love story as his obligatory sub-plot.<sup>38</sup> The opening scene of Dryden and Lee’s play introduces us first to Creon and his henchmen. Creon is an unprincipled hunchback who hates his sister Jocasta and her husband Oedipus and who lusts for power and for Laius’ daughter Eurydice. Before bringing on Oedipus, Dryden and Lee set in motion the sub-plot by showing Eurydice rudely spurning Creon, and then they initiate the play’s political themes, by showing the mob being worked by Creon’s henchmen and then brought back from the brink of rebellion by the prophet Tiresias. At this point, Oedipus enters the city of Thebes fresh from a military victory. This is the point at which the two classical plays begin, with king Oedipus contemplating the devastation wrought by the plague.

One of the most significant differences between Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Seneca’s *Oedipus* is that the Roman dramatist postpones the revelation of Oedipus’ identity until much later in the play.<sup>39</sup> Dryden and Lee follow Seneca

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38. For full discussion of Corneille’s *Œdipe* (1659) see my book *Seneca: Oedipus* (2016), 94–108.

39. Technically speaking, Oedipus’ understanding of the revelation occurs at roughly the same point in both plays, about four-fifths through (at line 1182 in Sophocles and at line 868 in Seneca); however, in a passage not adapted by Seneca, Sophocles’ Tiresias is absolutely explicit about

in this postponement and they borrow from him the same techniques of deferral: the prodigies in their Act 2 are equivalent to the lengthy divination scene in Seneca (likewise in his Act 2) and they take over his lengthy necromancy episode in Act 3.<sup>40</sup> As well as postponing Oedipus' discovery of his identity, these episodes ramp up the atmosphere of imminent doom in a most un-Sophoclean manner.

Dryden and Lee do not only follow Seneca in his dramatic strategies, but they borrow other distinct features of Senecan dramaturgy, some from his *Oedipus* and others from other plays. For example, they make Laius' ghost a reluctant ghost. This is a feature assimilated from the openings of the *Thyestes* and especially the *Agamemnon*, where the ghost of Thyestes would much rather remain in the Underworld. They also share with the Roman dramatist an interest in the nature of kingship. This emerges in their concern with Realpolitik: they set up the ugly Creon as a foil for Oedipus and they interweave complicated accusations of regicide into the play. This reflects Seneca's concern with good and bad rulers: his plays present rulers with all kinds of flaws, for example, the megalomaniac Atreus in *Thyestes*, the tyrant Lycus in *Hercules Furens*, the impetuous Theseus in *Phaedra*, and the merciful Agamemnon in *Troades*. The concern with loyalty and rebellion to good or bad rulers fits the political context in seventeenth-century England: Dryden, as a supporter of the Stuart monarchy, was concerned to advocate the defence of the king and to dismiss any schemers or pretenders supported by the mob.

But the chief manifestation of Seneca's influence on Dryden and Lee is their predilection for spectacle. This is alien to Sophocles but closely aligned to Seneca's conception of the myth. Seneca's *Oedipus* contains two spectacles performed on stage—the divination scene and the suicide of Jocasta—and it incorporates several narratives of spectacles too, including the necromancy and Oedipus' self-mutilation. Spectacle narratives are a hallmark of other Senecan plays too, for example, his *tour de force* descriptions of the terrifying storm in *Agamemnon*, the horrifying dismemberment of Hippolytus in *Phaedra*, and of the deaths of Astyanax and Polyxena in *Troades*; of these, the last two take place in front of built-in internal audiences and are both inevitably redolent of the Roman experience of watching executions in the arena.

Spectacle appears to have been a staple of English drama from the time when appreciation for Seneca's tragedies was rekindled in the 1580s through the later Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and into the English Restoration theatre. Indeed, when we analyse Dryden and Lee's play through the lens of spectacle, self-consciously spectacular moments virtually trip over one another. Dryden

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Oedipus' identity much earlier in the play (447-60), although Oedipus chooses to ignore him. This constitutes a significant difference in treatment.

40. They also make the Delphic oracle especially riddling: the oracle says that 'the first of Lajus blood' is the cause of the plague and this leads to Eurydice, as the oldest of Laius' children, being considered guilty of Laius' death for some while.



and Lee's play starts with the horrific spectacle of the plague, reworking Seneca's description visually: 'The Curtain rises to a plaintive Tune, representing the present condition of Thebes; Dead Bodies appear at a distance in the Streets; Some faintly go over the Stage, others drop.' That said, this is not merely a literary spectacle, of course, since Londoners had endured the ravages of the terrible plague just thirteen years earlier. The second act also begins in a spectacular manner, with a catalogue of prodigies which seem to herald the end of the world, followed by an apparition of 'the perfect Figures of a Man and Woman', 'A Scepter bright with Gems in each right hand, | Their flowing Robes of dazzling Purple made', with their faces hidden in the clouds but crowned by 'clusters of Golden Stars'. Beside them are 'long-bearded Comets' which 'like flaming Porcupines' try to shoot their quills into the hearts of the figures. As Oedipus, Jocasta, Eurydice and Adrastus enter, the prodigies are displayed to the actors and audience and soon the cloud veiling the figures' heads is withdrawn to reveal 'the names of *Oedipus* and *Jocasta* written above in great Characters of Gold.' Dryden and Lee are here making the most of the two-tier stage and the machinery of the Restoration theatre,<sup>41</sup> but they are also responding to the spectacular impulse present in Seneca's tragedies.

The spectacular centrepiece of the third act is the necromancy, set in a dark grove. It is directly inspired by Creon's extended narrative in Seneca's third act of the necromancy performed by Tiresias and his daughter Manto that he witnessed. In other words, Dryden and Lee see the potential of Seneca's spectacular narrative and turn it into an on-stage spectacle. Tiresias arrives to investigate the murder of Laius and in 'the darkest part o' th' Grove' he gives instructions to prepare for the necromancy, with details drawn directly from Seneca, complete with the device of Manto reporting to her blind father. Stage directions in Dryden and Lee indicate thunder and lightning and groans from beneath the stage, followed by 'the Stage wholly darkn'd' and music to conjure the ghosts, then more lightning and the appearance of the ghosts of Laius and the three who were murdered with him. Laius' ghost points the finger at Oedipus and then retreats as quickly as it can, borrowing directly from Seneca's *Oedipus* line 658, '[Thebes,] | deprive him of his earth; I, his father, will take away his sky', with his 'Do you forbid him Earth, and I'll forbid him Heav'n.'

Finally, Act 5 is packed with bloody spectacle, both first-hand and narrated. We hear a report of how Oedipus has torn out his eyes with his own hands which closely replays the messenger speech in Seneca in its depiction of Oedipus' twisted reasoning and the graphic physicality of his self-inflicted

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41. On the innovations in the physical aspects of the theatre in the Restoration, warmly encouraged by Charles II, see Langhans (2000): this era saw the introduction of movable painted scenery offering perspective complementary to the receding view from the forestage through the proscenium arch, along with machines that enabled playwrights to produce spectacular effects.

violence.<sup>42</sup> Then, in the remainder of the act, Dryden and Lee stage a veritable bloodbath that is inspired by Seneca while going well beyond his onstage suicide of Jocasta. First Eurydice, then Creon, then Adrastus are slaughtered. Next, after a messenger reports that Jocasta has hanged her daughters and stabbed her sons, she is spectacularly revealed in her bedroom with multiple self-inflicted stab wounds, from which she immediately dies. Lastly, Oedipus appears at the window of the tower where he has been taken for his own protection: once he discovers what Jocasta has done he hurls himself to the ground.

In conclusion, although the play of Dryden and Lee exhibits many debts to Sophocles, its fundamental sensibility is far removed from that of the Athenian dramatist and closely aligned to that of the Roman dramatist, especially in the predilection for spectacle. The authors' claims to be modelling their play on Sophocles are flimsy. Their *Oedipus, A Tragedy* is a revitalisation of the tragic plot of Oedipus through appropriation of exciting and horrifying elements from Seneca. And at the end of the Epilogue they reveal that they are entirely aware of this when they assert that they are serving up:

what your Pallats relish most,  
Charm! Song! and Show! a Murder and a Ghost!  
We know not what you can desire or hope,  
To please you more, but burning of a *Pope*.

There is nothing Sophoclean about 'Charm! Song! and Show! a Murder and a Ghost!', and everything Senecan. I like to think that Seneca would have approved of this progeny of his tragedy.<sup>43</sup>

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42. In particular, 'if thou must weep, weep bloud; | Weep Eyes, instead of Tears' (V i 57f.) reworks Seneca *Oedipus* 954-57; see Braund (2016) 114-15.

43. I am very grateful to the several audiences of different versions of this paper, which began by invitation from the editors of this volume to participate in a panel on Senecan tragedy at the Classical Association of Canada meeting in Winnipeg (May 2013). The paper was conceived and written in French, since the province of Manitoba is bilingual, and was later delivered at the Collège de France in Paris (June 2014). Maude Côte-Landry assisted with the translation into English and Juliet O'Brien gave essential help on translating sixteenth century French tragic diction. Jayne Knight rendered excellent editorial assistance for which I am very grateful. The editors and *Ramus* readers critiqued my argument in very productive ways from which I have benefitted: my thanks to them too. The errors that arise from straying beyond one's comfort zone and competence are all mine.