Speech Disorders.

The Speaking Subject and Language in Neronian Court Literature

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Abstract

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By combining literary criticism, philology, and contemporary psychoanalysis, this dissertation offers an innovative interpretation of Neronian court literature (Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius). I argue that the works of these three authors thematize and embody a problematic relation between the human subject and language. Language is not conceived or represented as an inert tool that can be easily appropriated by the speaking subject, but rather as a powerful entity that may, and often does, take control of the human subject, directing it from without. Besides analyzing how Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius portray the relation between the human subject and language in the internal plots and characters of their works, I also explore the relation between these three authors themselves and language. My conclusion is that this relation is defined by unresolved ambiguities and neurotic tensions, and I suggest that this might be a consequence of the traumatizing circumstances that the three examined authors endured at Nero's court.

Table of Contents

Preface 1

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Self, Language, and the Other in Neronian Literature 8

Chapter 2: The Senecan Subject and Language 83

Chapter 3: Lucan: The Mind in Conflict 148

Chapter 4: The Neurosis of Neronian Prosimetra 206

Chapter 5: An Anxiety of Influence? 248

Epilogue 325

Bibliography 327

Appendix 1 355

Appendix 2 368

Appendix 3 381

Appendix 4 387

Appendix 5 395

Appendix 6 399

Appendix 7 411

Preface

The central thesis of this dissertation is simple: in Neronian literature, the relation between the speaking subject and its own discourse is problematic, and often even conflictual. Based on this idea, I propose many different, and at times complex, interpretations, ranging from issues of minute textual philology to psycho-social and cultural phenomena. My aim is to shed new light on disparate aspects of the works of Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius, the three extant authors who lived at close quarters with the emperor Nero. My approach is historicist, but I will pursue it through comparativist methodologies.

Neronian literature is defined by lacerating internal contradictions. One of the most striking of them is that the Neronian court authors continuously conjure human speakers who fail fully to own their own discourse; but these authors' *own* practice of literature displays ambiguous, contradictory, neurotic, and quasi-postmodernist elements that render their works so intellectually fascinating and artistically powerful. I aim to show that, if we adopt the interpretive key that the Neronian speaking subject (be it an internal character, the narratival persona, or the external author) is at war with its own discourse, many bizarre features of Neronian literature become easier to make sense of.

This dissertation argues that the *internal* thematization of a problematic relation between the human subject and language is an important common feature between the works of Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius. The relation between the human subject and language, as depicted in Neronian court literature, is constantly one of control, or lack thereof: language is not conceived

or represented as an inert tool that can be easily appropriated by the speaking subject, but rather as a powerful entity that may, and often does, take control of the human subject, directing it from without. This thesis is outlined in Ch. 1 (on Neronian court literature in general) and developed in Chapters 2-4 (each devoted to one of the three examined authors).

In Ch. 2, I show that Seneca's philosophical works presuppose an understanding of language as a dangerous external influence, which the *sapiens* must defend against by subjecting language itself to a relentless scrutiny; Seneca's idiosyncratic style can be seen as a direct consequence of his conception, and fear, of language. In Ch. 3, I argue that Lucan's narrator behaves and speaks as a neurotic individual, who is lacerated by an internal split between an urge to inflict on himself the pain of narrating what he hates and despises, and an equally strong desire to stop his narration and even rewrite history; the *Bellum Civile* can be viewed as the story of a speaker unable to control, and in fact even dominated by, his own discourse. As I discuss in Ch. 4, the plot of Petronius' *Satyrica* is, essentially, a sequence of failed impersonations performed by human subjects who are unable to define themselves without the crutches of the great models of Literature; thus, the discourse of the Other is an external paradigm that exposes a disquieting lack at the core of these characters' identity.

Besides analyzing how Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius portray the relation between the human subject and language in the *internal* plots and characters of their works, a secondary, more speculative goal of this dissertation is to explore the relation between these three authors *themselves* and language. My conclusion is that this relation is characterized by powerful ambiguities, and I suggest that this might be a consequence of the traumatizing circumstances that the three examined authors endured at Nero's court. On the one hand, it is clear that the three Neronian court authors are moved by an intense need to own and control their own discourse, as

is suggested by the markedly experimental, allusive, dense, multi-layered, ironical, and paradoxical qualities of their texts. But (according to a well-known psychological phenomenon) an abnormal need to control often arises from an internal sense of powerlessness, and it may result, ultimately, in a self-sabotaging loss of control. Various elements suggest that this might be the case for the Neronians.

My chapter on Neronian allusivity (Ch. 5) argues that the latter constitutes a supremely skillful manipulation of the literary tradition, but at the same time, and paradoxically, it invites a diametrically opposed interpretation: by continuously quoting previous texts as negated, the Neronians seem to stage their own *inability* to truly get rid of the discourse of the (literary) Other. Therefore, Neronian allusivity constitutes a deeply ambiguous practice. Seneca's philosophical prose is pervaded by self-contradicting elements that appear to undermine the coherence of the philosophical message (most glaringly, his conceptual inconsistencies and his metaphors, which often seem to espouse the worldly values that Senecan philosophy rejects; cf. Ch. 2.4). Lucan (the external author)'s creation of a neurotic first-person narrator who seems to be overwhelmed by his own subject matter poses the crucial, unanswerable question of whether the narrator is a text-internal alter ego of the author, who therefore shares the same victimized lack of control over his own creation, or if the entire operation is conducted, ironically, by an external author in full control of his expressive means (Ch. 3). Similarly, Petronius may be seen as a controlling author who ironically, and almost sadistically, exposes his characters' pretensions and lack of a core identity, but his novel seems to presuppose a huge deal of *self*-irony, too: he is an author who allows himself to be supremely original only through the constant evocation (albeit ironized or subverted) of the texts of other authors. There is a sense in which

Petronius is, like his characters, unable to speak except through adoption of an external discourse (Ch. 4).

This dissertation is not organized as a sequential argument; rather, it presents a cluster of thematically related, but reciprocally independent ideas, all of them revolving around the central theme of the relation between the speaking subject (be it the internal characters, the narratival personae, or the external author) and its own discourse. Based on this general theme, I will offer numerous original interpretations of the works of the three Neronian court authors or of aspects thereof – interpretations that have different degrees of certitude, contribute to my general theses in different ways, and deploy very different methodologies. For instance, my analysis of Neronian allusivity as a vast display of linguistic control (Ch.5), my interpretation of Seneca's style as a tool that enables his persona to exercise philosophical control over the dangerous and frightening complexities of language (Ch. 2), and my findings concerning the 'hybrid segments' of Neronian prosimetra (Appendices 6-7) are based on a strictly philological analysis of the texts. My interpretations of Neronian allusivity as a self-sabotaging practice (Ch. 5), of the Lucanian narrator as a neurotic individual (Ch. 3), and of Petronius' characters as 'identifications without a center' (Ch. 4) represent three different employments of psychoanalytical tools.

It should be obvious that a study of this type, which applies very different methodologies to authors who in many respects differ widely from each other, sets out to provoke innovative questions, much more than it tries to provide definitive answers. In my opinion, these innovative questions need to be asked, because they expose important problems with the current understanding of Neronian literature. However, they are not themselves devoid of problematic elements. Three issues, in particular, seem to me to complicate and question some of the theses of this study.

(1) Neronian texts are so complex (and in the case of Seneca so vast) that my initial project of providing a general interpretation of Neronian literature has proved to be over-ambitious. In writing this dissertation, I often felt that not only single chapters, but indeed single chapter-sections could be expanded into a dissertation of their own. In order to keep the text within a managable size, I had to remove several parts that I had originally thought to be integral to my thesis; and many parts could not be developed as they would have deserved (this is especially true of the chapter on Seneca). It goes without saying that I do not feel that I have exhausted the topic; in fact, the number and variety of ideas that I try to juggle sometimes undermines the depth of analysis, compromising, perhaps, the demonstration of my theses.

(2) Central to some of the claims that I make in this dissertation are concepts such as 'need to control' and 'lack of control'. These psychological phenomena are difficult to assess. Although it seems to me certain, as I show all through this dissertation, that Neronian texts thematize problems of linguistic control in their *internal* plots and characters, it is admittedly speculative to apply these concepts to the *external* authors who composed Neronian texts. I am aware that some of my theses (especially when I try to examine the external authors) cannot be proven or quantified in a rigorous way, and require a certain degree of 'collusion' on the part of my readers. But I am willing to take the risk, because I believe that these ideas, because of their novelty and disruptive potential, deserve to be discussed by scholars regardless of whether I have been able to demonstrate them cogently or not. The intended 'genre' (so to speak) of this dissertation is literary criticism; although I make use of philological and psychological tools, my ultimate aim is neither textual nor clinical analysis, but rather to offer a literary interpretation. I am convinced that my adoption of psychological concepts such as 'need to control' and 'lack of control', and in general my recourse to psychoanalysis (which to my mind is very judicious and

eliminates the most controversial/Freudian aspects of this discipline, as I illustrate in Ch. 1.6), usefully illuminates some important aspects of Neronian literature; but I concede that some of my theses might seem overly impressionistic to some of my readers. It is crucial to stress that exactly how literally vs. metaphorically the psychological concepts that I evoke may be applied to Neronian texts and authors is in large part left in the hands of my readers; my intention is to make a highly flexible and nuanced recourse to post-Freudian contemporary psychoanalysis, exploiting the powerful hermeneutic potential of concepts such as 'neurosis' and 'mental conflict' in an attempt to capture the various forms of 'disorder' that, in my opinion, define Neronian literature (for a fuller discussion of my method see Ch. 1).

(3) This dissertation calls for a change in the way we read Neronian literature, one that de-emphasizes the role of the Author as a masterful creator who controls every aspect of his composition, and instead posits that great literature (such as Neronian literature undoubtedly is) may arise despite – and in fact even because of – an author's inability fully to be coherent and in control of his work. I apply this interpretive approach to Neronian literature because, to my eyes, it seems easy and reasonable both to diagnose a Neronian 'symptom' (the generically experimental, allusively dense, and stylistically restless nature of Neronian literature) and to identify its cause (the trauma of living at Nero's court). However, it may well be the case that this Neronian symptom is in fact universal (or Roman, or post-Augustan), and that I believe it to be typically Neronian simply because I have not thought about the literatures of other historical periods long or well enough; perhaps a problematic relation between authors and their texts is true, to some degree, of all world literatures (or of all Roman literature, or of all post-Augustan literature). It seems to me certain that Neronian literature has unique characteristics, and I did my

best to bring them out in my analysis, but I cannot feel completely sure that the method that I have adopted captures the ‘uniqueness’ of Neronian literature successfully.

I offer the study that follows, not as a conclusive demonstration, but rather as a cluster of provocative solutions to problems that, in my opinion, still need to be properly addressed by the community of scholars.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Self, Language, and the Other in Neronian Literature

SUMMARY

In this introductory chapter, I outline the general theses of my study, while also elaborating in some detail on selected aspects thereof. I argue that the literary works of Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius share a conception of linguistic agency as inherently impaired, inhibited, and alienated as a result of these three authors' shared experience as courtiers under the psychotic tyrant Nero. In their works, they repeated that trauma in two correlated ways: on one hand, by projecting their status as impotent victims in their characters and narratival voices, and, on the other hand, by re-enacting that status as authors. Neronian literature views the human self as engaged in an incessant power struggle against language, which is not seen as an inert tool or medium at the disposal of the self, but rather as an overwhelming entity that defines the individual from the outside. This emerges in a number of different ways, such as Seneca's restless recourse to *correctio* and aphorism, Lucan's obsessive indulgence in paradox and lists, and Petronius' prosimetrum and linguistic hybridization, all of which phenomena constitute, I argue, different symptoms of a typically Neronian linguistic neurosis. Apart from introducing the general topic of my study, in this chapter I focus on one avenue where the Neronians' linguistic neurosis is particularly evident, namely their compulsive recourse to allusivity. I interpret this

overwhelming component of their poetics as a form of internalized oppression, by which they inflicted on themselves the pain of passively repeating the words of their Augustan predecessors in the same way in which, in the paranoid and depersonalizing environment of Nero's court, they were forced to renounce their linguistic agency and conform to the discourse of the Other. I see Neronian literature as a literary system that, with an intensity and disquiet unparalleled in most other periods of Roman and pre-modern literature, reflects on the nature of language, its crucial role in the constitution and self-definition of the human self, and the elusive boundaries of human agency.

1. LANGUAGE AND THE ‘OTHER’ IN NERONIAN LITERATURE

Book 6 of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* ends with a disturbing scene. The witch Erichtho resuscitates a corpse and compels him to predict the future. Although the ghost is terrorized at the prospect of returning into his ‘old prison’, Erichtho forces him to do so, first by lashing the corpse with a live snake, and then, in a violent outburst of rage, by threatening, apparently from a position of superiority, all the most powerful chthonian divinities, such as Tisiphone, Megaera, and Hecate (719-749). When the corpse, finally, rises from the ground, ‘his sealed lips sound with no muttering: voice and tongue are given him only to reply’ (760-761). All through the scene, the dead soldier is a mere instrument in Erichtho’s hands, a powerless object for her to use, whose only function is to say what the witch coerces him to say. This sense of verbal domination is emphasized by the words by which Erichtho opens her speech to the corpse, ‘Speak what I command’ (762-3 *dic quod iubeo*), and also by her last order: ‘give a voice through which the Fates can talk to me’ (774 *da vocem qua mecum fata loquantur*).[1]

The Roman individual living under the psychotic tyrant Nero, especially if he lived at close quarters and had to interact with him on a daily basis, was in a position suggestively comparable to that of Lucan’s corpse: hopelessly powerless, he could not act or speak up for himself, but had to conform to what he was expected to do and say.[2] Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius, the three coeval authors examined in this study, found themselves in this traumatizing

[1] She had chosen this corpse precisely due to its undamaged lungs (629-30), as she was looking for a ‘voice’ in a dead body (631 *vocem defuncto in corpore quaerit*).

[2] O’Higgins (1988), too, interprets the corpse as a partial projection of Lucan, in particular of his status as an ‘unhappy, oppressed, and vulnerable’ man living within Nero’s Rome (p. 226). She also applies a similar reading to the Phemonoe scene in Book 5 (pp. 211-222), which I will discuss below.

situation for years.[3] They lived at the court of an increasingly deranged monocrat who had a lot in common with Erichtho: his power was boundless and irresistible, his sense of morals non-existent. The ancient sources offer us glimpses of how Nero's overpowering presence inhibited and distorted these three men's modes of self-expression. In the early phase of the composition of the *Bellum Civile*, only a few months or years before penning the scene of necromancy I have just summarized, Lucan was reportedly banned by Nero from public recitation of his poetry, thus becoming the victim of a particularly direct form of linguistic violence.[4] When he was compelled to kill himself, Petronius gave vent to his frustration by detailing the emperor's debauches in his will, finally taking off the ambiguous, mimetic mask of trusted imperial minister he had been wearing for years.[5] Tacitus and Cassius Dio repeatedly depict Seneca as a duplicitous courtier who rarely, if ever, spoke his own mind.[6] A further point of similarity between the corpse, on one hand, and the three authors, on the other, is that none of them was master of his death. The corpse had to wait for Erichtho's assent before he could die for good (6.820-28), whereas Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius were ordered by the emperor to commit suicide, in different circumstances but more or less in the same period (between 65 and 66 CE).

The experience of Nero's court and cruelty is an important commonality between these three authors. One of the core theses of the present study is that this shared experience resulted in

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[3] Apart from Nero, Seneca also had a problematic relation with Nero's two predecessors, namely Caligula (who ordered him to commit suicide) and Claudius (who exiled him). For this reason, in this study I will take all of Seneca's oeuvre into consideration, including those works that pre-date Nero's reign. My assumption is that the circumstances that characterized life at Nero's court must not have been considerably different from those that characterized the courts of Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. See sections 4 and 5 below.

[4] Tacitus, *Ann*. 15.49.

[5] Tacitus, *Ann*. 16.19.

[6] Cass. Dio 61.10.2, Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 6.10, and e.g. Dyson (1970).

significant similarities in their works as well. At first glance, this might seem a bold claim, since Seneca was a philosopher and a tragedian, Lucan an epic poet, and Petronius an author of prose fiction (a ‘novelist’). Formally as well as thematically, their works are incommensurably different. And yet, as I will show in what follows, our three authors have a lot in common in the way they depict the human condition. This common outlook on human existence, I will suggest, derives precisely from the traumatizing experience of Nero’s court.

As political subjects, Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius were as powerless and vulnerable as the corpse abused by Erichtho. But what about their status as literary authors? While in their everyday life they were courtiers who had to survive in a context in which they had systematically to hide what they thought (for, as I will discuss in more detail below, such were the normal dynamics of Nero’s court as described by ancient historians), they were also authors, the active producers of original artistic works made of words. Language must have been, for them, a crucial fulcrum of conflicting activities, existential tensions, and creative energies. It was one of the realms of life in which their enslavement to the autocrat was most painfully evident, but also a privileged tool for artistic expression. One thesis of this study is that the interaction of the two elements of this paradox is crucial. On the one hand, it can certainly be argued that artistic creation may function as a relief valve and offer the political subject an outlet where he can regain, on a different level, the freedom that he has lost in real life.[7] On the other hand, I will argue that the opposite line of reasoning may also be the case: namely, that the humiliating experience of enslavement can be so traumatic as to deeply affect literary creation, undermining what is normally perceived to be one of its defining features, namely freedom of expression. It is

[7] Cf. e.g. Ahl (1984), 77 ‘The Neronian Age in terms of literary freedom was more republican than the late republic’.

not a question of either-or. As I will demonstrate in this study, the two phenomena not only coexist in Neronian literature; the coexistence of opposite tendencies also creates the conditions for the emergence of the masterpieces of Neronian literature, whose remarkable originality is indissolubly connected to their depicting and embodying the human self's painful inability to exercise a full, unrestrained control over its own means of expression.

Let us return to the wretched corpse in Lucan, and let us look at it from a different perspective: apart from figuring the Roman individual living under Nero, this scene also stages, in a sort of literary mise en abyme, the creative process that brought it to life. Lucan's narrator,[8] this most bizarre figure, is very much like the impotent corpse: a man dispossessed of his linguistic agency. Repeatedly, he informs his readers of how much he hates and despises what he is narrating, and yet he never stops. This circumstance has often puzzled Lucan's readers.[9] Why should he continue to perform an activity that proves to be so excruciatingly painful? The point, of course, is that the narrator does not have the *power* to stop talking about civil war. If the corpse is linguistically dominated by Erichtho, Lucan's narrator is linguistically dominated by his own topic, civil war. Both the corpse and the narrator are at the mercy of an inhuman, cruel, even crazed entity that, mercilessly, compels them to speak. Lucan's scholars have long since recognized that one important aspect of this poem is the narrator's unremitting, but invariably unsuccessful resistance to engage in his poetic activity.[10] Apart from complaining, he often gives

[8] All through this study, I will refer to 'Lucan's narrator' (or comparable phrases) as the text-internal narratival voice of Lucan's poem, a literary entity that is distinct from 'Lucan' the external author. More on this in Ch. 3.2 and Appendix 5.

[9] E.g. Williams (2017), 98 (with his emphasis) 'the unspeakable civil war resists Lucanian narration; and yet the ineffable cannot *not* be told'; Johnson (1987), 98; Feeney (1991), 174-179; Masters (1992), 7-10 and 205-15; Ormand (1994), 38.

[10] See esp. Henderson (1987), Masters (1992), Bartsch (1997), Williams (2017), 98-100. More on this in Ch. 3.

the impression that he would like to repress, or at least delay, the narration. To this end, he deploys a whole series of devices, such as geographical excursuses and his notoriously interminable lists, among others. This suggests that, for Lucan's narrator, 'civil war' represents an external, unwanted influence that forces its way into his language. Civil war, the subject matter of his poem, is a form of detested Other that, like Nero for his courtiers, takes possession of the narrator's ability to express himself, brutally compromising and even annihilating his autonomy.[11]

Besides the narrator, the centrality in this poem of the theme of the loss of linguistic agency is repeatedly re(in)stated by a series of narratival and vatic figures, all of whom complain about or even resist divulging what they are talking about, thus expressing their sense of powerlessness with respect to the unwanted meanings that inevitably occupy their discourse. Pertinent examples include characters who discuss past events or present circumstances, such as the old men who recall the brutality of previous civil wars at Rome (2.64-233), but the most well represented category is that of the foretellers. The poem teems with prophetic figures, to a degree that is anomalous even for a genre where prophecy was a traditional element.[12] I have already mentioned the necromancy performed by Erichtho. In Book 7, an augur from Padua realizes that the day of doom has come (7.192-200). In Book 5, in a breathtaking display of paranoid expertise, Amyclas is able to list several dozens of signs portending a tempest (5.540-556). The last third of Book 1 (584-695) is entirely occupied by bad omens and their reluctant interpretation by three distinct vaticinators. The first of them, Arruns, repeatedly states that what

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[11] Cf. 4.738-9 *bellumque trahebat / auctorem ciuile suum*, 'C/civil W/war was dragging off his author', with Henderson (2010 [1987]), 434.

[12] The prophecies in first half of the *Aeneid* all perform an important function in the plot of this poem, as they mark progressive steps in the Trojans' voyage to Latium. On the contrary, many scholars have observed that Lucan's prophecies are totally disconnected with the development of the events.

he is conjecturing is so horrible that it should not be talked about (1.631-2 *vix fas prodere*, 'it is hardly right for me to reveal'; 634 *non fanda timemus*, 'not to be uttered are the things we fear') and even deliberately complicates what he reveals so as to make it unintelligible, thus abdicating the normal function of an haruspex, a function consisting of deciphering signs rather than crafting riddles (637-8 'so the Etruscan prophesied, and wrapped and veiled the omens in obscure ambiguity'). The matron utters her prophecy in a state of deranged frenzy bordering on psychosis, in which she feels completely dispossessed of agency and will, and describes being carried around the globe by Phoebus while having disturbing visions (1.673-695). Even cruder is, in Book 5, the ordeal endured by the prophetess Phemonoe, who is the object of two successive acts of brutal violence, both human and divine.

This unfortunate character merits our attention because, as has been noted by many scholars, she represents an ideal twin of the prophetic corpse victimized by Erichtho. Impatient to comply with the request of Appius, a Roman anxious to know his destiny in view of the approaching showdown at Pharsalus, the priest of Delphi seizes the Pythia and forces her into the temple (126-7). She resists him and stubbornly refuses to perform the divinatory rite, falsely adducing that the divinity has fallen silent and Delphi has lost its divinatory quality (128-40). The priest is not tricked: again, he seizes her, 'thrusting her forcibly inside the temple as she lingered, hesitant' (145-6 *haerentem dubiamque premens in templa sacerdos / impulit*).[13] At this point, in terror, Phemonoe tries for a second time to dupe her taskmasters. She stops in the initial part of the shrine, and feigns a mystic seizure by the god, uttering a fake prophecy (146-55). But Appius realizes that she is just pretending, and, in a rage, he threatens that she will pay a severe

[13] In Latin *premo* is idiomatically used in reference to sexual intercourse by a male, often with aggressive connotations: cf. OLD s.v. 2b.

penalty, unless she ceases ‘to speak in her own words’ (159-61 *nisi ... desinis ipsa loqui*). Terrified, the girl takes refuge by the tripods and, pushed (162 *adducta*) towards the cave, she finally resigns, unwillingly, to receive in her breast (163 *invito pectore*) the divine inspiration, which the god ‘thrust into’ her (165 *ingessit*). Then, finally, ‘Paean [Apollo] mastered her breast and never more completely penetrated (*inrupit*) her body, drove out her former mind, and told the mortal part to leave her breast to him entirely’ (165-9). She completely loses control over her body and voice: the narrator compares her to a horse skillfully driven by its rider (174-6). At the climax of this process, Phemonoe becomes a mere tool, passively allowing the contents dictated by Apollo to pass through her and thus manifest themselves (181 ‘the Fates grapple as they seek a voice’), until the god decides that it is time to silence her (197 ‘the rest Apollo stifled (*subpressit*) and he blocked (*obstruxit*) her throat’). As these extracts show, the entire scene is characterized as a protracted, excruciating act of violence perpetrated by two men and a god over a helpless victim. It is a disturbing scene of violence that is as verbal as it is physical, in which the imagery of bodily penetration describes the dynamics of a linguistic rape. I propose to look at this scene as a projection, by the *internal* narrator, of his own impotence vis-à-vis his urge to masochistically indulge in the narration of civil war, but also as a symbolic rendition, by Lucan (the *external* author), of the humiliating life conditions he had to endure under Nero.

Many of Petronius’ characters have something in common with Lucan’s compulsive narrator and his many replicas within the text itself. True, the general atmosphere of the two works is widely (even wildly) different. But Petronius’s characters are similar to Lucan’s narrator in that their discourse is continuously violated by an external and powerful Other, which determines how they act and what they say. The character in whom this phenomenon is most evident is, of course, Eumolpus, who is systematically presented as an incontinent poet. For him,

every occasion serves to make a display of his poetic skills: to explain his shabby outfit, he surprisingly transitions from a normal conversation into a hexametrical six-liner (83.10); to describe the content of a painting (83.10), he declaims a 65-line poem in tragic trimeters (89); during a dinner, he cannot help but versify the menu (93.2). The list of his poetical eccentricities might be much longer. The other characters often make fun of, or lament, Eumolpus' propensity for poetical exhibitionism and repeatedly beg him to restrain himself (e.g. at 90.3-6, 92.5-6, 93.3). But Eumolpus, and this is the crucial point, *cannot* refrain from expressing himself in verse. Poetry, in the form not just of metrical patterns but also of hackneyed themes, belabored mannerisms, and an overwhelming recourse to allusivity, operates as an unnatural, external force that constantly gains control of his linguistic expression and prevents him from being himself. The more we readers get to know Eumolpus, the more we are puzzled by this divergence between him as a person and the uncontrollable poetic Other that operates within him to overpowering effect. This is particularly evident, for example, in the scene of the shipwreck, in which his friend Encolpius has to physically coerce him to leave the sinking ship in the middle of a tempest, because Eumolpus is so engrossed in the composition of a poem that he did not even notice what was going on (115.1-5):

> We heard a strange noise, and a groaning like a wild beast wanting to get out, coming from under the master's cabin. So we followed the sound, and found Eumolpus sitting there inscribing verses on a great parchment. So we were surprised at his having time to write poetry with death close at hand, and we pulled him out, though he protested, and implored him to be sensible. But he was furious at our interruption, and cried: 'Let me complete my thought; the poem halts at the close!'[14]

[14] Translations of Petronius are adapted from Walsh (1997).

Eumolpus' compulsive relation to his own faculty of self-expression, characterized by the systematic adoption of externally determined models such as meter and trite poetical topoi, is but one instance of a larger pattern, which pervades the *Satyrica* at many different levels. This pattern is one of compulsive imitation. In the world of the *Satyrica*, self-expression is inextricably associated, and often practically coincident, with an act of imitation. Any banal event may become the trigger for a histrionic performance reproducing the heroic feats of tragedy and epic. One example is Encolpius' behavior after being abandoned by Giton: at first, he retires on the shore to mourn the loss of his beloved, as Achilles does in *Iliad* 1 after Briseis' delivery to Agamemnon; later, Encolpius seizes a sword and rushes to the city, determined to take revenge on his rival, repeating Achilles' return to battle to avenge the loss of Patroclus (as narrated in *Iliad* 19-20). Similar cases of heroic imitation abound in the *Satyrica*, and the examples may be multiplied far further. This is how characters normally respond to events, an internalized behavior un-reflexively triggered. All through the novel, poetry is portrayed as an external, inauthentic force that takes possession of the characters, dominates their perception of themselves and of the world, and informs the way they talk.

On a macroscopic level, this pattern results in the prosimetrical form of the work: a succession of prose and poetry segments that is not just a formal feature, but, on the contrary, originates out of the conflicting dynamics of liberation vs. subjugation that define the novel as a whole. On every level, ranging from textual minutiae to the sequence of the scenes, the *Satyrica* is shaped by the tension between the spontaneity of prose, which functions as the dimension of authenticity and freedom, and, on the other hand, the superstructure of poetry (and other institutionalized discourses such as rhetoric or even, as in the freedmen scene, small-talk platitudes), which represents the discourse of the Other – influence, dependence, imitation,

contrivance. Poetry (and its equivalents) constitutes an oppressive and inescapable force that dominates every aspect of life, reducing the human self to a mere marionette, created, defined, and moved by external and overpowering paradigms.

Like Lucan's and Petronius' works, Seneca's oeuvre, too, is obsessed by the idea that the human subject is exposed to the danger of being controlled from the outside. Since language is the primary means by which the self organizes itself and interacts with the world, it is also the primary channel through which this dangerous contamination takes place. For Seneca, language comes to us fraught with powerful meanings that, often unbeknownst to us, distort our ability to interpret events and to be active agents in them, because we end up confusing with reality itself these erroneous meanings that are surreptitiously brought into our mind by the intertextual nature of language. For instance, Seneca recommends to steer clear of unphilosophical people because their words might contaminate us (*Ep*. 123.8-9):

> You should avoid conversation (*sermo*) with all such persons: they are the sort that communicate and engraft their bad habits from one to another. [...] Their talk (*sermo*) is very harmful; for even though it is not at once convincing, yet they leave the seeds (*semina*) of trouble in the soul, and the evil which is sure to spring into new strength follows us about even when we have parted from them. Just as those who have attended a concert carry about in their heads the melodies and the charm of the songs they have heard – a proceeding which interferes with their thinking and does not allow them to concentrate upon serious subjects, – even so the speech (*sermo*) of flatterers and enthusiasts over that which is depraved sticks (*haeret*) in our minds long after we have heard them talk. It is not easy to rid the memory of a catching tune; it stays with us, lasts on, and comes back from time to time. Accordingly, you should close your ears against evil talk (*malis vocibus*), and right at the outset, too; for when such talk has gained an entrance and the words are admitted and are in our minds, they become more shameless.

After (curiously) devoting fifteen lines to a direct quotation of examples of dangerous considerations (*verba*) that one should at all costs try to avoid listening to (10-11), Seneca concludes that 'these are voices (*voces*) which you ought to shun just as Ulysses did; he would

not sail past them until he was lashed to the mast. They are no less potent' (12). Thus Seneca presents us with three vivid metaphors meant to illustrate the dangerous nature of language: that of bad seeds (*semina*) that impregnate us with vice;[15] that of a catchy and distracting earworm that the mind cannot stop repeating over and over; and that of the Sirens. Clearly, for Seneca the normal condition of the non-*sapiens* is that of being passively governed by words. As we will see in Ch. 2.1-2, language needs to be subjected, by the human mind, to a relentless, almost paranoid analysis, whose purpose is to define things correctly. Only if this process, which is essentially a linguistic process, is successful, will the individual be able to make the right judgments and realize the philosophical goal of living freely and according to nature.

Senecan drama constantly thematizes problems of linguistic expression.[16] In the seduction scene of the eponymous tragedy, Phaedra experiences an excruciating internal conflict between an urge to express her desire for Hippolytus and an equally strong resistance: 'my mouth won't grant a passage to the speech (*verbis*) I've started: a great force (*vis magna*) makes me speak (*vocem mittit*), a greater holds me back' (602); 'it pleases me to speak, and it disgusts me' (637 *libet loqui pigetque*).[17] In an extremely intense exchange at the end of the *Oedipus* (1010-40), Oedipus and Jocasta try to speak about the terrible truth that they have just uncovered, but they are literally unable to find words that might express their situation.[18]

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[15] The impregnation image is activated by the repeated employment of the verb *gestare* in the previous sentence (8 *gestarent*, *gestant*). For *gestare* meaning 'to carry in the womb' cf. OLD s.v. 4 and e.g. Sen. *Marc*. 6.1 'yourself a weak and fragile body, liable to all diseases, can you have hoped to produce (*gestasse*) anything strong and lasting from such unstable materials?'

[16] All through this dissertation, translations of Senecan drama are adapted from Bartsch (2017a) and (2017b).

[17] The entire play revolves around the central theme of problematic communication: see Calabrese (2009).

[18] Cf. *Oed*. 1009 'Her first words are sticking in her throat', 1009-10 'What am I to call you?' (*quid te vocem?*), 1020-23 'Spare your words (*verbis*) now, mother [...] by all that's right or wrong in our names (*per omne nostri nominis fas et nefas*)', 1034-6.

Previously, Creon had been forced by Oedipus to report the results of Tiresias' necromancy (511-29); their heated confrontation reflects on the nature of political power and a king's prerogative to control the discourse of his subjects.[19] When Creon asks Tiresias to reveal the culprit sought after by Apollo for punishment, the first thing that Tiresias says is that '[his] tongue is slow to speak' and 'seeks delay' (293 *tarda fatu est lingua ... quaerit moras*), meaning that he does not know for sure. During the rite, Tiresias is so confused by the signs that he is speechless: 'What can I speak? My mind is lost in a maze of turmoil. What might I say? (*Oed*. 328-30 *quid fari queam?*; *quidnam loquar?*). When she is possessed by the god, Cassandra loses control of both her body and her speech (*Aga*. 710-19; esp. 717-9 'now she's ready to unlock reluctant jaws, and now in vain she tries to keep the words (*verba*) inside by closing tight her mouth'). Messengers typically complain that they have to narrate something terrible (e.g. *Phae*. 991-6; esp. 995 'My tongue won't grant my grief its painful words'; *Thy*. 623-40). Ulixes hypocritically disavows 'the words coming from [his own] mouth' (*Tro*. 524-8; esp. 525 *ore quamvis verba dicantur meo*). Tantalus at first is determined to resist the gods' command and to denounce the horror he is being asked to cause (*Thy*. 91-3 'Even if my telltale tongue should be sentenced to the greatest torture, I will not be hushed'); but he soon succumbs to the Fury's stronger power.

A striking example of a speaker who fails to understand, and even notice, the internal otherness of his own discourse is Thyestes. During the banquet scene, repeatedly, yet

[19] For instance: 511 'Your command is that I should speak (*fari iubes*), but fear advises silence'; 518-9 'Tell me what you have heard (*audita fare*), or you'll be broken by dire suffering and learn how far the violence of an angered king can go'; 520 'Kings always hate the words expressed at their command (*dicta quae dici iubent*)'; 521-2 'You'll be killed if you don't reveal the secrets of the rite with your voice (*voce tua*)'; 523 'Allow me to be silent (*tacere liceat*)'; 524-5 'Often freedom that is mute (*muta libertas*) can do more damage to a king and kingdom than free speech (*lingua*)'; 526 'When silence is not allowed, then what is anyone allowed?'; 527 'Silence is subversive after the command to speak (*imperia solvit qui tacet iussus loqui*)'; 528 'Then I ask that patiently you hear the words you have compelled (*coacta verba*)'.

unknowingly, he conjures in his words the fact that he has just eaten his own children. At 950-951 he complains that '[his] face floods with tears despite its own wish, groans interrupt [him] while [he] speak[s]'; at 974-975 he expresses the wish that his sons were 'there with [him]', not realizing that in that very moment they are, indeed, *inside* him; at 999-1004 he is again interrupted by a groan:

> What is this agitation that roils my intestines? What quivers deep within? I feel a load that's out of place. My chest emits a groan, but the groaning is not mine (*meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit*). Come, my sons, your luckless father calls you: come. This pain will leave me when I see you – From where are they speaking? (*unde obloquuntur?*).

Thyestes' speech is possessed by Other voices, which emerge, powerfully, in multiple ways: as groans coming from within that he is unable to explain or suppress (975 and 1001), as internal voices whose ultimate origin he is unable to identify (1004), as unwitting instances of tragic irony (974-975), as unwitting intra-textual quotations,[20] and as unwittingly ironical inter-textual allusions.[21] These uncontrollable linguistic intrusions combine to characterize Thyestes as an impotent speaker comparable to the corpse victimized by Erichtho (which I discussed above) .

One thesis of this study is that a crucial characteristic of Neronian court literature is its constant calling of attention to the inherent weakness of the human subject with respect to its main instrument of self-definition and self-expression, namely language. The self is seen as engaged in an endless clash for control over language, a clash that, with the sole exception of the

[20] Thyestes' words at 999 (*quis ... tumultus viscera exagitat mea?*) rephrase, unknowingly, the chorus' words at 339 (*quis vos exagitat furor?*).

[21] At 958 *mittit luctus signa futuri /* ***mens, ante sui praesaga mali***, Thyestes quotes the Vergilian scene in which Mezentius *realizes* that *his son* Lausus has been killed; the irony is that Thyestes *has not realized yet* that he has just eaten *his own children* (*Aen.* 10.843 *agnovit longe gemitum* ***praesaga mali mens***; cf. Tarrant 1985 *ad loc.*).

ideal and unreachable Stoic *sapiens* portrayed by Seneca, the self is destined to lose. Language is inhabited and inhibited by the Other, whose presence prevents the self from being fully free in its speech as well as its actions. So far, I have offered an outline of some important ways in which this theme emerges in the works of the three examined authors, but I have kept my considerations at a very general level. I will now offer a few concrete, micro-textual examples that showcase the presence of the Other in Neronian texts, a presence which overrides the will and escapes the awareness of the speaker. What does it mean that the Other inhabits the discourse of the self?

2. THE NERONIAN CHARACTERS AND THE 'LINGUISTIC' OTHER: THREE EXAMPLES

Seneca's Medea provides a first remarkable example of this phenomenon. As is well known, at the end of the homonymous tragedy, Medea kills her two little sons, a brutal act by which she avenges her husband's divorce. Seneca took care to represent the precise moment when the idea to kill her sons first occurs to her mind; it is about halfway through the play, during the harsh confrontation between her and Jason starting at line 431.[22] She has just implored Jason, since exile is inevitable, to at least let her keep their children (540-3). For Jason, however, this is non-negotiable. He explains (544-8): 'I confess I'd like to satisfy your pleas: but paternal love forbids it. Neither the king himself nor Acastus could make me endure that. They are what I live for, they are the consolation for a heart that's scorched by suffering. I could sooner give up breath, or limbs, or light'. Medea, who had long been pondering how she might best punish him without being able to identify an adequate method,[23] thus finally discovers where her ex-husband is most vulnerable, as she reveals in a brief aside which has been defined as 'one of the most powerful moments in Seneca's drama'[24] (549-50): 'He loves his sons so much? That's good – he's caught, the place to strike is clear'. It is not until this point that Medea even conceives of murdering her sons;[25] however, this is not the first time that she conjures child murder in her speech.

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[22] This constitutes a variation from Euripides' *Medea*, in which Medea first expresses her plan to kill her children in her monologue after meeting with Aigeas (790-810).

[23] Cf. her initial monologue, which I will discuss soon.

[24] Cleasby (1907), 54.

[25] Some scholars observe that we are not forced to take Medea's words at this point as meaning that she will kill her sons. For instance, Hine (2000), *ad loc.* suggests that she may 'mean no more than that she could abscond with them'. Personally, I agree with Cleasby (1907) (quoted above) and others that the scene would lose most of its dramatic power if this were not the very moment when Medea first conceives the terrible idea

The tragedy opens with a monologue in which she complains about Jason's perjury (1-12), wishes death for Creon and the bride (13-18), and expresses her intention to devise some even greater punishment for Jason, an unheard-of and still undetermined crime (19-55). Readers of all ages have detected, in this initial speech, a number of ambiguous elements that, although they do not and cannot point to the future infanticide literally (since Medea has not yet conceived it), seem in fact to anticipate it in an indirect way.[26] At line 23-6, she expresses her wish that her sons may take after their parents (both of those parents being repulsive in some respect); if this happens, she argues, 'my vengeance is obtained already – because I've given birth' (*parta iam, parta ultio est – peperi*). The Latin text repeats the verb *pario*, which may signify 'to give birth' both literally and metaphorically, thrice in the space of only six words, thus calling attention to the veiled ironies of this sentence. Although Medea is saying something different (if my husband's sons will grow up to be terrible people, that would already constitute a revenge of sorts), what she inadvertently seems to signify is that she has literally 'given birth' to her future revenge, which will, indeed, consist of the murder of her offspring. We find similar ambiguities based on the semantics of *pario* repeatedly in her monologue: so when she claims that, now that she is a mother (50 *post partus*), she should commit crimes greater than those she perpetrated before marriage; and then in the last line, when she declares (55): 'the home you (be)got by crime must be left behind by crime as well' (*quae scelere parta est, scelere linquenda est domus*). Analogously, at 37-50, she suggests that the only remaining course for her is to attend the wedding, taking part in 'the slaughtering of the victims' and 'finding a path through the very

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of killing her children, an idea which would surely never cross the mind of normal people. However this may be, for my purposes it is enough to have established that Medea conceived this idea either at this point or later.

[26] Among the most recent ones, see e.g. Rimell (2012), 16 and McAuley (2016), 219-220.

entrails'. These enigmatic statements have been variously interpreted.[27] But two things are certain: on the one hand, she cannot possibly mean, consciously, that she is going to kill her sons, a decision she will make only much later; on the other hand, the phrasing she adopts does anticipate, at least by association, this scenario, especially through the phrase *per viscera ipsa quaere supplicio viam* (40). Taken out of context, this phrase allows for a translation like 'through your children themselves look for a path toward punishment', since in Latin the term *viscera*, 'entrails', may also be used in the sense 'womb' and consequently take on the metaphorical meaning 'son/daughter'.[28]

In sum, Medea's words, in so many ways, reveal an internal tension, or hidden layers of latent meanings, of which, for the reasons I have illustrated, she cannot be aware.[29] This conclusion is important for the theses concerning Senecan drama I will develop in Ch. 2.3. One of the most widely held assumptions in the current scholarship is that some of Seneca's characters, such as Atreus and Medea, are endowed with authorial capabilities and a strong metatheatrical dimension which allow them, from within the play, to move the action forward and even in a sense direct it. These special qualities are primarily evident, it is often said, in these characters' masterful control over language. In Ch. 2.3, I will question this *communis opinio*, arguing that his theater is a large-scale reflection about the human self's lack of control over

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[27] The various theories are listed by Costa (1973) *ad loc*., Hine (2000), *ad loc*., and Boyle (2014), *ad loc*.

[28] For *viscera* = 'son(s)' cf. e.g. *Ag*. 27 and the other parallels in Boyle (2014), *ad loc*. On the ambiguities of the metaphorical and metonymic employment of the term *viscera* in Julio-Claudian literature, see Hines (2018) (on Seneca's Medea, see pp. 102-104).

[29] I find interesting the degree of syntactical wriggling to which a 17th century commentator was forced to have recourse in order to try and describe Medea's situation: Gronovius (1661), *ad 25* 'Et ars est Poetae iubentis eam adhuc ignaram imprudentemque et necdum intelligentem, quid ominetur, praesagire et turbatam dictitare, quod futuris eius consiliis congruit, etsi nondum ipsa verbis hos sensus imponat'. We post-Freudians have an easier life and can express the same idea more pithily: Medea's unconscious is revealed by the latent meanings of what she says. For my use of psychoanalytical tools in this study, see below.

itself, its boundaries, and its means of expression. The Medea example I have just presented provides a first important argument in favor of my interpretation. Medea is, together with Atreus, the strongest manifestation of what we may call the Senecan metatheatrical-authorial character, a creation of the last few decades of Senecan scholarship. On the monologue I have just analyzed, for instance, Alessandro Schiesaro wrote:

> In the prologue Medea seeks to transform the storm of her emotions (*mens intus agitat*, 47) into a revenge-plot. In doing this *she is the prime mover of the play*, and thus already close to embodying *a quasi-authorial function*. Medea's decision to find a 'way' (*viam*, 40) for her revenge and, later, her selection of the most appropriate means to do so, and her careful realization of her plans – all constitute the decision to create and represent a tragedy.[30]

Similarly, and with a greater emphasis on the linguistic ambiguity of her words, another authoritative Seneca scholar, Anthony Boyle, wrote:

> Medea even uses her own ironic language (25-6, 50, 55) to point to the final act. She takes on the role of writer-actor-dramaturge-character right from the beginning of this play.[31]

[30] Schiesaro (2003), 17 (emphasis mine).

[31] Boyle (2014), cviii. Cf. also, *ad* 549-50 'Medea is not only a character in this play, but a character who seems at times as 'knowing' as the dramatist and his audience'. And *ad* 37-9 'Medea and Atreus are fully aware of the ambiguity and explore it'.

As these quotations illustrate, the standard way of reading the prologue attributes to Medea a very active role: she is fully master of the situation, she decides how to act, what to say, and, with consummate skill, she is capable of delivering a speech in which she seems to be deliberating about what to do, but is in fact conveying her knowledge that she will kill her children, as she signals through crafty double entendres. I find it difficult to adhere to such an argument: Medea is in an almost deranged state of mind, she has just lost her position in the world, she is being forced to go into exile, and, most importantly, she will form the idea of killing her children only at lines 549-50. Both her circumstances and the plot of the play, therefore, suggest that Medea is not in such a position of power and control over what she does and says. Of course, this is not to deny that she is indeed in the process of getting things started, and all through the play she will actively plot and pursue her revenge. But, behind this apparent display of action, there is a deeper dimension in which other forces, of which Medea is not consciously aware, move *her*. In this respect, as I will show in the next chapters, Medea is a typical Neronian subject, a tormented soul overwhelmed by external forces which manifest themselves in the form of uncontrollable linguistic intrusions.

After Seneca's Medea, a second example of a mind unable to understand its own internal workings, yet revealing these workings in an unconscious and indirect way (i.e. in the words it utters), is Lucan's narrator. One of many possible examples is the long mythical excursus on Medusa and her severed head (9.619-99). The narrator wants us to believe that this excursus is meant to provide an explanation for the snakes' presence in Africa. The wording of this justification, however, is puzzling (9.619-23):

> Why the Lybian air abounds in such great plagues, prolific in death, or what hidden Nature has mingled with her harmful soil, no care or toil of ours can know (*non cura laborque / noster scire valet*) except that a legend (*fabula*), spread throughout the world, has deceived (*decepit*) the centuries in place of the real reason (*pro vera causa*).

The narrator tells us that, although he does not know for sure how the African snakes came to life, the myth of Medusa is surely a lie. But he then narrates that very lie over the next seventy lines, with plenty of details and despite the fact that, as he himself says, this lie is known all over the world (and therefore surely does not need to be repeated here). He thus contradicts himself in multiple ways. Moreover, in a poem that normally shuns the narration of traditional myths, the Medusa excursus amounts to an unnecessary and surprising cause of narratival delay. The deeper reason for the inclusion of this excursus at this point remains unknown to the narrator himself. And yet all readers realize that the one clearest connection of the Medusa legend to the plot of the *Bellum Civile* has nothing to do with snakes, Africa, or myth; it is, more simply, the fact that both constitute the story of a decapitation. The beheading of Pompey, so traumatic for the narrator, had been narrated at the end of the previous book. Although the narrator seems to have already repressed this painful memory, there can be no doubt that his psyche is still deeply affected by that shock, so much so that it cannot avoid repeating the narration of that decapitation, if in a disguised form. The introductory wording he uses, by which he splits and projects externally the fraudulent nature of his own motives, betrays that which he is trying hide from himself and his readers: *he* is deceiving (*decepit*) us by telling us a lie (*fabula*) instead of the real reason (*pro vera causa*). The episode as a whole represents a remarkable demonstration of the narrator's lack of control over the reasons that are prompting him to compose his poem.

My third and, at least for now, my final example comes from Petronius. When the transmitted text starts, Encolpius is in the company of a teacher of rhetoric called Agamemnon. The two are passionately debating about the harmful effects of declamation on Roman education. Encolpius condemns the ‘thematic grandiloquence and stylistic bombast’ (1.2 *rerum tumore and sententiarum vanissimo strepitu*) which is currently trendy, but both he and, later, his interlocutor fill up their speeches with many of the exaggerations and clichés that are typical of imperial declamation. For instance, in the initial sentences of the transmitted text, Encolpius quotes a few examples of excessive, pompous rhetoric, but the very way in which he introduces them, a rhetorical question portraying the supposedly ‘bad’ orators as beset by the Furies of myth, is essentially analogous to the samples that follow; it is thus difficult, at least for a reader newly embarking on the text, even to realize that a quotation and a change of voice are involved (1.1 *num alio genere Furiarum declamatores inquietantur qui clamant: ‘haec vulnera pro libertate publica excepi’*, etc.).[32] A few lines later, at 2.6-8, Encolpius advocates for a return to Attic simplicity, accusing Asianism of having corrupted the purity of eloquence, but he does so in a display of Asian exuberance. In a blatant self-contradiction, but without apparently noticing or even caring about it, Encolpius and Agamemnon thus brandish declamation against declamation, a circumstance that already showcases a profound disconnection between self and language. Both interlocutors are unable to rid themselves of the rhetorical structures and mindset that have become for them, as it were, second nature. In effect, bombastic rhetoric has grown into a mental prison from which they are unable to free themselves.

[32] The fact that Encolpius feels the need to quote extensively that which, in his own opinion, should be avoided, is in itself puzzling. Cf. Rimell (2002), 19 ‘Encolpius’ apparent hypocrisy muddles the relationship between critic and criticised. In order to condemn the fantastic rhetoric of trainee orators, he has to act out their loud empty phrases in direct speech’.

But there is more. Among the numerous trite metaphors they employ, the ones that occur most insistently have to do with food and cooking. According to Encolpius, at school students are only served up desserts, instead of healthier types of food (1.3), their minds will inevitably smell as badly as those of the kitchen staff (2.1), and the decline of poetry is due to a wrong diet (2.8). Agamemnon praises Encolpius for his 'exquisite taste' (3.1 *non publici saporis*), and he compares school teachers to fishermen preparing baits to lure their prey (3.4); Agamemnon seeks justification for their approach in the fact that they have to pamper to the whims of parents in the same way as the parasites of comedy flatter rich people so as to secure dinner invitations (3.3); he later prohibits students from chasing the banquets of the wealthy (5.5) and drinking wine (5.6), and he repeatedly employs the terminology of eating and drinking while outlining his ideal school curriculum (5.12 *bibat*, 13 *plenus*, 16 *saporem*, 22 *plenus*). This almost obsessive emphasis on food in the exchange between the two intellectuals is not in itself anomalous, since the connection between cookery and rhetoric is traditional.[33] In retrospect, however, it takes on a surprising twist a bit later in the novel, when we discover, first, that Encolpius went to the school not so much because of an intellectual need, but rather to cadge a meal (10.2); and, later, Agamemnon is indeed a habitué of the dinner parties of rich people, and it is thanks to him that Encolpius gets invited to Trimalchio's banquet (26.8-9, 27.4).[34] Reading the initial discussion with this knowledge in mind casts a completely new light on the seriousness and sincerity of the storyline's participants and, in particular, on all those culinary references. Neither Encolpius nor Menelaus have any real interest in the issues they are debating. They are just venal, hypocritical

[33] Schmeling (2011), 4.

[34] Of course, it is probable that for a reader in possession of the complete novel this would not be a discovery, but a reminder. This does not affect my argument.

individuals playing a role in an institutional social setting. While putting on this show, however, something of their real, hidden motives emerges from below the surface. Between the lines of their artificial and cerebral speeches, we glimpse the pressing, all too natural demands of their bellies.

So far, I have argued that Neronian literature thematizes the presence of the Other in the discourse of the self. But what is, exactly, this unknown I have been referring to as 'Other'? The simplest answer would be to say that it may be anything that, being external to the subject, or being perceived to be such, exercises a distorting and controlling influence on the subject's way of expressing itself. In Medea's prologue, it consists of latent, disturbing forebodings of things to come. In the case of the Lucanian narrator's Medusa excursus, the Other is represented by the unwanted image of Pompey's severed head, which resurfaces from repression precisely at a moment when the narrator appears to have successfully found an excuse to stop talking about civil war. In Encolpius' declamation, the Other is simply an urge to eat, which in this particular contextual moment Encolpius has split from the idealized image that he is trying to convey of himself as a committed intellectual. In sum, we can say that the Other that threatens Neronian characters is best defined as a *function*, rather than as a specific entity, and that almost anything might, in principle, perform this function. It is an influence actively exercised by an encroaching Other, and passively suffered by a speaker who, to borrow Freud's words, can never be master in his own house. Although the role of 'Other' may be taken up by diverse elements (as the following chapters and appendices will show), one of the most recurrent performers of this role in Neronian literature is Rome's literary past, especially the Augustan masterpieces of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, which make their presence felt practically everywhere, as I will discuss in the next section.

3. THE POLITICAL 'OTHER' AND THE LITERARY 'OTHER' IN NERONIAN LITERATURE

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested a parallelism between the representation of the failure to control language, a pattern frequently repeated, in a variety of ways, by our three authors, and their status as victimized subjects in whose life and discourse the Other, in the form of an unpredictable, unhinged, and cruel tyrant, was a constant presence. In the remaining sections of this chapter and in Ch. 5, I will explore this idea by arguing that the massive recourse to allusivity made by Neronian court authors constitutes a form of internalized oppression; it was one way in which they reenacted their passive condition of abused court officials by allowing the 'literary Other' to take control of their texts. In my view, compulsive literary allusivity is only one manifestation of larger masochistic patterns that pervaded Neronian culture – patterns that are especially evident in the dynamics of the Julio-Claudian court and the practice of Stoicism.

Before I move to discussing Neronian allusivity, I would like to stress that I view allusivity as only one aspect of the Neronian courtiers' linguistic neurosis.[35] In the course of this study, I will analyze several other symptoms of this neurosis, including these authors' obsessive

[35] The concept of neurosis is no longer used by the professional psychiatric community in North America, and was consequently eliminated from the authoritative 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' starting from the 1980 edition (*DSM-III*: see American Psychiatric Association 1980), because it is perceived to be too vague for *medical* purposes. However, *literary* studies have continued to use it abundantly, precisely because its conceptual vagueness allows for a flexible application to the study of unresolved literary and cultural tensions, as has been recently shown by Furlanetto and Meinel (2018) (cf. the enthusiastic review by Spirkovska 2019). All through this study, I embrace 'neurosis' as an exceptionally useful hermeneutic tool, which will enable me to decipher and alphabetize, so to speak, aspects of the visceral disorder that, in my opinion, defines Neronian literature. Differently from psychiatry, psychoanalysis has not renounced the concept of 'neurosis', surely because psychoanalysis does not construe itself as a systematic science, but rather as a method of investigation that has constantly to re-invent itself, on a case-by-case basis, and therefore needs a correspondingly elastic vocabulary (cf. e.g. Ferro 2015 and Mitchell and Black 2016). I will explain my employment of psychoanalysis in more detail in section 6 of this chapter, but it is important to stress that in no way my recourse to it intends to be clinical; rather, I constantly use it as a hermeneutic, largely metaphorical, instrument, in order to facilitate literary and cultural analysis.

recourse to negation, paradox, aphorism, and prosimetrum. What these disparate phenomena have in common is a restless, and self-sabotaging, need for control, which these authors direct toward their own and previous texts. The Neronian text becomes the arena of a profoundly paradoxical conflict, in which the more the author tries to exercise an imperialistic, 'Neronian' control over texts, the more he ends up losing control and victimizing himself. The reading of Neronian allusivity as a self-damaging behavior that I delineate in Ch. 1 and Ch. 5, and that I will further develop (but more tangentially) in Chapters 3-4 should not be seen as the main object of my study, but rather as an initial interpretive model whose import and applicability I will extend from the Neronians' relation to other texts to their relation to language altogether. As I will explain below, I employ the terms 'allusivity' and 'intertextuality' not just as referring to modes of quotation of previous literary texts, but as philosophically more far-reaching concepts, which ultimately underscore two widely different conceptualizations of human agency.

Imitation, in all its possible forms and denominations (borrowings, quotations, allusions, etc.), is a normal feature of the literature of every period in antiquity. Yet it is obvious that literary allusivity constitutes a more central element in the Neronian literary system than in that of most other eras, for two main reasons. First of all, it is in part a question of sheer quantity, as is demonstrated by the fact that, in order to render the extraordinary density of Neronian allusivity, scholars often have recourse to hyperbolic terminology, such as 'cloying', 'hypertrophic', 'parasitic, 'ultra-allusive', and 'hyper-allusivity'.[36]

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[36] Schiesaro notes the 'almost cloying intertextual texture' of Senecan tragedies (2009, 234) and their 'hypertrophic allusive dimension' (2003, 221); Henderson (2010 [1987]) Lucan's 'pronounced belatedness' (436) and 'parasitic intertextuality' (479); Rimell (2002) the *Satyrica*'s 'hyper-allusivity' (200) and, in general, 'the dense, self-consciously secondary literature of Neronian Rome' (196) and 'the ultra-allusive texts of Neronian Rome' (181). These are only some of the countless examples that could be quoted. For instance, according to Littlewood (2004), 6, 'Senecan tragedy is stitched together from lines of Virgil and Ovid'; and Trinacty (2014), 233 sees Seneca's plays as 'a mosaic of [other] texts'. On Petronius, cf. Schmeling (2011), xxxiv 'It is perhaps impossible to find another classical work with a richer, deeper, or broader literary texture. Even in the small portion of the *Satyrica* extant today, Petronius' use of the Greek and Latin traditions staggers

However, as has been variously noted and I will further show in Ch. 5, Neronian literary works do not simply exhibit a high rate of allusions to previous literature, but actually seem to define their own nature as that of 'responses to', rather than as fully independent works. For instance, in a 1982 article Roland Mayer interpreted Neronian literature as a whole in terms of a classicistic 'revival' of Augustan literature. Emily Gowers, in her suggestive article on 'the decoction of Nero' (1994), analysed how Neronian writers represent themselves as late, hurried, and immature through an intense exploitation of the culinary, corporeal, rhetorical, and financial polysemies of the verb *decoquere*. A 2001 international conference examined Neronian literature and culture in terms of its anti-classicistic 'aesthetics of inversion'.[37] According Yanick Maes (2013), Neronian literature is defined by 'a mannerist aesthetics of deviation' and a 'poetics of disorientation' based on a 'grotesque' deformation of the literary tradition; 'the Neronians are perhaps more adequately regarded as "modernists", trying to undo everything that is classical and Augustan. They almost obsessively practice [an] "aesthetics of deviation".'[38] In a recent companion article entitled 'Post-Augustan revisionism', Cedric Littlewood offers a survey of ways in which the Neronians engage with their predecessors, representing themselves as 'having fallen away from an Augustan highpoint'.[39] These studies emphasize five quite different aspects (classicism, an awareness of one's own belatedness, anti-classicistic inversion, grotesque deformation, and revisionism, respectively), but essentially attempt to explain the same

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the imagination. [...] Perhaps for the *Satyrica* the search for allusions ought to be turned on its head, and a search conducted to ascertain if there is any kind of literary work from which Petronius does not borrow, to which he does not allude, or which he does not treat in some fashion'.

[37] Castagna and Vogt-Spira (2002).

[38] The quotations from Maes (2013) are from pp. 311-313.

[39] Littlewood (2017), 79.

phenomenon, namely, that Neronian literature seems to establish itself as a second-degree literary system, one that defines itself as being in a close 'relation' to the Augustan authors.[40]

The standard approach, in the last few decades, has emphasized the contrarian nature, so to speak, of this relation: in this view, Seneca in his tragedies 'offer[s] a view of his poetics through the intertextual critique of his precursors',[41] Lucan quotes Vergil to criticize his pro-imperial ideology,[42] and Petronius parodies the tragic and epic traditions to expose the hollow falsity and the moral degeneracy of his contemporary society.[43] On this approach, the Neronians may need to evoke their predecessors, but they do so in a controlled way, by emphasizing their own difference and by 'employing' them rather than 'being influenced' by them. In this study, however, I take a completely different approach, one which rejects (i) an exaltation of the Neronians' active 'appropriation' of their predecessors and (ii) antiquated notions of literary imitation as a lifeless mode of textual reproduction. I argue that the Augustans' massive presence

[40] I have limited my list to studies of Neronian allusivity in general. Many more studies could be cited focusing on a single Neronian author. Cf. e.g. Tarrant (2006)'s comments on the 'creative reuse' of Augustan materials made by Seneca in his tragedies (p. 1) and on his allusions to Augustan poetry as 'radical reinterpretations' (p. 2); Stöckinger, Winter, Zanker (2017), 7 in general on Seneca's engagement with Horace's text, which 'involves alteration, reworking, and a movement beyond the original thought. Nearly all such moments where Seneca seems to be borrowing from Horace involve a transfiguration of some kind'; Martindale (1993), 48 on Lucan's 'radical revisionism' of Vergil, which is symbolized by the fact that the first word of the poem, *bella*, 'caps Virgil's synecdochic *arma*'; Conte (1994), 443 defines Lucan's poetry as 'essentially reflective' with respect to Vergil. As for Petronius, there is no need to quote scholarly opinions, since the 'responsive' nature of the *Satyrica* is inherent in its plot, which stages various characters who constantly try to imitate the heroes of lofty literature: see Ch. 4.2.

[41] Trinacty (2014), 186.

[42] Cf. esp. E. Narducci's seminal work on Lucan's 'antiphrastic' allusivity (1979 and 2002). Cf. also e.g. Elsner (1994), 112.

[43] E.g. Walsh (1970), 139.

in Neronian literature is the result of an unwanted and painful, yet paradoxically sought after and self-imposed, influence.[44]

Neronian literature is defined by a lacerating form of internal conflict between a push towards creativity and self-assertion on one hand, and, on the other, a need to inhibit itself through an overwhelming, self-punishing obsession with what has already been said by others. This paradox is perhaps most evident, on a macroscopic level, in Lucan's poem. The *Bellum Civile* is unquestionably one of the most innovative and idiosyncratic works in ancient literature. It reinvents the epic format, renouncing the traditional divine machinery, choosing events of recent and still controversial history, rather than myth, as its topic, and, most importantly, introducing the concept of a biased, unreliable, ranting narrator, a figure wholly unique in the history of ancient epics. And yet, one of the first things that current introductory works on Lucan invariably mention is that the *Bellum Civile* asks to be read as an 'anti-*Aeneid*'.[45] This purely negative designation, which ultimately calls into question the poem's status as an independent and original work, is justified, because the *Bellum Civile* is steeped in reworked, and in most of cases inverted, scenes, phrases, and tags from the *Aeneid*, so as to generate the impression that the author was just re-doing, or un-doing, the *Aeneid* rather than producing a work of his own autonomous devising. Equally evident is the paradoxical coexistence of originality and imitation in the work of Petronius, where the plot itself is constructed as a series of attempts, by the various characters, to reenact lofty literary paradigms in the lowly circumstances of their personal lives. Although the total combination of these imitative tendencies results in one of the

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[44] For a more detailed discussion of previous bibliography on allusivity and intertextuality and how my study engages with it, see section 6 of this chapter.

[45] To mention but one influential example, cf. Conte (1994), 443 'the poem has rightly been described as a sort of anti-Aeneid, the author as an anti-Virgil'; see also pp. 445-446 for a more detailed discussion of Lucan's response to Vergil, accounting for both the larger structure and the small particulars.

most original works in world literature, this originality is achieved through the constant repetition of a pattern of (attempted) repetition, so that, in one respect, the entire work can be viewed as little more than a pastiche of quotations. Seneca's oeuvre, too, if considered as a whole, presents us with an analogous conflict between elements of profound originality and inert conformity. On the one hand, Seneca is universally perceived as the inventor of a powerfully personal prose style: a dynamic, tense, and disrupted style that is particularly well-suited for describing the complexities of human interiority and has remained a paradigm in the history of Western culture. On the other hand, however, Seneca is also the author of a corpus of tragedies that have often been perceived as artistically unsuccessful because they are (the critique goes) linguistically unoriginal, based as they are on a systematic application of the worn schemes of declamation and an intense, enormous recourse to literary imitation.

In the present study, I offer an explanation of this Neronian paradox by arguing that the practice of allusivity by Neronian court authors, considered as a comprehensive habit, is a large-scale analogue of the pattern of the linguistic loss of control that, as I have outlined in the previous two sections, defines their characters. In other words, I am suggesting (i) that the characters' linguistic failures constitute a projection of the Neronian court authors' discomfort, anxiety, and pain deriving from their being, ultimately, mere puppets in the hands of Nero; and (ii) that the lack of 'authorial' agency that is obsessively thematized, through the internal characters and personae, is reflected in the way in which these texts let Other texts enter them and seize control of their meanings.

A widespread and (characteristically) paradoxical pattern in Neronian literature is its obsession with letting us know – and therefore, at least in some respect, its becoming – what it is not. The most famous example of this mechanism is probably Lucan's negative enumerations.

As is well known, Lucan's narrator often describes certain situations by listing all the elements that are *not* there.[46] For example, he devotes eleven lines to enumerating all the normal nautical sounds that are *absent* when Pompey leaves Italy with his fleet (2.688-98); five lines to the actions Curio's soldiers and horses do not take (4.749-53); and, to introduce the notion that Sextus decided to consult a witch, six lines to all the oracular seats and forms of divination he could have, but does not, consult (6.425-30). The obvious irony is that these non-existent circumstances, precisely inasmuch as they are explicitly negated, are brought to life all the more vividly in our mind. On a different level, but in a similar way, Petronius continuously conjures acts of imitation, acts performed by his characters in an attempt to impersonate the great heroes of literature. The mechanism behind this form of parody can be compared to Lucan's negative lists, because the implicit function of Petronius' 'irony', as has been noted by many scholars, is to underline that, despite their best efforts, these characters are *not* like their models. However, the fact that Petronius' novel systematically exposes its characters' pretensions (an exposure technique equivalent to the 'not' placed in front of a statement) hardly rules out that most of what we think about when we read this work is the great literature of old. R. Tarrant has called attention to a pervasive and surprising feature of Seneca's philosophical prose, namely the fact that he seems to be more interested in, and in a sense even (perversely) attracted by, the 'negative' rather than positive aspects of human life; 'his imagination seems to respond more vigorously to vice than to virtue'.[47] Tarrant's acute observation, which refers in particular to Seneca's vivid depictions of foolishness, violence, corruption, human weakness, and moral

[46] E.g. Ormand (1994), 38 (with his emphasis) 'that odd piling-up of negatives that makes us feel that we know more about what has *not* happened than what *has*', 53-4; Fantham (1992) *ad* 2.354-80.

[47] Tarrant (2006); the quotation is from p. 7.

failing, can be strengthened through stylistical analysis. One of the most peculiar and important characteristics of Seneca's philosophical prose, to which I will devote abundant space in Ch. 2, is the rhetorical device of *correctio*, which consists in elucidating a certain idea by presenting it as the opposite of an erroneous one.[48] As I will show below, Seneca's philosophy programmatically articulates itself as a correction and reframing of widely held non-philosophical values, and therefore constantly needs to evoke these alien, but standard, ways of interpreting the world. Whether or not one is convinced by Seneca's arguments, it is a fact that his treatises are literally made up by the discourse of the non-philosophical Other, often expressed through strategies of violent grammatical antithesis. This Other is the object of a paranoid dissection that cannot stop to think about what normal people think, in order to negate it.

What I tried to suggest in the preceding paragraph, although necessarily in a very provisional way that will need to be further corroborated and clarified by my analyses in the following chapters, is that Neronian literature, on so many levels, is constructed on the principle of negating certain external discourses – a paradoxical strategy of negation that, at least in some respect, is deployed to self-sabotaging effect. The more obsessive the thought of that which is negated, the more strongly that alien discourse will make its presence felt in the new discourse that the Neronian author articulates. This mechanism, although perhaps counterintuitive at first glance, is in fact familiar to most human experience, and has become the object of inquiry of a new field of experimental psychology, called ironic processes theory. In a biographical piece of

[48] A few random examples: *Brev*. 1.3 ***Non*** *exiguum temporis habemus,* <u>*sed*</u> *multum perdimus, ...* ***non*** *accipimus breuem uitam* <u>*sed*</u> *facimus,* ***nec*** *inopes eius* <u>*sed*</u> *prodigi sumus*; *VB* 21.4 *Sapiens ...* ***non*** *amat diuitias* <u>*sed*</u> *mauult;* ***non*** *in animum illas* <u>*sed*</u> *in domum recipit,* ***nec*** *respuit possessas* <u>*sed*</u> *continet*; *Pol*. 10.4 *Quod habuisti ergo optimum fratrem, in summis bonis pone:* ***non*** *est quod cogites quanto diutius habere potueris,* <u>*sed*</u> *quam diu habueris. Rerum natura illum tibi sicut ceteris fratres suos* ***non*** *mancipio dedit* <u>*sed*</u> *commodauit; cum uisum est deinde repetit* ***nec*** *tuam in eo satietatem secuta est* <u>*sed*</u> *suam legem.*

1863, F. Dostoyevky famously wrote: 'Try to pose for yourself this task: not to think of a polar bear, and you will see that the cursed thing will come to mind every minute'. Taking the cue from this observation, in the last few decades social psychologists have studied the mental phenomenon of thought suppression and its self-defeating functioning, finding evidence that 'when we try not to think of something, one part of our mind does avoid the forbidden thought, but another part 'checks in' every so often to make sure the thought is not coming up – therefore, ironically, bringing it to mind'.[49]

I argue that this mental mechanism, which questions one's ability to exercise one's own free agency, is operative to an exceptional degree in Neronian authors, and especially in their recourse to allusivity. For them, as I will argue all through this study, the texts of previous authors seem to function as intrusive, insuppressible thoughts, which undermine their authorial control. Neronian authors systematically put themselves, with respect to the literary past, in a position of passivity, which replicates, in their texts, the position of linguistic passivity they endured at Nero's court. As Nero must have been a monopolizing obsession in their personal lives, so past literature, and (unsurprisingly) especially Augustan literature, which flaunts its being aligned with the Julio-Claudian imperial ideology,[50] was a monopolizing obsession in their literary production. In the same way in which Nero was an unmovable presence, the oppressive presence of the Augustan poets could not be erased. And precisely because they are so busy distorting, recombining, and negating Augustan poetry in their own works, the Neronians show themselves unable to do away with it. I will discuss in detail this process in Ch. 5, showing how

[49] Winerman (2011), 44. Cf. also, e.g., Wagner et alii (1987), 5-13; Aronson et alii (2007).

[50] Of course, this is not to deny that Augustan literature is pervaded by undercurrents that destabilize their pro-Augustanism. But there is a big difference between indirect, between-the-lines undercurrents and the ample display of explicit glorifications of Augustus' regime contained in Augustan works.

the systematic aggression against the literary tradition performed, in their poetic works, by Seneca and Lucan in fact backfires. Their multifarious ways of refashioning the words of their predecessors through negations, antonyms, synoyms, screens, and other allusive techniques result in a self-destructive attack against the new text being created, because the only way to attack a previous text is, so to speak, through an introjected image of it (the quotation/allusion), in a characteristically masochistic act which, inverting and confusing the poles of activity and passivity, turns hostility toward an external object against one's own self.

In a variety of different ways, which I will explore in the next chapters, Neronian literature positions itself as an artistic gesture that fails to be original; that is, it shows off its own weakness and dependence, its letting the Other take control of its meanings. In this respect, it can be seen as a masochistic literary system, which aestheticizes passivity through the obsessively repeated pattern of an alien discourse taking control of the new text. To clarify my meaning: by masochism I do not refer to a sexual perversion, but rather to the sense that this term normally assumes in the current psychoanalytic literature, referring to a wide spectrum of both pathological and physiological human behaviors, in which a subject seems to be acting against a maximization of its pleasure, for instance by actively inflicting pain on itself or by putting itself in situations that undermine its freedom and independence.[51] According to this general definition, even studying for an exam or sweating in a gym can be categorized as masochistic acts, but of course they are acts of a physiological type, since the extrinsic purpose for which these activities are pursued is obvious. On the other side of the spectrum, we have self-destructive behaviors that, apparently, do not have any such extrinsic goal, but rather seem to seek displeasure, humiliation, inhibition, or dependence for their own sake, a still mysterious and

[51] E.g. Glick and Meyers (1988), Ross (1997).

widely debated phenomenon for whose explanation psychology and psychoanalysis have recourse to a series of widely different and complex concepts, ranging from learned behavior to unconscious defense mechanisms. One purpose of this study is to show that Neronian allusivity has to be fully situated on the pathological side of this spectrum. The Neronian authors systematically embrace external influence as the major building block, so to speak, of their works, thus undermining, masochistically, their status and agency as authors. Why? The key to answering this question resides, I propose, in their deeply ambivalent relation to political power, court dynamics, and philosophical ideals. I view Neronian allusivity as the literary manifestation of larger masochistic currents of Neronian society, and especially of the court environment in which Lucan, Seneca, and Petronius lived. These masochistic currents, I argue, are to be explained as the result of internalized oppression and trauma, as I will clarify next.

4. NERONIAN ALLUSIVITY AS INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION: THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN COURT AND STOICISM

Tacitus' depiction of the Julio-Claudian court famously delineates a political world dominated by perpetual distrust, malevolent scrutiny, and deceit, a world in which self-mastery and a complete reigning-in of self-expression are fundamental not just to thriving in life, but even to basic survival.[52] The primary skill required of a courtier, and of the monarch as well, is dissimulation, which Tiberius believed to be the most important of his 'virtues' (Tac. *Ann*. 4.71). 'The higher a man's rank', Tacitus remarks, 'the more eager the hypocrisy' (*Ann*. 1.7.1). The game of power is played according to a paradigm in which revealing one's real thoughts and feelings constitutes a fatal mistake, as is especially evident, for instance, in Book 1 of the *Annals*, where Tiberius secures the continuation of the dynastic structure created by Augustus by displaying a reluctance to assume the powers the Senate bestows on him, while the Senate covers its mortal hostility under an adulatory ostentation of devotion. During Nero's reign, such dynamics were further accentuated by the capriciousness and progressive criminal derangement of the emperor. In a famous scene of the *Annals*, for instance, as Britannicus lies dying under the effect of poison, the numerous senatorial witnesses went on with their dinner as if nothing special had happened, ostensibly accepting Nero's explanation that that was just one of his step-brother's habitual epilectic attacks (*Ann*. 13.16-17). Such is the brutal and paranoid environment in which Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius operated, and their status as 'characters' in Tacitus' representation of court

[52] Barton (1993), 29-30 and 39-40, suggestively compares the literal arena of the amphitheater to the 'political arena' of the court. Both the courtier and the gladiator have to be ruthless in their relation with others as well as with themselves. Both must be skilled dissemblers.

dynamics (which I touched upon in section 1) facilitates my attempt to assimilate the lack of spontaneity informing their behavior as courtiers to their imitative practices as 'authors', both being forms of alienated behaviors (cf. sections 3, 5, and 6).

To clarify this point, I will briefly turn to early modern theorization of the art of court dissimulation, which was fundamentally based on a careful study of Tacitus' oeuvre; but, in comparison to Tacitus' ever ambiguous and reticent discourse, this early modern theorization has the advantage of formulating explicitly the paranoid dynamics of an absolute court. Lipsius' great 1574 edition of Tacitus launched the phenomenon known as 'Tacitism' throughout Europe, a revival that has been amply studied by early modern historians.[53] In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, Tacitus became the chief authority on the subject of dissimulation, which a flourishing literature of treatises and manuals on courtship viewed as the essential characteristic of the accomplished courtier. As J. Snyder wrote, 'Tacitus's laconic account of the deeds and misdeeds of Rome's imperial rulers seemed to speak directly to many of those who found themselves living in a new age of absolutism'.[54] In early modern courts, as in the ancient Julio-Claudian court, being a courtier involved the exercise of strict self-control over the expression of thoughts, emotions, and passions, and it was routine to suspect dissimulation in the words of others as well. The individual was required to put on a perpetual show of conformity, to exercise caution at all times and in all places, and to extinguish spontaneity and sincerity in speech. As these early theoreticians were fully aware, the practice of courtship involved a rigid and painful self-discipline, demanding the mortification of the passions and prohibiting their free

[53] Maravall (1969); Stegmann (1969); Mellor (1993), 137-152; Morford (1993), 129-151; Schellhase (1976), 101-161; Snyder (2009), 14-5, 121.

[54] Snyder (2009), 14-16.

expression. Lipsius, for instance, noted that ‘in order to realize their plans, [courtiers] have to feign many things against their will, and to dissimulate although they hate to do so’. The early 17th century Italian writer Torquato Accetto, for whom dissimulation was an art of patience comparable to that exercised by Job in the titular book of the Bible, recognized that psychic pain was inevitable: ‘not a little pain is felt when we keep silent what we would like to say, or when we do not try to carry out what our desires urge upon us’.[55] In some exponents of the Tacitean current, dissimulation became inextricably entangled with the ascetic-Christian and neo-Stoic traditions, both of which required their practitioners to exercise over their desires and thoughts an ever-vigilant self-control.[56]

The practice of dissimulation, thus, inevitably determined a schism in the personality of the courtier, a split between inside and outside, the external persona and the internal core of the individual. The historian John Martin has argued that the experience of a ‘divided self’, torn between external pressures to define one’s identity clearly and publicly and the internal convictions and emotions that were incompatible with those pressures, was common in early modern societies.[57] We can be sure that the same was true for the Neronian courtier as well. In his historical and psychological study of political dissidence under Nero, Vassily Rudic has written: ‘it was in the Julio-Claudian Empire that the practice of *dissimulatio* acquired paramount importance, becoming a prerequisite not only of political success, but even of physical survival. *Dissimulatio* was a complex and contradictory state of mind within one and the same person, a

[55] Both are quoted and translated by Snyder (2009), 129 and 65 respectively.

[56] Snyder (2009), 21 and 102.

[57] Martin (2004), 48.

resultant of conflicting forces – intellectual, emotional, and instinctive'.[58] The primary rule of conduct for a courtier was to conform unquestioningly to etiquette, the other courtiers' expectations, and the sovereign's commands. This involved renouncing one's own desires in order to accommodate these external requirements. As the 16th century essayist Lorenzo Ducci argued, 'the courtier has to conform without question. [...] By all means, he has to adapt to [the prince's] will, and make himself, if possible, the very portrait of his properties and fashions'.[59] Such recommendations correspond to the depiction of Petronius by Tacitus, who in an often quoted passage suggests that Petronius might have been able to ingratiate himself before the emperor not so much because he was really as dissipated as Nero, but rather because he was able to impersonate that role to perfection (*vitiorum imitatione*, *Ann*. 16.18.1-2); he thus demonstrated an ability to camouflage his perceived persona according to circumstances – an ability that is totally analogous to the opportunism of his characters, who are ever ready to change their attitudes and opinions when the shifting settings in which they successively find themselves require it.[60]

Both Tacitus and the Renaissance essayists document how court life, especially under despotic rulers, requires a broadly masochistic attitude on the part of the courtier, in which the alienated individual must embrace a series of painful practices, such as self-effacement, conformity, and, especially important for my purposes, *a rigid self-discipline in the employment of language*. Seneca himself, at *Ira* 2.33.2, writes: 'Everyone knows the saying of the old courtier, who, when someone asked him how he had achieved the rare distinction of living at

[58] Rudic (1993), xxii.

[59] L. Ducci, *Ars Aulica*, ch. 111.

[60] Cf. Ch. 4.2-3.

court till he reached old age, replied: “By receiving wrongs and returning thanks for them” (*iniurias accipiendo et gratias agendo*)’. A masochistic attitude to language has to be internalized by the successful courtier. Due to their closeness to the emperor, Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius had a direct experience of linguistic oppression. On a daily basis, they had to use language in a way that was not spontaneous but externally determined. In their massive and compulsive recourse to allusivity, I propose, they reenacted this linguistic trauma by imposing on themselves to process, filter and repeat someone else’s words.

Stoicism, like the court environment, required from its practitioners what resembles a masochistic attitude with respect to the relation between the self and its needs. The Stoics, and Seneca in particular, have a frequent, even obsessive recourse to what we may call the rhetoric of freedom and pleasure: only the Stoic *sapiens* is really free, only he enjoys a real form of pleasure. Under the empire, to the senatorial elites now unable to exercise their atavistic privileges and enslaved to the rule of an absolute ruler, Stoicism offered, and eloquently presented itself as, a way to achieve a more complete form of personal freedom and a more stable sense of self-realization than those provided by the political arena.[61] This notion is embodied by the exemplary figure of Cato, who might be unable to liberate the state, yet has the power to bestow freedom on himself (Sen. *Prov*. 2.10). That which is truly essential and important for human beings is within their control and cannot be taken away from the outside (*Helv*. 8.40).[62] But this rhetoric fails to obfuscate the obvious: Stoicism recreates, within the

[61] For instance, Matthew Roller argues that one function of Seneca’s philosophy is to help aristocrats come to terms with new political conditions, in particular with the unavailability of independent military commands and military honors: Roller (2001), 66. On the disorientation experienced by the ruling classes of Rome under the Julio-Claudian dynasty, cf. also Barghop (1994) and Winterling (2009).

[62] Cf., although not in a philosophical context, Sen. *Phoe*. 104-5 ‘power over my own life and death resides with me. I’ve left my kingdom willingly; my kingdom of myself I keep’.

individual, the same dynamics of power, coertion, and enslavement that are typical under monarchical rule. 'To be enslaved to philosophy equals freedom' (*Ep*. 8.7). 'Philosophy exercises a monarchical power ... it is a master' (*Ep*. 53.9-10, where philosophy is compared by Seneca to Alexander the Great, a tyrant par excellence). The individual, like a soldier to his general or a subject to his king, ought to willingly submit to fate's rule (*DVB* 15.5-7 'freedom consists in obeying god'; cf. *Ep*. 54.7; 107.8-12). Seneca's philosophy articulates an ideology of command that pervades every aspect of human activity: whatever action we take, we are obeying the orders of either virtue or vice (*Ep*. 106.10). Apart from obeying philosophy, fate, and virtue, the individual intent on conquering freedom ought to yield unquestioningly to the command of his or her own *animus*. Christopher Star has recently investigated the relation of self-address and *imperium* in Senecan philosophy, showing how Seneca subordinates the traditional ideal of military and political power over others to the power to command the self (*sibi imperare*), and calling attention to the central role that self-address plays in this process, since Seneca seems to conceive of the soul as functioning 'imperatively', that is by issuing commands to itself. As Star shows, command is a key idea that Seneca uses to describe the core workings of the soul, which is continuously engaged in a battle for self-command (*sibi imperare*).[63]

This relation of the self to itself displays the very same inversion of the categories of active and passive that define masochism, since the *animus* is at the same time the issuer and the receiver of the same commands, the master and the slave. Senecan Stoicism returns insistently to the notion that being able to endure (passively) adverse external circumstances is a form of (active) mastery, and the *sapiens* has to embrace willingly whatever fate imposes on him. We

[63] Star (2012), 23-61. For instance: the soul is now a king, now a tyrant (Ep. 114.24); our *animus* is our controller and master, by the command of which we are driven forward or called back (NQ 7.25.2); self-command is the greatest empire (*Ep*. 113.30).

cannot change the constitutional frailty, limits, and mortality of the human condition, but we can choose to endure (*patiamur*) whatever happens, thus consenting to the decrees of nature, because 'the best thing is to endure (*pati*) that which you cannot correct', and it would be misguided not to follow, like soldiers, 'the course of this most beautiful universe, into which all of our future sufferings (*quidquid patiemur*) are woven' (*Ep*. 107.7-10). The only comfort amidst evils is to endure (*pati*) them and resign oneself to one's destiny (*De Ira* 3.16.1). Virtue will endure whatever may happen 'not only with patience, but even willingly' (*non patiens tantum sed etiam volens*), like a soldier who, although wounded and dying, loves the emperor for whom he is dying, embracing with a great mind whatever has to be endured (*patiendum*) (*DVB* 15.5-7).

In these quotations, I have emphasized the terminology of *patior* and *patientia* because they help to illustrate the conflicted and paradoxical nature of Senecan Stoicism: the *sapiens*, who embodies the most perfect form of human existence achievable, takes delight in self-chosen and self-inflicted passivity. Robert Kaster has analyzed the semantics of *patientia* in Roman culture, showing its inherent ambiguity: for the ancient Romans, *patientia* could denote both exemplary mastery (e.g., over the elements or the pain of wounds) and a total lack thereof (e.g., in the form of servitude or male homosexual passivity).[64] Taking the cue from Kaster's study, Shadi Bartsch has further discussed the paradoxes generated by the polysemy of *patientia*, especially with respect to the theme of bodily violation in early imperial Roman culture. She writes: '*patientia* is on the one hand the self-ennobling standard of the Roman philosopher, who prided himself, under the dangerous and arbitrary rule of such emperors as Nero, on his capacity to endure the violation of his body – if it came to that – with an unflinching will and with

[64] Kaster (2002).

devotion to the principles he had spent his adult life endorsing. But, on the other hand, *patientia* is also the mark of the un-man, of the Roman who is forced to accept the aggression of the other; the mark of the stage-actor, the man without citizenship, the unmanly *cinaedus* and his ilk'.[65] The ambiguities of the term *patientia* highlight the contradictory nature of Roman Stoicism, whose practice may be conceptualized both as a form of self-enhancement and as a form of self-castration.[66] Stoicism can be seen as a coping mechanism that provides its practitioners with a highly gratifying sense of perfection, autonomy, and superiority; but it comes at the cost of a psychological alienation of the subject from the social world and from itself.[67]

In sum, early imperial Stoicism is a profoundly conflicted cultural phenomenon: it recommends the attainment of freedom in the realm of interiority as a reaction to external political enslavement, but it does so by politicizing the internal dynamics of the self, which becomes its own master and slave. Political slavery is thus re-projected inside the human self. Just so, I argue, Neronian allusivity replicates, inside the text, a sado-masochistic dynamic in which the attempt to gain mastery over the previous text backfires, resulting in a loss of control.

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[65] Bartsch (2006), 178-182; the quotation is from p. 180.

[66] For a suggestive reading of Roman Stoicism as a form of 'emotional self-castration', an ascetic practice whose repression of desire is the result of its obsession with it, see Barton (1993), 72-81.

[67] Lotito (2001) does not hesitate to describe this aspect of Stoicism in terms of psychopathological phenomena such as dissociation and derealization: cf. (with my emphasis) p. 41 'Ne risulta che anche gli esercizi psicofisici in uso per realizzare il controllo delle passioni si basano in realtà su procedimenti mentali ed affettivi immaginari, artificiosi, mere simulazioni *derealizzanti*, che prima of poi scontano la *perdita di contatto con la realtà*. Il soggetto è concepito come una entità in qualche modo sempre capace di sciogliersi dalla relazione sociale, con *momenti di autoesaltazione quasi deliranti*'; p. 68 '[i]l sapiente, anestetizzato della *vitalità* del dolore, della *umanità* della morte, dell'*incanto dei desideri*'; p. 86 'Questo effetto di profonda *alienazione* produce una sensazione di radicale distacco dal reale. Questi "esercizi" potrebbero essere interpretati come induttori di effetti momentanei di "*derealizzazione*", per usare questo termine psichiatrico non a fini solo suggestivi ma direi in parte anche descrittivi'. I have quoted Lotito's formulations extensively because I find them illuminating; they will become especially useful for my interpretation of the Senecan persona in Ch. 2.4.

As the Stoic practitioners actively surrender to the external force of fate and derive a certain pleasure from embracing pain and self-imposed inhibitions, so the Neronian authors construct texts that emphasize their dependency on other texts. Neronian allusivity is in this respect a form of self-inflicted *patientia*, a masochistically sought condition of passivity that is incapable of refraining/unwilling to refrain from letting the influence of external voices penetrate and dominate the new text.

5. NERONIAN LITERATURE AS A MALADAPTIVE PRACTICE

The ‘masochistic’ mechanisms presupposed by court dynamics, by Stoicism, and by Neronian allusivity are analogous: these three phenomena are characterized by a subject’s introjection of the external oppressive structure represented by tyrannical rule – a form of oppression that becomes a constituent part of the subject’s own sense of self and, consequently, informs his or her behavior. This process of incorporation can be explained through various sociological, psychological, and psychoanalytical models. I will now discuss three of these approaches, selected because of their great cultural distance from one another, for illustrative purposes.

My first model is that of ‘internalized oppression’, a concept currently widely used across a variety of disciplines, including oppression theory, social justice education, critical race theory, feminist theory, gender studies, and postcolonial studies, among others. As a phenomenon, internalized oppression refers to the (mostly) unconscious ways in which living within the confines of an oppressive system affects the psychological functioning and behavior of oppressed individuals and groups, creating in them debilitating psychological and behavioral patterns.[68] The experience of oppression becomes a part of the core identity, self-concept, and self-knowledge that oppressed individuals hold about themselves.[69] Oppressed individuals thus live in a state of psychic alienation, whereby they unwittingly end up accepting and colluding with their own oppression through a wide array of self-damaging and self-inhibiting behaviors.

[68] Important discussions of internalized oppression include Fanon (1963), Freire (1970), Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996), David (2013), Ratner (2014), David and Derthick (2017).

[69] Brown (1986); Williams (2012).

In her study of femininity and domination, Sandra Bartky explains that ‘to be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors’.[70] The masochistic dynamics resulting from the introjection of external oppression are described by I. Prilleltensky and L. Gonick in these terms: ‘At the intrapersonal level of analysis, the political dynamics may be conceptualized along a continuum of personal harm. At one end of the continuum we may notice minor acts of identification with the oppressor, whereby the victim engages in behavior that is seemingly self-defeating, or at the very least constraining [...]. Moving along the continuum, people may harm themselves in numerous ways, such as causing bodily injury or creating reasons to be fired from a satisfying job. At the end of this path there is suicidal behavior, which may be regarded as the ultimate expression of intrapersonal oppression’.[71] My contention is that allusivity may be viewed as one mode of such self-harming behavior by which Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius abased and victimized themselves as a consequence of having lived for so long at close quarters with the homicidal oppressor Nero. This ghastly experience required them systematically to mask their thoughts and feelings when expressing themselves, a depersonalizing ordeal that (we may be sure) would have left wounds in anyone. When facing the task of being creative and producing a work of art, they found themselves struggling with their deep-seated habits of self-inhibition and linguistic conformism, with the result that they ultimately surrendered, as it were, their artistic agency to their predecessors.

[70] Bartky (1990), 22.

[71] Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996), 135.

My second model is that of ‘learned helplessness’, which is currently viewed as a basic principle of behavioral theory, and as a field of research aims to shed light on a spectrum of human ills involving passivity.[72] According to the article in the 2001 ‘International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences’, ‘Learned helplessness refers to the maladaptive passivity shown by animals and people following experience with uncontrollable events. [...] The individual learns in one situation that responses and outcomes are independent, represents this learning as an expectation of helplessness, and then generalizes this expectation to other situations to produce passivity even if outcomes objectively can be controlled’.[73] Studies conducted on animals found that, when these were given shocks that they were not able to prevent in any way, they tended to react with an attitude of total passivity even in situations where they could have taken control.[74] Researchers later found that this type of learned helplessness applies to humans as well in a variety of circumstances and fields, and can originate from widely different types of trauma including neglect in early childhood, marital abuse, captivity, and the aging process. An individual exposed to victimizing circumstances learns that one is helpless in those and similar situations, accepts that one has lost control, and gives up even trying to regain one’s agency. Typical examples of learned helplessness include psychogenic cognitive disturbances in children and adolescents, refusal of divorce in women abused by their husbands, refusal to escape in long-time prisoners, the forming of illusory correlations in stock market information among financial operators, paranoia in conspiracy theorists and superstitious people, and clinical depression. Research has found that learned helplessness often generalizes

[72] Peterson, Meier and Seligman (1995), Sahoo (2002), Nolen (2009), Seligman and Peterson (2001).

[73] Seligman and Peterson (2001).

[74] Overmier and Seligman (1967), Seligman and Maier (1967).

itself across situations.[75] I propose that Neronian literature may be seen as a form of 'maladaptive passivity' on the part of victimized linguistic subjects. After being exposed for years to victimizing patterns of self expression as Nero's courtiers, the Neronians that form the object of this study developed an expectation that linguistic outcomes are uncontrollable; this mindset, I argue, ended up affecting their relation to literature, a realm where, in theory, they could have exerted a far greater control than they seem to have realized.

My third explicative model is psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis interprets pathological masochistic behaviors in a variety of different ways. I will leave aside those relying on the Oedipus complex, which, apart from being a controversial topic *per se*, is not relevant for my purposes, since it applies specifically to intra-familial dynamics. Instead, I will briefly discuss four interrelated psychoanalytic concepts that are not only comparatively less controversial, but also well attested and mutually compatible. The first, and for my thesis the most important, phenomenon is 'repetition compulsion', which refers to the paradoxical fact that individuals tend to repeat or reenact past trauma over and over again.[76] The psyche becomes trapped, as it were, in its trauma and is unable to extricate itself from it. As is unfortunately well documented, for instance, people who were the object of sexual or physical violence seem to be more likely to put themselves, unconsciously, in situations that constitute or bring about a reenactment of that trauma.[77] On my interpretation, the practice of literature represents for the Neronian court authors a means through which they masochistically re-enact the trauma of being slaves who are

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[75] Hiroto and Seligman (1975), Peterson and Seligman (1984), Peterson, Meier and Seligman (1995), Peterson and Park (1998), Seligman and Peterson (2001), Whitson and Galinsky (2008), Mohanty, Pradhan and Jena (2015).

[76] Van der Kolk (1989); Mitchell and Black (2016), 114.

[77] Wöller (2005) with further bibliography.

manipulated by Nero. A mechanism that often plays a role in trauma repetition is 'identification with the aggressor'. Psychoanalysis posits that identification is one of the most powerful and pervasive psychological mechanisms, and that it tends to be all the stronger in proportion to how cathected, i.e. emotionally charged, the relation with the object is. This means that identification is likely to be developed not only with respect to loved objects, but also for those who are hated or who inspire strong ambivalent feelings in others. A mode of identification with the aggressor can be developed for objects whom the individual hates, but at the same time perceives as highly powerful. The so-called 'Stockholm syndrome', or the emotional bond a kidnapping victim establishes for his captor, belongs in this category. Through his masochistic behavior, which accepts his role as the passive object of the aggression, the subject enjoys the satisfaction of participating, in fantasy, in the power and glory he attributes to his opponent[78] (a dynamic that is unmistakably evident in Senecan Stoicism: the *sapiens* accepts his own victimization by Fortuna/Fate in order to identify himself with God).[79] The Neronians may be situating themselves in the position of victims in their relation with their Augustan predecessors, who are viewed as symbols of imperial power (and therefore of Nero), as an unconscious way of participating in their (and his) prestige. Strictly connected to 'identification with the aggressor' is the mechanism called 'the turning of instinctual impulse against the self', which postulates that the aggression that cannot be expressed toward others often turns against itself.[80] Perhaps the Neronian authors direct against themselves, in their recourse to allusivity, the aggressive energy that they harbored in real life but could never exert against Nero himself. Finally, contemporary

[78] Brenner (1974), 43.

[79] More on this in Ch. 2.4.

[80] Brenner (1974), 93, 181.

psychoanalysis is increasingly exploring the affinities between masochism and narcissism. The masochistic propensities of human beings are often explicable, in part, in terms of a bitter-sweet, narcissistic pleasure-through-pain: the individual seeks pain, passivity, or disappointment because of an unconscious need to prove that he is special, superior to others, and/or unjustly persecuted by the external world.[81] This pattern appears to be easily applied to our three court authors. Their self-victimization as authors can be read as the wounded cry of individuals in an inner, although impossible, state of revolt against the absolutist system in which they lived.[82]

This brief survey of sociological, psychological, and psychoanalytical theories of self-damaging behavior was not meant to offer any strong and conclusive interpretation. Rather, the multiplicity of the models presented above serves to clarify, by showing its intrinsic plausibility, the dynamics of internalized passivity that, I argue, is reflected in the Neronians' practice of literature. Seneca's, Lucan's, and Petronius' recourse to intertextual repetition, I aim to show in this study, easily lends itself to being analyzed in terms of unconscious patterns of masochistic reenactment of pain and passivity, together with a number of other linguistic phenomena.

Of course, the notion that living in a situation of impaired freedom of speech might affect the way people express themselves, including while writing literary texts, is not new. In fact, already the ancients expected the nature and quality of the literary output of a certain society to be related to and affected by its political circumstances. In Tacitus' *Dialogus*, for instance, Maternus famously argues that the current decline of eloquence is an inevitable consequence of the peace and prosperity determined by Vespasian's rule. In Longinus' last chapter, an unnamed

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[81] Cooper (1988).

[82] Loewenstein 1957 (quoted by Cooper 1988, 136) has remarked that 'masochism is the weapon of the weak [...] faced with the danger of human aggression'.

philosopher argues that great literature is stimulated by democracy, whereas slavery (although 'just') stifles it (*On Sublime* 44.1-5). Modern scholars have offered various sociological interpretations of early imperial literature, with varying degrees of sophistication. Whereas they normally emphasize how literature reflects the ways in which individuals 'adapted' or 'reacted' to the environment, preserving their status as active agents, my study argues that the Neronians' practice of literature is in fact a form of maladaptation, which reflects the authors' failure to cope with trauma.

One example of the 'adaptive' approach is Shadi Bartsch's (1994) *Actors in the Audience*, in which she explores a variety of ways in which, during the first century of the Roman empire, loss of freedom affected how people behaved, expressed themselves, and read texts. Since a writer was forced to feign alignment with the regime, readers inevitably became suspicious about the sincerity (or otherwise) of what they read or listened to, and hyper-sensitive in detecting hidden messages that the author, supposedly, did not dare to state explicitly, whether or not these hidden messages were intentional. This, in turn, led authors not only repeatedly to protest the sincerity of their praises of rulers, but also to exploit this expectation of double-speak by actively subverting the surface meaning of their texts through deliberate internal contradictions that were meant to convey, at least indirectly, the insincerity of their words. Concerning specifically Nero, Bartsch offers abundant evidence of the extreme theatricalization of society during his reign – a tendency determined in part by the emperor's own theatrical activities, which forced the members of the senatorial class themselves to 'act out' a script.

Overall, Bartsch's depiction of societal and behavioral dynamics has influenced my view of the relation between the human subject and self-expression under Nero, but only with respect to the external appearances, so to speak, of those dynamics. It is true that under the empire

individuals became extremely sensitive to how their social moves and literary works were perceived by others, and it is also true that they consequently tried to exercise as much control as they could over such 'appearances'; but what about their inner sense of self and personal agency? Bartsch's study, to my eyes, is undermined by a rather naive notion of the workings of the human psyche. Throughout, she expects human beings living in conditions of harsh repression to be able to retain total control over their own mental functioning. They may have to adapt, externally, to adverse circumstances, but in a mimetic process that, however painful, does not affect an individual's ability to determine one's course of action. This represents, I argue, a serious underestimation of the profound repercussions trauma normally has on one's psyche and agency, as I have illustrated above. Several of Bartsch's conclusions are compatible with those I propose in this study, since I explore a profounder dimension not taken into consideration by her.

My study also responds to Vassily Rudich's (1997) book on 'the danger of rhetoricization' that, in his view, fundamentally characterizes Neronian literature. According to Rudich, the ubiquitous falsity of Neronian society, its 'socio-political schizophrenia' (p. 4), exercised a depersonalizing influence on the mentality of the Neronian subjects. The pervasive rhetoricization displayed by their works is the result of a 'habitual intellectual procedure' (p. 3) that consisted in using shallow declamatory practices to mask one's real feelings. Unfortunately, Rudich does not connect this phenomenon to the macroscopic, highly allusive mask-wearing performed by the Neronians. Rather, he focuses on the incoherent ways in which Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius, respectively seen as an 'immoral moralist', a 'moral immoralist', and an 'immoral immoralist', adopted or handled moral paradigms within their work. Their manifest self-contradictions in this respect are explained as the result of their 'rhetoricized mentality' (an attitude that prioritizes manner over matter), which led them to nihilism and overblown

formalism. I find Rudich's analysis disappointing in many respects, but especially because it ultimately rehearses outdated notions of rhetoric (not least as a synonym for meaningless formalism) that fail to capture the complexities of Neronian literature. Rudich fails to perceive, in particular, that the Neronian's obsession with linguistic virtuosity is not a merely formal phenomenon, and one superimposed on, but essentially disconnected from, and therefore meant to hide, their real feelings, but an intense and direct enactment of their tormented relation to language and other power structures. However, in as much as it tries to explain literary phenomena not simply in terms of an author's superior artisanship, but rather as deeply influenced by largely unconscious, socially induced mental mechanisms, Rudich's approach is a precursor of my reading of Neronian allusivity and style as fundamentally neurotic features.

Numerous scholars have observed that the representation of cruelty reached extreme levels in Latin literature of the first century,[83] a tendency likely to be correlated, in part, to the spectacularization of other people's pain at the gladiatorial arena, which seems to have peaked in the same period.[84] Neronian authors display a morbid fascination for violence, since they seem unable to stop indulging in its representation, while at the same time identifying and sympathizing with its victims; this constitutes but one of the many manifestations of the sadomasochistic tendencies of Neronian culture.[85] Neronian literature, in particular, is obsessed

[83] In general: e.g. Fuhrmann (1968); Williams (1978), 184-192; Most (1992). Seneca: e.g. Regenbogen (1961), Segal (1983), Edwards (1999), Bartsch (2007), 91-92. Lucan: e.g. Bartsch (1997), Dinter (2012). A recent and detailed monograph on the representation of violence in Seneca and Lucan is provided by Backhaus (2019).

[84] Ahl (1976), 84-115; Coleman (1990); Most (1992); Bartsch (1994); Leigh (1997), 234-91.

[85] Cf. Barton (1993), 25 'The writers of the Neronian period, in particular, gloried in the violence they abhorred. They not only described but created scenes of violence against victims with whom they could simultaneously identify and sympathize. They were at once victims and spectators'. To the examples from Lucan and Seneca that she lists in her footnote 47, add the many scenes of physical violence in Petronius, e.g. 11.4, 16-21, 90.1, 95.4-7, 105.4-5, etc. Henderson (2010 [1987]), 442-3 comments on Lucan's Scaeva episode: 'here in Lucan the sadomasochism of the cult of 'manliness' is laid bare [...] Rome is all about bravery – active

with mutilation and dismemberment.[86] Various scholars have perceptively observed that there exists a parallelism between the disrupted, sententious, and paradoxical style of Seneca and Lucan, which the ancients themselves described as 'amputated', 'torn off', or 'cut off', and their prolonged and detailed descriptions of physical amputations.[87] There seems to be a certain degree of sadism in these authors' relation toward the 'body' of the texts they produced. Glenn Most wondered whether the Neronian subjects' uneasiness at feeling like meaningless fragments within the body politic might have found an outlet 'in the sadistic enactment of dismemberment upon fictional bodies and the bodies of literature'.[88] Several scholars have recently analyzed how both corporeal and stylistic dismemberment figures, in Lucan, the disintegration of the Roman body politic and the violation of personhood entailed by civil war and despotism.[89] It is in this current of Neronian scholarship, emphasizing language as an avenue where unresolved problems of selfhood, identity, and freedom emerge, that my study situates itself. Why are the Neronians so restless in their employment and destruction of language? Why is their style so broken, nervous, idiosyncratic, obsessive, and hyperactive? Why are their texts so violent, corporeal, heavy, dense, allusive, rhetorical, fragmented? What does their sadistic relation to their own

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and passive'. Cf. also Pandey (2014), 132-133 on the sadomasochistic dynamics of both text-internal audiences and text-external readers of Senecan tragedy and Lucan.

[86] As Most (1992) has demonstrated with plenty of examples and even statistical analyses. But see also the bibliography that I mention in the following footnotes.

[87] Most (1992), 408 'What happens to the bodies of the characters in Seneca's and Lucan's fictions corresponds to what happens to the bodies of these fictions as well; conversely, we may well imagine that authors who were wont to amputate discourses will have been interested in seeing what happens when the same procedures were applied to the literal human bodies from which the figural language for analyzing such stylistic phenomenon was drawn'. Similarly Bartsch (1997), 48 'If we were to look for a verbal form that inflicts on language what Lucan does to his bodies, it would be paradox'.

[88] Most (1992), 409.

[89] Quint (1993), 140-7; Bartsch (1997); Dinter (2012), esp. 9-49; Mebane (2016).

words tell us about their sense of selfhood? And how does it relate to their masochistic attitude toward the texts of others? Such are the questions I try to answer (or at least to ask) in this dissertation.

6. THE ALLUSIVE SELF VS. THE INTERTEXTUAL SELF: WHY A HISTORICIST READING OF NERONIAN LITERATURE NEEDS TO BE POSTMODERNIST

In the following chapters, I offer an interpretation of Neronian court literature based on the idea that it presupposes, thematizes, and embodies the inability of the human self fully to control its powers of self-expression and, consequently, given the essentially linguistic nature of the human self, its own identity and agency. Neronian literature views the human self as engaged in an incessant power struggle against language, which is not seen as an inert tool or medium at the disposal of the self, but rather as an overwhelming entity that defines the individual from the outside. This emerges in a number of different ways, such as Seneca's restless recourse to *correctio* and aphorism, Lucan's neurotic indulgence in paradox and lists, Petronius' prosimetrum and linguistic variety, and these three authors' compulsive allusivity, all of which phenomena originate, I argue, from a severe form of linguistic paranoia.

The Neronians' troubled relation to language results in the enactment of a systematic reversal of some of the traditional poles of the literary work: plot and characters, container and content, author and work. I will show that Neronian texts continuously challenge us to reconsider these dichotomies. Lucan's 'narrator' is in fact a plot, a 'narrated'. It is civil war that narrates, by figuring, the mental conflict of this neurotic individual, not the narratorial voice that is 'fractured' (to use Jamie Master's often quoted phrase) because it is narrating civil war (Ch. 3). Similarly, a work like the *Satyrica* does not allow for the existence of 'authors' who create stories (be it the external author Petronius or the many text-internal authors such as Encolpius or Eumolpus); instead, it ceaselessly represents stories that create authors, being itself one example of this phenomenon (Ch. 4). In Seneca's tragedies as well as in his philosophical works, the

human condition is defined by its being constantly spoken-through by the words of others: the human self, for Seneca, is not the protagonist of its own life, but a story narrated from the outside (Ch. 2.1 and Ch. 2.4 for Senecan philosophy; Ch. 2.3 for Senecan drama).

Before moving to a more detailed articulation of my theses, I would like briefly to discuss a few important recent works on Neronian literature, so as better to illustrate how my reading differs from, and engages with, theirs. My interpretation reacts, in particular, to the prevailing approach in the current scholarship, which, in an attempt to vindicate Neronian literature from the charge of being excessively imitative and therefore, supposedly, qualitatively inferior to that of other periods, tends to characterize its allusivity as an original and assertive act of appropriation. In this view, the Neronians are not inert imitators, but active re-creators. This kind of scholarship is well exemplified by Daniel Groß' book on Horatian allusions in Lucan (2013) and Christopher Trinacty's book on the reception of Augustan poetry in Senecan tragedy (2014), two admirable works, which represent fundamental achievements in the study of these two authors, but which, in my opinion, are based on a perspective which is inappropriate for Neronian literature.

According to Groß, Lucan appropriates Horace's persona in the *Odes* and *Epodes* to create a first-person lyric narrator who expresses strong moral views concerning the narrated events, imparting political teachings and recommendations on his readers. He aims to be a *praeceptor populi*, 'a preceptor of the people'. To support his thesis, Groß embarks on a book-long list of close readings of Horatian allusions, aiming to elucidate their didactic function. As he repeats twice towards the end of his analysis (pp. 266-267), Horatian allusions are a 'help toward interpretation' (Interpretationshilfe) provided by the narrator to the readers in order to enable their understanding (Verständnis). Like so much of the current scholarship on ancient allusivity,

Groß sets out to decipher the ways in which the poet, through a masterful control of his own text, of his quotations of previous authors, and of the readers' response, was able to articulate his intended meanings. Interpretive notions of control and meaning are obsessively evoked through phrases such as 'the allusion means', 'the allusion suggests', or the narrator 'points to [a certain meaning]'.[90] Literature is thus objectified into an efficient system of exploitation. Lucan 'uses' allusions 'in order to' convey certain meanings.[91] An allusion is a 'means' through which a certain meaning is conveyed.[92] An allusion 'serves' a certain purpose, or 'performs' a certain

[90] For instance: Groß (2013), 102 'Das [= this allusion] bedeutet [...]'; 158 '[this allusion] legt aber nahe, dass'; 91 'Durch den Verweis auf die Vergil-Stelle deutet der lucanische Erzähler an, dass [...]'.

[91] Groß (2013), 161 'Lucan scheint an dieser Stelle einmail mehr ein Horaz-Gedicht zur Characterisierung seines Caesar benutz to haben'; 231 'ruft [Lucan] verschiedene Kontexte aus Horaz-Gedichten jeglicher Thematik auf, um einen bestimmten Characterzug einer Figur deutlicher hervortreten zu lassen'.

[92] Groß (2013), 101 'Durch den Verweis auf das Horaz-Gedicht [...] wirkt das Ende des siebten Buches des *Bellum Civile* noch pessimisticher'; 248 'Mithilfe eines intertextuellen Verweises auf Horaz spricht der lucanische Erzähler dem Pompeius sogar die *virtus* ab'; 263 'Lucan wertet seinen Cato durch die intertextuellen Bezüge zu Horaz und Vergil auf und bestätigt ihn in seiner Autorität als *sapiens*'; 264 'Durch den Bezug seiner Formulierung auf Lukrez rückt Lucan seinen Cato in die Nähe auch der Naturphilosophen bei Lukrez'.

function.[93] An allusion 'strengthens',[94] 'confirms',[95] 'increases',[96] 'expands',[97] or 'deepens'[98] a certain meaning or effect. Allusions play a crucial function for the 'understanding' of the meaning of the passage.[99] The readers, like the text's meanings and allusions, appear to be passive marionettes constantly manipulated by the omnipotent author-engineer.[100] As the previous eleven footnotes abundantly document, Groß' approach is dominated by an anxious need for control, which he seems to project on to the ancient author as well: both the ancient author and the modern critic are masters of the poetic 'meanings', which become a quantifiable

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[93] Groß (2013), 235 'Alle diese Bezugnahmen dienen dem einen Zweck, [...] zu [...]'; 239 'Die Anspielung auf diese Horaz-Stelle erfüllt im Lucan-text eine doppelte Funktion'; 266 'dienen die Horazgedichte als Kontrastfolie, von der sich der gänzlich andere Charakter der jeweiligen Figur Lucans deutlich abhebt'.

[94] Groß (2013), 89 'Dadurch, dass Lucan hier die Ode 1, 12 mit ihrer optimistischen Teleologie aufruft, wird der aus seinen Worten ohnehin schon hervorgehende Kulturpessimismus noch weiter verstärkt'; 95 'verstärkt [der Erzähler] durch die kontrastierende Anspielung auf Horaz seine Aussage'; 97 'durch den Bezug auf Horaz [...] die Aussage des Lucanverses verstärkt [...] wird'; 109 '[...] wird [...] durch den Bezug auf die [...] Horazode 3, 25 erheblich verstärkt'; 151-2 'die intertextuellen Bezüge [...], was den Eindruck verstärkt [...]'; 176 'Die Anspielung auf Horaz verstärkt [...]'; 205 'Der Kontrast [...] wird durch die Anspielung [...] deutlich verstärkt'.

[95] Groß (2013), 232 'Intertextuelle Bezüge zu Horaz bestätigen [...] das Bild vom [...]'; 263 'Lucan wertet seinen Cato durch die intertextuellen Bezüge zu Horaz und Vergil auf und bestätigt ihn in seiner Autorität als *sapiens*'.

[96] Groß (2013), 111 'Der intertextuelle Verweis [...] erhöht die trotzige Wirkung [...]'; 237 'Der Bezug auf den Ovidischen Prätext erhöht den Eindruck der [...]'.

[97] Groß (2013), 161 'die [...] intertextuelle Ebene erweitert den Sinn der Lucanstelle erheblich'; 255 'Für den mit Horaz vertrauten Rezipienten verstärkt und erweitert sich die Aussage der Szene'.

[98] Groß (2013), 227 'eine Vertiefung der Charakterbilder durch Bezüge auf Horazische Prätexte'.

[99] Groß (2013), 97 'diese Stelle ohne die Ode 3,16 als Prätext gar nicht verstanden werden kann'; 162 'Die Funktion dieser Horaz-Anklänge für unser Verständnis des Lucan-Textes ist [...]'; 240 'Der Rezipient [who notices the allusion] kann [...]' verstehen.

[100] Groß (2013), 98 'Durch die [...] Anspielung auf die Ode 3, 16 ist der Rezipient dann schon auf dieses Thema vorbereitet und kann Caesars Verhalten auch im Licht dieser Ode bewerten'; p. 106 'Durch die Übernahme der horazischen Formulierung ruft Lucan dem Rezipienten [...] ins Gedächtnis'; p. 152 'der Rezipient in der Troia-Episode erst durch den Bezug zur dritten Römerode darauf gestoßen wird, dass [...]'; p. 206 'dem Lucan-Rezipienten wird hier durch den Verweis auf die literarischen Vorgänger wie an so vielen anderen Stellen deutlich, dass [...]'; p. 254 'Dem Rezipienten [through the allusion] gewährt Lucan Einblick in das Verhältnis des Pompeius zu Caesar'; p. 266 'ruft Lucan dem Rezipienten Horazgedichte ins Gedächtnis'.

commodity that can be transferred from text to text in a domesticated manner. Yet the violence that this type of scholarship inflicts on the text is evident in the terminology employed, which casts meaning as the product of a dynamics of strength and instrumental functions.

Such an approach, which is dominant in the scholarship on Lucan,[101] is also standard in that on Seneca, as is exemplified, in part, by Christopher Trinacty's recent *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry* (2014). This study is based on two major interpretive concepts. On the one hand, there is an attempt to read Seneca through an intertextual, rather than allusive, approach (on this terminology more below), which leads Trinacty to suggest that Seneca's characters reveal Seneca's view of the human self as a theatrical construction.[102] On the other hand, however, and to contradictory effect, Trinacty's book places a strong emphasis on authorial control, in a way essentially identical to Groß' handling of Lucan. Trinacty systematically unveils how Seneca reproduces previous materials from a position, as it were, of superior power: responding to, reworking, organizing, manipulating, emulating, and variously recasting them. Unfortunately, this author-centered line of interpretation is largely dominant in the book, whereas the 'intertextual' one receives but cursory treatment.[103]

As is well known, the last few decades have witnessed a raging debate among classicists, and especially Latinists, concerning issues such as the nature of literary imitation, allusive practices, and 'intertextuality'. This debate is characterized by three main currents of thought.

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[101] E.g. Thompson and Bruère (1968); Thompson (1984); Maes (2005), 24 ('allusion in Lucan is often a moment of elucidation'); etc.

[102] Trinacty (2014), 234.

[103] As one reviewer remarks: 'despite its rhetorical focus on intertextuality, which suggests an interest in the ways in which meanings are produced between and across texts and readers, this book is, in fact, a highly traditional, author-centered work of classical scholarship [...] The language of reading and reception is appropriated for a highly conventional study of authorship-as-mastery' (Willis 2015, 123).

The traditional approach, which is famously exemplified by works such as West and Woodman (1979), Thomas (1982 and 1986), and Lyne (1987), analyses allusions as creative acts by master-authors who retain a strong control over the meanings of their works. The traditionalists tend to use the terms 'allusivity' and 'intertextuality' as synonyms. Although this approach is nowadays only marginally represented in *theoretical* studies on allusivity/intertextuality (such as the ones that I am about to discuss in this paragraph), it can safely be said that it is vastly dominant when it comes to the *practice* of allusive criticism, as is demonstrated by the just discussed Groß (2013) and Trinacty (2014). A second current embraces the concept of 'intertextuality' as radically distinct from that of 'allusivity'; it posits that literature is best understood in terms of interactions between texts, genres, and discourses, rather than between alluding authors. This current de-emphasizes the notion of authorial production, without however renouncing it. Famous exponents of this current are Gian Biagio Conte (1986), whose 'semiological' intertextualism interprets literary imitation as a rhetorical trope, Stephen Hinds (1998), who retains both 'allusion' and 'intertext' as two distinct concepts that, far from being mutually exclusive, need in fact to be combined, and Alessandro Barchiesi (2001), whose highly sophisticated readings of Ovid explore the complexities inherent in the processes through which the literary tradition shapes itself.[104] It is important to stress that the employment of the term 'intertextuality' by these scholars is, to some degree, improper and misleading, because it waters down, and effectively betrays, the original, philosophically revolutionary import of the concept of 'intertextuality', which is indissolubly connected with a postmodern questioning of constructs

[104] It might be appropriate to mention that I have a personal relation to this second current, since Gian Biagio Conte was my supervisor and mentor when I was an undergraduate and later a graduate student in Pisa between 2006 and 2011. Barchiesi, too, is a former pupil of Conte.

such as the 'individual', 'intention', and 'agency'.[105] As a term and concept, 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva in the sixties as referring to her notion of the text as 'process' and 'social practice'; in Kristeva's view, the role of the author as the controlling subject and the source of the work is replaced by the idea of a continual inter-textual redistribution and reutilization of linguistic materials.[106] A third, more extreme current of intertextual scholars preserves this radical meaning of the term 'intertextuality'. Accordingly, they completely eliminate concepts such as 'authorial intent' and 'allusion' (considered as obsolete constructs and, in any case, unknowable), and replace them with a radical understanding of intertextuality that locates the construction of meaning exclusively in a text's reception through the ages (Martindale 1993) or even in the reader's response (Edmunds 2001). Where does my study situate itself in this scholarly landscape?

My approach contributes to the debate on intertextuality in that it tries to redefine the confines between the three main currents that I have just discussed. On the one hand, my method flirts with the extremist approach, in that I propose a reading of Neronian literature that, in some respects, is manifestly non-philological and comparativist; there is an obvious sense in which my application of psychoanalytical methodologies represents the idiosyncratic reading by a person living in the 21st century who projects his own way of conceiveing the world back into a distant

[105] Cf. Angenot (1983), 124-125 'L'idée d'intertextualité comme engendrement du texte sert au telquelien à proclamer la bonne nouvelle de la mort du Sujet' ('Tel Quel' was the journal in which Kristeva and other French intellectuals published in the sixties). Both Hinds (1998), 21 and Farrell (1991), 21-23, for instance, note the contradictory tension between Conte's intertextual methodology and his inability to free himself from a rhetoric of authorial intention and allusion. But Hinds (1998), too, despite the dazzling brilliance of his close readings, banalizes the concept of 'intertextuality' and even fails to mention Kristeva in his bibliography (cf. Edmunds (2001), 164-166); for instance, at pp. 18-20 and 34 he seems to conceive of the opposition allusivity~intertextuality in terms of a distinction between an author's intentional references to specific previous texts and 'intertextual' phenomena such as accidental confluences of words, recourse to a topos or commonplace, and recourse to common sources – clearly an over-simplification of the issues at stake.

[106] Kristeva (1968), (1969 = 1980), (1985 = 1989 = 1996).

past. On the other hand, my method does not dispose of the concept of an 'author', and it *does* aim to offer a historicist interpretation. I agree with S. Hinds that allusion and intertext are best employed in combination, rather than one at the exclusion of the other. Therefore, an important methodological innovation of my study resides in the fact that I attempt to combine aspects of what I have defined the 'second' and 'third' currents: I am not willing to follow the most extreme intertextualists so far as to reject the historicist approach, but I also try to engage with the concept of intertextuality in a way that does justice to its disruptive philosophical meaning to a degree that is far superior compared to the 'second' current.[107]

The reason why I reject any strong-authorship reading of Neronian court literature is that, to my eyes, the latter appears as an externally-constructed literary system, so to speak, a body of texts that have been shaped, not by an internal, authorial coherence, but by the propulsive push of the external, pre-existing texts. This literary body is the product of overwhelmingly powerful external texts that repeat and re-assert themselves through the medium of weak and impotent authors, alienated individuals who were so deeply traumatized by their torturer Nero that they were incapable of resisting the compulsive power of those texts. As authors, Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius might, or might not, have made a deliberate attempt to articulate certain meanings (which we will never be able to know for sure in any case); the result, however, is a literature wherein no author is easily discernible, a set of texts that invariably resolve themselves into self-deconstruction. One crucial commonality between Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius is that all of their works (including Seneca's treatises) presuppose and display, each in its own way, the threat of the Other, an obscure force constantly and successfully pushing to make its presence felt inside, and to dominate, the text.

[107] More on the dichotomy allusivity~intertextuality below.

Given this perspective, in this study I engage in dialogue above all with a number of modern scholars who, in the past few decades, have started to read Neronian literature in terms of its inherent multiplicity of voices and apparent lack of coherence. My understanding of Lucan, for instance, situates itself in the scholarly current initiated by John Henderson's deconstructive reading of the *Bellum Civile* as a poem where language is at war against itself (1988), and by Jamie Masters' concept of the narrator's 'fractured voice'. In their own different ways, these two studies establish duality as the structuring principle of the poem, on levels that go well beyond that of the plot (a people divided into two factions). My interpretation of the narrator's contradictory behavior and of the poem's restless paradoxicality as the result of neurotic mental conflict offers, I argue, a more economical, realistic, and humanly relatable explanation for the perplexing behavioral and linguistic phenomena highlighted by Henderson and Masters – even as my approach agrees with them on the crucial centrality of those phenomena.

For Seneca's tragedies, apart from Trinacty's treatment of intertextuality, the two scholars whom I find most perceptive are Alessandro Schiesaro and Cedric Littlewood. Schiesaro's book on 'the dynamics of Senecan drama' (2003) brings a lot of interesting ideas to the table. Particularly fascinating is his exploration of how the poetry of the *Thyestes* appears to voice realities different from those of logic and reason, which, outside the artistic work, would otherwise remain repressed. Schiesaro's application of a psychoanalytical perspective shows how Seneca's plays conjure in their characters an emergence of dark, viscerally powerful instincts, with which the spectators/readers, too, cannot help resonating. The resulting celebration of *nefas* subverts the categories of excitement and horror, pleasure and pain, frustrating any attempt to find philosophical truths as the structuring 'meaning' of the plays. This sensitivity to the uncontrollable otherness of the unconscious, which Schiesaro emphasizes as the

emotional engine of the plays, seems to me to be related to a striking contradiction with the other main tenet of his reading of Senecan drama, namely the latter's pervasive self-conscious meta theatricality, which presupposes a view of the plays as being doubly controlled by both an external master-author[108] and by internal poet-surrogates such as Atreus and Medea.[109]

In his 2004 book Cedric Littlewood has shown that 'by allusions to other literary texts, by self-referential theatrical scenes, and by other devices, Senecan tragedy continually reminds its readers of the fictive quality of its dramatic reality'.[110] According to Littlewood, intertextuality is constantly deployed by Seneca to construct an artificial world of illusions, which he interprets through Seneca' reflections, in his philosophical works, on human life as a stage. My own reading of Seneca develops Littlewood's intertextual approach, radicalizing his idea that Seneca's tragedies conceptualize the human self as an artificial construct and embody philosophical views that are central to Seneca's prose works; but I arrive at this conclusion on the basis of a completely different reading of the treatises, and from a radical change of method. If the tragedies expose the intertextual artificiality of the human self, the inevitable next step, which Littlewood seems to consider only hesitatingly, whereas I will decisively take, is to explore the possibilities (i) that Senecan philosophy is *itself* an intertextually illusory theater, and (ii) that the Senecan philosophical voice is not at all different from the artificial and constructed voice of the characters of the plays. In a departure from the standard approach, which consists in

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108 Schiesaro mostly develops arguments through the analysis of allusivity, constantly attributing to Seneca (and Atreus) a subtle and full control of Vergilian reminiscences.

109 Schiesaro (2003), 1 'Atreus dominates the stage as a gifted poet'; 3 Atreus is 'endowed with all the characteristics of a successful creator of poetry'; 16 'it is a mark of self-reflexivity in Seneca's tragedies that the character who controls the dramatic action and displays superior knowledge and power on stage can often be seen as embodying the playwright, and can thus offer implicit insight into the poetics of the play'; etc.

110 Littlewood (2004), 7.

reading Senecan plays through, or against, the philosophical parameters theorized in the treatises, in Ch. 2.4 I will suggest that, in fact, the tragedies invite us to do precisely the opposite.

For Petronius, I have been influenced by a series of scholars who have reacted against rather banalizing perceptions of this author as a moralist or a parodist – perceptions that were largely dominant in the 20th century; I have focused, instead, on the powerful internal tensions of the text. I have found useful, in particular, Froma Zeitlin's article on 'Petronius as paradox: anarchy and artistic integrity', which investigates the 'fundamental disorder' and 'vision of disintegration' displayed by this novel;[111] and Niall Slater's reader-response analysis of the *Satyrica* as an uninterpretable, liberated work,[112] although I believe that both his and Zeitlin's emphasis on interpretive chaos needs to be toned down. The *Satyrica* may be, in some respects, a 'mad' work, but there is method in it: the obvious, hopeless lack of coherence is not incompatible with the existence of recurrent patterns that explain, without eliminating, that incoherence.

From Catherine Connors' study of 'Petronius the poet' (1998), I have adopted the idea that the alternation between prose and poetry is not just a formal feature, with the poems being mere divertissements, unconsequential and detachable from the prose (the standard interpretation); the prosimetrical structure is, rather, a core element of the Weltanschauung offered by the poem. Connors, however, limited her analysis to prose and poetry as 'rival structures of representation' (p. 2) of the narrated events, whereas in my view they amount to something substantially more far reaching than that, since their conflict figures the dynamics of self-formation, self-definition, and self-expression that are inherent to human nature and become

[111] Zeitlin (1971b).

[112] Slater (1990).

so painfully evident in Nero's court. Also, I do not agree with Connors' traditionalistic notion of Petronius as a master-author in self-conscious and amused control of his literary agency, 'repeatedly restaging the whole enterprise of choosing to be a novelist instead of a poet, and, with an unfailingly light touch, exploring the consequences of this choice' (p. 2). On the contrary, this 'repeated restaging' exposes the compulsive neurosis of Neronian prosimetra, which I will investigate in Ch. 4 and Appendices 6-7.

The single study of a Neronian author that I have found most fascinating is Victoria Rimell's *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction* (2002). In her analysis, the *Satyrica* emerges as 'a theatrical, prismatic and highly metaphorical piece of writing' in which literature 'is no longer just 'written', static and containable, but is imaged as a live body, a flesh or food ingested in the process of learning and spewed out from bodies in performance: inside the consumer, it is a volatile force transmuted in the process of digestion which may also gnaw away its host from within. This disruption of civilising hierarchies between eater and eaten evokes a graphic picture of the risks of eating (and therefore reading) per *se*' (pp. 8-9). The *Satyrica* continually dramatizes incorporation, which is the common denominator underlying a wide variety of human activities, both corporeal and literary, which ultimately blend into each other according to a pervasive pattern of metaphorical and fluid interpenetration. Rimell's close readings bring to light how the *Satyrica* performs a systematic inversion and confusion of dichotomies such as writing and reading, creating and being created, eating and throwing up. On this approach, she oscillates between a powerful, aggressive notion of the *Satyrica* as an obsessive and

‘imperialistic’ incorporator,[113] and the specular idea of literature as an ‘invasive force’,[114] ultimately accepting the paradoxical coexistence of these extremes.[115] Taking my cue from Rimell’s brilliant and sophisticated study, I will push this line of inquiry more decisively towards an appreciation of the weakness and passivity of the *Satyrica* as a ‘work’, the relentless ‘imperialistic’ (to use Rimell’s terminology) erosion of boundaries operated, from the outside, by previous literature, and the alienated condition of the human self with respect to language as depicted by Petronius.

Scholars have frequently noted that a distinctive feature of Neronian literature as a whole is its ‘anxiety of influence’, which emerges as a preoccupation with constructing itself as belated, reactive, contrarian, revisionist, and quintessentially post-Augustean.[116] My own interpretation recognizes this ‘anxiety of influence’ as a core feature of Neronian literature, but with two decisive differences. In the first place, whereas in Bloom’s and his classical followers’ formulation anxiety is of a merely literary type (that is, fear of the influence literary predecessors may have on the production of new, original literary works), ‘influence’ as feared by the Neronians is a more radical and, as it were, less frivolous and aesthetically indulged

[113] Rimell (2002), 16 ‘the *Satyricon* always constructs its ‘difference’ out of sameness: it does not supplant, succeed or ignore other texts, it obsessively incorporates them, imperialistically chews up the known world of literature until, ironically, it is itself fat and flaccid’.

[114] Rimell (2002), 181 ‘the idea, developed so strickingly in the *Satyricon*’s narratives, that literature is/gets inside you, is an invasive force subject to corporeal flux and ephemerality, forces us to contemplate issues of freedom of speech and originality, as well as the concept of whether literary knowledge, which we must amass in order to read the ultra-allusive texts of Neronian Rome, makes us physically vulnerable or even intellectually incapacitated’.

[115] Rimell (2002), 201 ‘this text makes it difficult, to various degrees, to decide what is controlled, and what is beyond a character’s control, or what is merely constructed as control/freedom’.

[116] In general on the Neronian authors’ revisionism, cf. the already mentioned Mayer’s (1982), Gowers (1994), Castagna and Vogt-Spira (2002), and Littlewood (2017). Scholars who explicitly cite Bloom’s anxiety of influence in connection to Neronian literature include: for Lucan, Masters (1992), 9-10 and (1994), 156; for Petronius, Rimell (2002), 199.

phenomenon. It is an anxiety about any sort of influence that might undermine the freedom and independence of the self tout court. This includes an anxiety of language, which is felt as an external force that threatens one's ability to determine one's fate (Ch. 2), an anxiety of mental processes that the self is incapable of controlling (Ch. 3), and an anxiety of a more general kind of influence than the one studied by Bloom, that affecting the relation of the self to the world at large (Ch. 4).

Second, and more importantly, the Neronian 'anxiety of influence' is a deeply conflicted phenomenon, which coexists with its opposite, an irrepressible 'fascination for influence'. Whereas previous studies have tended to emphasize the Neronians' active 'engagement' with or 'appropriation' of the literary past, I argue that their exhibited intolerance of the literary tradition should not distract us from the macroscopic paradox that they deliberately choose to impose on themselves that oppressive burden. Their massive display of difference is better explained as a reaction formation that counters, but fails to mask, a deeper need to let the dominating Augustan texts take control of their own works (Chapter 5). For the Neronians, allusivity is not an instrument of signification, but rather a compulsive habit of mind, by which the literary Other, in a sense against these authors' best intentions, takes center stage. Allusions, I argue, are neither exclusively nor primarily constructed as a means of enriching the new text with strengthening meaning. Allusion, which is always on the verge of becoming intertextuality, is rather one way by which the Neronian text turns away from itself, stressing its own, and the human self's, lack of coherence, unified meaning, identity, control.[117] This renders Neronian poetics particularly prone to being read through postmodern eyes and parameters.

[117] Using Rudat (1985)'s terminology, we may say that Neronian texts stress the centrifugal, rather than centripetal, vector of allusions.

Many areas of contemporary philosophy, social criticism, and psychoanalysis understand the human self as decentered, multiple, and contextualized, as opposed to the traditional notion of the human self as centrally organized, individual, and absolute. The contemporary view sees the human self as considerably more passive than people normally take themselves to be. Although we experience ourselves as singular and as having a 'self' as a quasi-object inside us, this is a mere construction; for, far from being active agents, we are constantly 'acted upon' by diverse hormonal, social, cultural, inter-subjective, intra-psychic, and other forces of which we remain essentially unaware and which we cannot control. My approach applies to the study of Neronian literature this postmodern understanding of the human self as inherently 'weak', in an attempt to elucidate the authorial 'weakness' of the Neronian courtiers. My argument is not that the postmodern notion of the self is 'truer' when applied to the Neronian self, since the former is in fact applicable to human subjects of any age. Rather, I argue that, in part as a result of the alienating socio-cultural circumstances in which they lived (cf. sections 4 and 5), Neronian court authors created a literary system that, compared to that of other periods of antiquity, displays 'postmodern' themes, qualities, attitudes, and anxieties to a considerably more pronounced level.

My method, thus, may be seen as at once historicist and comparativist. I interpret Neronian literature as deeply influenced by larger psycho-social patterns of Neronian society, such as political subjugation, the depersonalizing self-effacement that is necessary in the court environment, and the equally alienating practice of a narcissistic-masochistic philosophical system such as Stoicism. These elements, I propose, contributed to determining in the authors of Nero's court a deeply suspicious and paranoid relation to language, a 'masochistic' approach to literature and allusivity, and an anguished anxiety concerning the nature, coherence, and agency of the human self. As a result of these factors, Neronian court literature constantly calls attention

to its *intertextual* (i.e., uncontrolled, uncontrollable, externally-determined, passive, incoherent, ambiguous, pluralistic), rather than *allusive* (i.e., controlled, controllable, self-determined, active, coherent, clear-cut, monadic) aspects. In an attempt to capture how the Neronian courtiers' status as alienated individuals may have led them to enact a quasi-postmodernist practice of literature, all through this study I will read their works through interpretive tools inspired by current theories such as psychoanalysis,[118] Girard's triangular desire, Derrida's deconstruction, Kristeva's intertextuality, and Barthes' death of the author. My assumption is not, obviously, that the Neronians anticipated the modern debate on these issues with a similar degree of theoretical rigor. However, I am convinced, and hope to demonstrate, that they were concerned with philosophical questions regarding the problematic nature of the human self and agency that are largely comparable to those addressed by 20th century thinkers.

My engagement with psychoanalysis, in particular, requires some final remarks, due both to the controversial status of this discipline and the innovative aspects of my recourse to it. I am aware of the dangers involved with applying psychoanalysis (a recent theoretical construct that is based on the 'lived' experience of the relation between two human beings who meet and talk to one another in person) to the study of ancient texts (linguistic artifacts that were produced around two thousand years ago and cannot engage in a dialogue); of course, there are limits to what a psychoanalytically oriented critic can do.[119] But I agree with Charles Segal that the operation is justified by the beliefs (i) that the ancient authors and the modern critic ultimately share 'a universal area of human experience', and (ii) that one aspect of this shared humanity is the nature

[118] See next paragraph.

[119] For instance, I do *not* try to reconstruct Seneca's Oedipus complex, which was attempted by Rozelaar (1976), esp. 48-52.

of language as a locus of manifestation of the human Unconscious.[120] Excellent psychoanalytical work has been done in the past few decades in the field of classical studies. I have been inspired especially by Charles Segal's seminal study of 'language and desire' in Senecan drama (1986), Micaela Janan (2001)'s and Paul Allen Miller (2009)'s Lacanian interpretation of Roman elegy as the manifestation of a fundamental split in subjectivity linked to the traumatic historical circumstances of the incipient phase of the Roman empire, and Ellen Oliensis's exploration of the emotions hidden behind, yet implicitly evoked by, the texts of Catullus, Vergil, and Ovid (2009). This dissertation differentiates itself from these studies mainly because I try to avoid both their heavy recourse to interpretation of imagery and symbols, and their focus (not exclusive but central) on sexuality and erotic desire; moreover, these studies adopt an exclusively Freudian and/or Lacanian perspective that is not up to date with the contemporary psychoanalitical thinking. The understanding of the human psyche presupposed by this study is based (although mostly I decided to avoid explicit references and jargon in order to keep it accessible to classical scholars), in particular, on three main concepts: Charles Brenner's 'conflict theory' (1982), which posits the ubiquity and centrality of mental conflict in every aspect of human life, both healthy and pathological; Philip Bromberg's concept of 'self-state' (1998 and 2011), which captures the inherent multiplicity and internal otherness of human subjectivity, and especially the more pathological forms of this internal otherness, arising from trauma; and a post-Bionian understanding of the most basic workings of the human psyche in terms of a ceaseless need to control, project, or avoid unprocessed emotions and trauma (e.g. Ferro 2011 and 2015).

[120] Segal (1986), 16.

Chapter 2

The Senecan Subject and Language

SUMMARY

This chapter provides an interpretation of the entire Senecan oeuvre (philosophy and drama) through the unifying interpretive key of the relation between the speaking subject and language, a relation that is problematic on many different levels. Senecan philosophy may be read as a 'theory and practice' of linguistic control. In section 1, I show that the Senecan philosophical persona conceptualizes linguistic mastery as a crucial element of the practice of Stoic philosophy. In section 2, I suggest that Seneca's highly idiosyncratic style can be read, in part, as a tool whose function is to enable his persona to exercise philosophical control over the dangerous complexities of language. Section 3 shows that Senecan drama constantly calls attention to its characters' inability fully to understand the implications of what they say or hear; in particular, I question some widely held assumptions concerning Senecan tragic characters (namely self-conscious metatheatricality, doublespeak, and quasi-authorial allusivity), arguing that even those characters who seem to be 'authorial figures' and to employ language in an assertive and powerful manner, such as Medea and Atreus, are, at a deeper level, puppets manipulated by stronger linguistic forces. In section 4, I suggest that the Senecan philosophical persona's preoccupation with controlling the meanings of its discourse seems to be questioned by various elements of the philosophical works, such as conceptual inconsistencies, incongruous

metaphors, destabilizing associations and changes of topic, and other phenomena that complicate the self-portrait of the Senecan persona as a coherent voice.

1. THE PHILOSOPHICAL SELF AND LANGUAGE

It is surprising that the Senecan corpus, one of the most original and influential stylistic achievements of Western literary culture, constantly stigmatizes stylistic concerns, promoting, instead, a focus on the 'substance' that (assertedly) lays behind and beyond mere 'words': style is an insignificant thing (*Ep*. 100.10 *pusillae rei: verbis*); philosophy is all about things, not words (*Ep*. 16.3 *non in verbis sed in rebus*); it is not necessary to devote too much effort to words (*Ep*. 75.3 *multum tamen operae inpendi verbis non oportet*); philosophy is an existential practice that prioritizes 'deeds' over 'words' (*Ep*. 20.1 *verba rebus proba*); words should become deeds (108.35 *ut quae fuerint verba sint opera*). The examples may be multiplied.[121]

This tension between Seneca's stylistic practice (resulting in a highly personal rhetorical style)[122] and his philosophical theorization (which is in line with the orthodox Stoic requirement that style should be as plain and simple as possible)[123] can be explained in various ways: for instance, in terms of hypocrisy;[124] as a failure to avoid the 'danger' of an excessive reliance on

[121] *Ep*. 40.14 (disapprovingly) *a **rebus** studium transferendum est ad **verba***; 45.6 *ne **res** nos, non **verba** decipiant*; 52.14 *<at> ad **rem** commoveantur, non ad **verba** composita; alioquin nocet illis **eloquentia**, si non **rerum** cupiditatem facit sed sui*; 83.27 *ostende **rebus**, non **verbis***; 88.32 ***res** tradit, non **verba***; 87.41 *litigare de **verbis**, quasi iam de **rebus** iudicatum sit*; 98.18 *quid opus est **verbis**? in **rem** praesentem eamus*; 108.6 *aliqui tamen et cum pugillaribus veniunt, non ut **res** excipiant, sed ut **verba***; 108.7 *rapit illos instigatque **rerum** pulchritudo, non **verborum** inanium sonitus*; 117.33 *cur ergo potius inter **vocabula** me sapientiae detines quam inter **opera**?*

[122] As is well known, the originality and immediate influence of Seneca's pointed, fractured, and restless style is documented, and criticized, by ancient authors such as Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.125-31), a younger coeval, and Fronto (*De Orationibus* 2.1) in the 2nd. century.

[123] For a detailed history of both the theorization about, and practice of, style among the Stoics from Zeno up until Marcus Aurelius, see Moretti (1995).

[124] Too (1994).

rhetoric;[125] as the outcome of a physiological transformation of Stoic dialectics;[126] or as arising from the need to render stylistically the complexities of human interiority.[127] Whatever the causes, here Seneca ultimately cannot be saved from some degree of self-contradiction, as some scholars have noted. For instance, in a recent discussion of Seneca's relation to Epicureanism, A. Schiesaro has called attention to the fact that 'Seneca reiterates that his style aspires to simplicity and directness (75.1-2), yet his epigrammatic sententiousness is one of the most noticeable aspects of his writing'; Schiesaro links Seneca's ambivalent attitude toward Epicureanism to unresolved 'tensions, in both [Senecan] thought and style, between self restraint and inspired excitement.'[128] E. Gunderson has recently offered a reading of *Letter* 108 as a text that captures the paradoxical interdependence of deeds and words that is inherent in Senecan philosophy.[129]

In the first half of this chapter, I propose that one important factor that contributes to explain the artificial and abrupt nature of Seneca's style is his conception of language as an external infectious influence (section 1) to which he reacts by creating an apparatus of stylistic antidotes meant to keep this dangerous influence under control (section 2).

In *De Providentia*, to Lucilius complaining about the apparently indisputable fact that bad things happen to good men, Seneca replies with a paradox: no bad things happen to good men. In his own preview of the dialogue's argument (3.1), he explains that 'what appear to be

[125] For instance, Cooper (2006), 47 suggests that Seneca 'falls victim to [the danger] that in relying so heavily on these rhetorical, emotion-evoking devices of the spiritual director, a Stoic writer will tend to forget or neglect the fact that the ultimate goal [...] is to achieve a full philosophical understanding'.

[126] Moretti (1995), 35-6.

[127] Traina (1987), 9-23; Citti (2012).

[128] Schiesaro (2015); the quotations are from p. 245 and p. 240 respectively.

[129] Gunderson (2015), 14-36; cf. p. 36 'to praise deeds over words itself involves spinning out a wordy wisdom that may be an opus in only a literary sense and not a concrete one. Writing readers into the letter offers an attempt to constrain this treacherous process'.

evils are not so' (*quam non sint quae uidentur mala*); the origin of this misconception lies in a wrong employment of language: 'what you call (*quae tu vocas*) hard measure, misfortunes, and things against which we ought to pray, are really to the advantage, firstly, of those to whom they happen, and secondly, of all mankind'. Therefore, Seneca invites Lucilius never to pity any good man; for 'though he may be called unhappy, he cannot be so' (*potest enim miser dici, non potest esse*). In this summary, Seneca conjures twice the idea that language and reality are two separate, and potentially even opposite entities (*vocas*; *dici*). The entire dialogue can be seen as a large-scale attempt to define, linguistically, what 'real' unhappiness and 'real' happiness consist of, in an attempt to bridge this gap between language and reality.[130]

The difficulty of discerning what is good and bad, happy and unhappy, behind the distorting words used to talk about these concepts is a leitmotif not only of this dialogue, but of the entire Senecan corpus. In *Ep*. 121 Seneca sets out to explain that 'so-called felicity (*hoc quod felicitas dicitur*) is fickle and empty, and that the word easily admits of a syllable's increase' (i.e. the terms 'happiness' and 'un-happiness' are often confused by humans; 121.4). At *Ep*. 36.2, Seneca warns Lucilius that 'there are men whose speech is awry (*quosdam perverse loqui*), who use the contrary terms (*significare contraria*). They called (*vocabant*) him happy; what of it? Was he happy?' Many 'bestow the name' (*nomen imponunt*) of 'good' upon things that are merely 'useful' (*Ep*. 120.2). Many define (*vocat*) 'felicity' as 'gluttony' or 'pleasure', because they are 'misled by the attractiveness of a word' (*blando nomine inductus*; *VB* 13.2). And so on.[131]

[130] Cf. e.g. Prov. 4.6 *illos merito quis dixerit miseros qui nimia felicitate torpescunt*; 4.15 *Miseri tibi uidentur? Nihil miserum est quod in naturam consuetudo perduxit*; 6.4 *Isti quos pro felicibus aspicis, si non qua occurrunt sed qua latent uideris, miseri sunt, [...]; non est ista solida et sincera felicitas: crusta est et quidem tenuis*.

[131] On *bonum* vs. *malum* or *felix* vs. *miser*, cf. also, e.g.: *VB* 12.3-4 *ut isti uocant, bona*; [...] *hos esse in*

The exact definition of the concepts of *felicitas* and *bonum* are two central problems of Senecan philosophy, but by no means the only areas in which philosophical awareness is indissolubly linked to linguistic definition. For instance, in *De Constantia Sapientis* one of Seneca's main arguments is that the *sapiens* cannot be offended; this is illustrated primarily through the analysis of the slippery meaning of words such as 'injury' and 'insult'.[132] The terms *iniuria* and *contumelia* belong to the long list of everyday language items that, according to Seneca, are normally misapplied to the wrong objects by insensitive speakers, together with, for instance, *occupatus*, *otiosus*, *sanus*, *magnus*, *senectus*, *uirtus*, etc.[133]

Hence the need, repeatedly felt by Seneca, to specify when a noun is being used in its 'true', i.e. philosophically correct, rather than normal and wrong, sense. For example, we read at *Ep*. 74.16-17:

> The true goods (*bona vera*) are those which reason bestows, substantial and eternal; they cannot fall away, neither can they grow less or be diminished. Other things are goods according to opinion (*opinione*), and though they are called by the same name as the true goods (*nomen quidem habent commune cum veris*), the essence (*proprietas*) of goodness is not in them. Let us therefore call them 'advantages' (*commoda vocentur*), and, to use our technical term, 'preferred' things.

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uoluptatibus dices, nec tamen illis bene erit, quia non bono gaudent; *Hel*. 4.1 *dici possim miser*; *Ep*. 8.3-5 *uoca*; [...] *nomen inpone: putabo hunc non esse felicem*; etc.

[132] *Const*. 16.2-4 'We do not deny that it is an unpleasant thing to be beaten or struck, or to lose one of our limbs, but we say that none of these things are injuries. We do not take away from them the feeling of pain, but the name of 'injury' (*nomen iniuriae*), which cannot be received while our virtue is unimpaired. [...] And what is this which is called an insult (*illud quod contumelia dicitur*)? Someone has made a joke about the baldness of my head, the weakness of my eyes, the thinness of my legs, the shortness of my stature; what insult is there in telling me that which everyone sees?'

[133] In *De brevitate*, a whole chapter (12.1-13.1) is devoted to clarifying the definition of *occupatus* and *otiosus*: 12.1 *Quaeris fortasse quos occupatos uocem?*, etc.; *Ep*.85.4 *Quid si sanum voces leviter febricitantem? non est bona valetudo mediocritas morbi*; *Ep*. 91.17 *Alexander Macedonum rex discere geometriam coeperat, infelix, sciturus quam pusilla terra esset, ex qua minimum occupaverat. Ita dico: 'infelix' ob hoc quod intellegere debebat falsum se gerere cognomen: quis enim esse magnus in pusillo potest?*; *Marc*. 11.5 *hoc quod senectus vocatur paucissimorum est circumitus annorum*; Ep. 92.25 *vitiis nostris nomen virtutis inponimus*.

There exists, for Seneca, a crucial difference between the essence (*proprietas*) of ‘goodness’ and the word (*nomen*) ‘goodness’, which is often attributed to things that have nothing to do with ‘real goods’ (*bona uera*) because of an established convention (*opinio*). Seneca often evokes the notion that the same word may, or may not, be used ‘truly’: ‘happy is that man to whom real pleasure (*uera uoluptas*) will coincide with contempt of pleasures’ (*VB* 4.2), ‘real happiness (*uera felicitas*) resides in virtue’ (*VB* 16.1), ‘there is no real value (*nihil ueri boni*) in those things which everybody desires’ (*Hel*. 5.6-6.1), most people are unable to appreciate what ‘real friendship’ (*uera amicitia*) consists of (*Ep*. 3.2).

As a consequence, it is fundamental to focus on what ‘things really are’, as opposed to ‘how things are called’:

> *Ep*. 95.54
> Let us banish rumor and let us set a value upon each thing, asking what it is and not what it is called (*quid sint, non quid vocentur*).
>
> *Ep*. 110.3
> Apply careful investigation, considering how our affairs actually stand, and not what men say of them (*quid sint res nostrae, non quid vocentur*).

Why is the way people use language so erroneous? A series of passages clarifies that the problem lies in what we may call, with anachronistic but descriptively appropriate terminology, the intersubjective and intertextual nature of language. In Ch. 1.1, I showed that, at *Ep*. 123.8-11, Seneca recommends Lucilius to steer clear of unphilosophical people because their words might infect us; to illustrate the dangerous nature of language, Seneca uses three vivid metaphors: that of bad seeds that contaminate us with vice; that of a catchy and distracting earworm that the mind cannot stop repeating over and over; and that of the Sirens, whose alluring song may lead

us to (philosophical) death. A further passage that helps to illustrate how this linguistic contamination/allurement takes place is *Hel*. 5.6-6.1:

> I have always believed that there was no real good (*nihil ueri boni*) in any of those things which all men desire, and I then found that they were empty, and merely painted over with artificial and deceitful dyes (*inania et specioso ac deceptorio fuco circumlita*), without containing anything within which corresponds to their outside (*intra nihil habentia fronti suae simile*): I now find nothing so harsh and fearful as the common opinion of mankind (*opinio uulgi*) threatened me with in this which is called 'adversity' (*in his quae mala uocantur*): the word itself (*verbum quidem ipsum*), owing to the prevalent belief and consensus (*persuasione quadam et consensu*), strikes (*ferit*) the hearers as something dismal and accursed, for so has the vulgar ordered that it should be (*ita enim populus iussit*): but a great many of the decrees of the vulgar are repealed by the wise (*sed populi scita ex magna parte sapientes abrogant*). Setting aside, then, the verdict of the majority (*iudicio plurium*), who are carried away by the first appearance of things and the usual opinion about them, let us consider what is meant by 'exile': clearly just a changing from one place to another.

This is an important passage to understand Seneca's stance toward language. The first sentence casts the dichotomy things vs. words in terms of an inner essence (*intra*) vs. a deceitful exterior (*fuco*; *fronti*). As the underlined phrases illustrate, Seneca believes that words (*vocantur*; *verbum*) come to us as carriers, not of neutral meanings, but of biased opinions. There exists a standard and automatic way of using language which is shared by everybody (cf. *uulgus*, *populus*, *consensu*) and which is therefore so deeply and inextricably rooted that it coincides with language itself. The non-philosophical human subject is so immersed in this linguistic field that s/he cannot be aware of how distorted the latter is, and thus passively conforms to the dominating linguistic patterns as though s/he were deprived of agency (*ita populus iussit*). Rather than being able to make a free use of words, the human subject is 'struck' (*ferit*) by them. The strong terminology adopted by Seneca (*ferit*; *iussit*), stresses the constrictive and even violent

nature of this process, whereas the political terminology (*populi scita*; *abrogat*) casts the wise man as a quasi-imperatorial figure whose authority is above the laws of language.

The non-*sapiens*' position of weakness and passivity with respect to language is further clarified by passages such as *Ep*. 81.29:

> We do not know how to weigh matters (*res*); we should take counsel regarding them, not with their reputation (*fama*) but with their nature (*rerum naturam*); those things possess no grandeur wherewith to enthrall our minds, except the fact that we have become accustomed (*consuevimus*) to marvel at them. For they are not praised because they ought to be desired, but they are desired because they have been praised; and when the error of individuals (*singulorum error*) has once created error on the part of the public (*publicum*), then the public error (*publicus*) goes on creating error on the part of individuals (*singulorum errorem*).

As human beings, we are misled by assumptions (*fama*) that are so difficult to eradicate because of two reasons: they have become un-reflecting habits (*consuevimus*); and they are agreed upon by the entire society (*error publicus*).[134]

This un-reflecting and erroneous use of language is a leitmotif of Senecan philosophy. Seneca conceives of language (as it is normally used by un-reflective speakers, not of course by himself) as an inadequate and misleading instrument, something that, simply, cannot be relied upon and can all too easily, and (crucially) inadvertently, be used in ways that are detrimental for the subject using it. 'All things may change their name', becoming good or bad depending on circumstances (with the sole exception of virtue: *Ep*. 95.35 *omnia praeter virtutem mutare*

[134] Cf. *Ep*. 91.19 *ex consensu istis metus est*; 95.33 *falsorum recepta persuasio*; *VB* 1.3 *optima rati ea quae magno adsensu recepta sunt [...] nec ad rationem sed ad similitudinem vivimus*; 1.4-5; 2.1-2; *Ot*. 1.3. Cf. also *Ep*. 107.1 *nomen quod illis noster error inposuit*. Even the best among us, like Lucilius, are not immune to this shared ('public') fallacy: cf. *Ep*. 3.1-2, in which Seneca wonders whether, in a previous letter, Lucilius employed the word *amicitia* in its 'public' (i.e. erroneous) sense (*si proprio illo verbo quasi publico usus es*); does Lucilius understand what the word 'friendship' *really* means? (*vim verae amicitiae*).

nomen). Therefore, we need to research to what things a certain word has been falsely attached (*Ep*. 110.8 *quibus hoc falso sit nomen adscriptum*). Social labels such as ‘knight’, ‘freedman’, or ‘slave’ are mere names (*nomina*) devoid of an essential foundation in reality (*Ep*. 31.11). It is just ‘out of convention’ (*ex consensu*) that we fear what we erroneously style ‘evils’, but what there could be more stupid than a man who fears mere words (*uerba metuente*)? (*Ep*. 91.19). In an imaginary speech that Seneca attributes to Socrates, the latter complains that people do not pay attention to the meaning of his words; they seem to perceive only the sound (*VB* 25.8 *sonus tantummodo uerborum*). They are misled by their own prejudices, with the result that their ‘accustomed talk’ (*solita verba*), namely the wrong ideas that they repeat over and over simply out of convention and habit, has the same value as the cries of babies (*VB* 26.4-5). When talking about the *sapiens*, one should avoid the risk of embellishing this figure through an ‘imaginary honor of words’ (*Const*. 3.3 *imaginario honore uerborum*).

Seneca’s distrust of language also explains his frequent and extensive attacks against the philosophical *cavillationes*, a vain playing with words which offers no occasion for real philosophical improvement.[135] Among the many passages from the *Epistles* which exemplify this polemic,[136] one in particular is important for my analysis of Seneca’s stance toward language, because it illuminates how his rejection of *cavillationes* relates to his more fundamental distrust of language in general, and it also illustrates, in part, how comes that Seneca may hold that *verba* are insignificant compared to *res*, while also emphasizing the crucial need to use *verba* correctly all through his philosophical corpus (*Ep*. 45.5-9). There are, for Seneca, two different ways in

[135] E.g. *Ep*. 48.4 *Tu mihi verba distorques et syllabas digeris*; 82.8 *Faciet autem illud firmum adsidua meditatio, si non verba exercueris sed animum*, etc.

[136] E.g. *Ep*. 48.4-8, 82.8-10, 82.19-24, 87.38-41.

which linguistic ambiguities may deceive us (5 *ambiguam significationem verbis inligamus*; 9 *verborum ambiguitates*). The first and less important one is that which is typical of *verborum cavillatio*, 'quibbling about words' (5). This form of linguistic illusion is artificial, disconnected from reality, and relatively innocuous: it originates from a misconception of what philosophy is about and results in a waste of time; Seneca compares it to the tricks of a prestidigitator (8). *Cavillatio* involves words alone and the relations of words with other words (6 *vocum similitudines*). A far more dangerous form of ambiguity (9) is that which is, so to speak, natural, that is, inherent to language. This ambiguity has to do, not with words themselves, but with the much more important problem of how we connect words to real things (6 'It is things, *res*, that lead us astray'). Using language correctly in our own lives is extremely difficult, because 'things' that are widely different are often referred to with the same 'word' (7): 'adulation' is almost indistinguishable from 'friendship'; 'vices' sneak in under the name (*sub nomine*) of 'virtues'; we apply the title (*titulo*) of 'strength' to 'recklessness'; 'self-control' is called (*vocatur*) 'lazyness' (7).

This instability of the signifiers, namely the phenomenon by which the same *verba* can refer to different, and even opposite, *res*, is a constant concern for Seneca. Sometimes it is not only a question of a wrong employment of language; the *res* themselves present us with apparent similarities that can easily deceive us and induce us to misapply words (*Ep*. 120.8-9):

> I will add something which may perhaps astonish you: evil things have sometimes offered the appearance of what is honorable, and that which is best has been manifested through its opposite. For there are, as you know, vices which are next-door to virtues (*virtutibus vitia confinia*); and even that which is lost and debased can resemble (*similitudo*) that which is upright. So the spendthrift falsely imitates the liberal man (*prodigus liberalem*) – although it matters a great deal whether a man knows how to give, or does not know how to save, his money. I assure you, my dear Lucilius, there are many who do not give, but simply throw away (*non donant sed proiciunt*); and I do not call a

> man liberal who is out of temper with his money. Carelessness looks like ease (*neglegentia facilitatem*), and rashness like bravery (*temeritas fortitudinem*). This resemblance (*similitudo*) has forced us to watch carefully and to distinguish between things which are by outward appearance closely connected, but which actually are very much at odds with one another (*distinguere* ***specie*** *quidem vicina,* ***re*** *autem plurimum inter se dissidentia*).

As in the previous passage, Seneca emphasizes that different things often look similar (*similitudo*); consequently, it is difficult to name them correctly. Precisely because the correspondence between language and reality is so imperfect and complicated, the task of philosophy is to bring this chaos to order, correcting the judgmental mistakes that, starting out as verbal misusages, translate into existential disaster. The inane subtleties of *cavillatio* are an aberration, but this does not mean that philosophy is not concerned with words. In fact, it is all about a correct employment of words.

This explains, among other things, why Seneca devotes such extended sections of his treatises to defining terms. For instance, in the *De Constantia* alone he feels the need to clarify his usage of the term *iniuria* no less than three times.[137] The *De Ira* is scattered with various definitions of what does or does not constitute 'anger', a concept that, under Seneca's linguistic microscope, proves to be less clear-cut and univocal than most people believe.[138] The *De Vita Beata* contains an elaborate linguistic disquisition, consisting of a series of technical definitions

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[137] At 5.1 to distinguish it from its quasi-synonym, *contumelia*; at 7.5-6 to explain logically, with abundant and almost pedantic exemplification, that the fact that an *iniuria* is committed does not automatically mean that it is received (in other terms, the property of 'being received' is not a necessary component of the definition of *iniuria*); and at 11.2-3 to comment, again with several examples, on the distinction between *contumelia* and a series of other concepts that are similar to, but distinct from, it.

[138] *Ira* 1.3.1-2 (definition of *ira* as *cupiditas poenae exigendae* and its relation to *iniuria*, whether the latter is carried out or only planned), 1.4.1 (difference between *ira* and *iracundia*), 1.4.2-3 (difference among various sub-species of *ira*, such as *amarum*, *acerbum*, *stomachosum*, *rabiosum*, *clamosum*, *difficilem*, *asperum*, *morosum*), 1.9.3 (things that resemble, but are not *ira*: *alio nomine appellanda est, desit ira esse*), 2.3.4-5 (definition of when an initial *agitatio animi* becomes an instance of ira; *hanc iram non uoco*).

of the notions of 'highest good' and 'happiness' (*VB* 4.1-5.4). *Ep*. 83.8-11 devotes some thirty lines to distinguishing between the meaning of *ebrius* and *ebriosus*; *Ep*. 89.4-8 thirty-four lines to discussing the difference between the definitions of *sapientia* and philosophy; *Ep*. 102.14-17 twenty-seven lines to defining what *laus* means, with a coda about the difference between the only seemingly synonymical *fama*, *gloria*, and *claritas*; *Ep*. 118.8-12 thirty-six lines to evaluating and contrasting various possible definitions of the notion of *bonum*, with the goal of clarifying to what things that term might by appropriate.

This constant need to clarify for his readers the meaning of the terms he uses leads Seneca, on many occasions, to isolate for analysis phrases or words that are of very common employment and whose meaning is apparently transparent. For instance, at *Ep*. 81.9-10 he devotes fifteen lines to an in-depth analysis of the idiomatic expression *gratiam referre*, going over the reasons why it differs from its seeming synonyms *gratiam reddere* and *beneficium reponere*. Another example is *Ep*. 49.2-4: to bring home the idea that time goes by with 'infinite speed' and human life is nothing compared to eternity, he dissects the word *modo*, 'a little time ago', by showing that it can be used as a synonym of 'a few days ago', 'a few decades ago', 'many decades ago', etc. – an almost Derridean paradox which exposes the intrinsic inadequacy of language to accurately convey the complexities of human existence.

Seneca's acute linguistic awareness also manifests itself in his constant research of the maximal possible precision in his vocabulary choices. Often Seneca explicitly informs us about his own difficulties in finding the most appropriate term. At *Ep*. 26.1, for instance, he first applies the word 'old age' (*senectus*) to himself, but then he reflects that maybe he is so old and weak that 'now a different word would be more appropriate' (*aliud iam vocabulum convenit*): '*senectus* means a time of life that is 'weary' rather than 'crushed' (*lassae aetatis, non fractae*

nomen est). You may rate me in the worn-out class – of those who are nearing the end'. Even when Seneca does not explicitly tell us, it is evident that he ponders every word he writes with the utmost care. One of the clearest and most famous examples is *Ep*. 1.1, where the apparently simple concept of 'wasting time' is conveyed by several series of phrases that articulate some of its many different manifestations.[139] Clearly, for Seneca a philosophical message can be successfully delivered only through a highly nuanced display of linguistic precision.

In sum, despite Seneca's insistent protestations to the contrary, which I have discussed at the beginning of this section, *verba* are central to his philosophical project. Senecan philosophy can unhesitatingly be defined as a 'philosophy of language': its primary aim is to name and define things correctly, a task that is particularly difficult both because of the elusive and slippery nature of language itself and because human beings make such a slack and unreflective use of it. *Verba* are not conceptualized by Seneca as a passive tool, but rather as a controlling force that takes possession of passive, unreflective human speakers. There is only one way in which this danger can be obviated, and this consists in subjecting language to a relentless scrutiny, as we will see in the next section.

[139] *Ep*. 1.1 *tempus quod adhuc aut auferebatur aut subripiebatur aut excidebat ... quaedam tempora eripiuntur nobis, quaedam subducuntur, quaedam effluunt ... magna pars vitae elabitur male agentibus, maxima nihil agentibus, tota vita aliud agentibus*.

2. *CORRECTIO* AND *SENTENTIAE*: THE NEED TO CONTROL LANGUAGE

This section offers an innovative interpretation of Senecan prose style based on the conclusions of the previous section. Senecan style originates from a need to assert mastery over language; this need of mastery originates from the fact that language (i.e. the standard, unphilosophical language that characterizes the discourse of the overwhelming majority of human beings) is viewed by the Senecan persona not as a tool, but as a dangerous influence. The Senecan persona rehearses his control over language through the continuous performance of two specular gestures: (i) a *separative* gesture; and (ii) a *connective* gesture. (i) separates a signifier[140] (*verbum*) from a meaning (*res*) that is normally connected to it, or emphasizes an important difference in meaning (*res*) between two signifiers (*verba*) that are normally considered as closely related; conversely, (ii) connects a signifier (*verbum*) to a meaning (*res*) that is normally alien to it, or emphasizes an identity or similarity in meaning (*res*) between two signifiers (*verba*) that are normally considered as divergent or opposite. This perspective seems to me particularly useful because it allows us to evaluate the inner dynamics of Senecan style, which are (I believe) extremely simple, without having to pay too much attention to its external forms, which are remarkably diverse and complicated.[141] My analysis differentiates itself from most previous discussions of Senecan style in that it attempts to adopt a linguistic (and illuminatingly reductionistic), rather than rhetorical (and confusingly complex) perspective.

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[140] By ‘signifier’ I refer to a word, phrase, or sentence, conceptualized as a ‘sign’ that conveys or defines a ‘meaning’.

[141] One may appreciate the usefulness of my model by comparing its simplicity to the chaotic heaps of rhetorical techniques and disorganized considerations that characterize the typical analysis of Senecan style. Notable examples of this tendency: Summers (1910), xlii-xcv; Traina (1987); Richardson-Hay (2006), 75-126; Von Albrecht (2014). Further bibliography in Williams (2015), 136 n. 8.

I will organize my analysis in the following way. First, (A) I will discuss *correctio*, which in my opinion is the most important rhetorical figure in Senecan philosophy, although this has not so far been properly appreciated by scholars.[142] In *correctio* the two gestures that I described above, namely (i) and (ii), are present simultaneously. Next, (B) I will examine all other types of Senecan *sententiae* and paradoxes, showing that frequently these can be interpreted as implicit cases of *correctio*, since they combine (i) and (ii) simultaneously. Finally, (C) I will argue that when a Senecan *sententia* cannot be reduced to an implicit case of *correctio*, it can still be interpreted as either (i) or (ii). The conclusion of this analysis will be that the Senecan persona makes such a frequent recourse to *correctio* (whether in its canonical or disguised forms) in order to appropriate for himself the status of a powerful speaker who, differently from normal human beings, is able to 'use' language, rather than being 'influenced' by it. While in his theorization of language (which I discussed in section 1), the Senecan persona describes the normal human condition as being dominated by stronger linguistic forces, in his obsessively 'corrective' practice of style (the object of this section) he goes out of his way to demonstrate that *he* has the power to dominate language.

(A) The Senecan persona constructs his philosophical arguments mostly by setting up a certain way of describing or conceptualizing the world, which he then immediately moves on to correct. The correction can be either explicit (A) or implicit (B and C). The former case corresponds to the rhetorical device of *correctio*, which consists in letting us know that 'X is not Y, but Z' or that 'X is Z, not Y' (or a number of further permutations). Seneca shows a truly enormous recourse to this technique. However, *correctio* is normally mentioned in the studies of

[142] See Traina (1987), 93-98 for a brief discussion of *correctio* in Seneca, containing a basic bibliography. Von Albrecht (2014), a 46-page companion chapter on Seneca's style, mentions *correctio* cursorily only once (p. 724): a representative example of modern scholarship's neglect of this rhetorical device in Seneca.

Senecan style only briefly, as just one among many rhetorical devices employed by Seneca; I will suggest that, instead, *correctio* is the most central and defining figure of his entire philosophical opus, because all the other types of *sententiae* and paradoxes that are universally recognized as the most distinctive features of Senecan style can in fact be viewed as implicit or partial cases of *correctio*.

The clearest examples of *correctio* are those in which Seneca evokes and then corrects the discourse of an interlocutor or adversary. Often this is imaginary or unnamed. Some examples:

> Prov. 6.1
> ‘Quare tamen bonis uiris **patitur** aliquid mali deus fieri?’ Ille uero non **patitur**.
>
> Const. 12.3
> Ergo et illud solutum scies quod nobis opponitur: ‘quare, si non accepit iniuriam sapiens nec contumeliam, punit eos qui fecerunt?’ Non enim **se ulciscitur**, sed **illos emendat**.
>
> Ep. 55.4
> Exclamabant homines, ‘o Vatia, solus scis vivere’. At ille **latere** sciebat, non **vivere**.
>
> Ep. 47.5
> Deinde eiusdem adrogantiae proverbium iactatur, ‘totidem hostes esse quot servos’: non **habemus** illos hostes sed **facimus**.
>
> Ira 2.16.3
> ‘**Simplicissimi**’ inquit ‘omnium habentur iracundi’. Fraudulentis enim et uersutis comparantur et simplices uidentur quia expositi sunt. Quos quidem non **simplices** dixerim sed **incautos**: stultis luxuriosis nepotibusque hoc nomen inponimus et omnibus uitiis parum callidis.

Equally often Seneca contradicts a person whom he explicitly identifies. Some examples:

> Ira 2.31.4 (Fabius)
> Turpissimam aiebat Fabius **imperatori** excusationem esse ‘non putavi’, ego turpissimam **homini** puto.

Tranq. 9.5 (Livy)
Quadraginta milia librorum Alexandriae arserunt; pulcherrimum regiae opulentiae monumentum alius laudauerit, sicut T. Liuius, qui **elegantiae** regum **curae**que egregium id opus ait fuisse: non fuit **elegantia** illud aut **cura**, sed **studiosa luxuria**, immo ne studiosa quidem, quoniam non in studium sed in spectaculum comparauerant.

Ep. 2.6 (Epicurus)
'Honesta' inquit 'res est **laeta paupertas**'. Illa vero non est **paupertas**, si laeta est; non qui parum habet, sed qui plus cupit, pauper est.

Ep. 21.1-2 (Lucilius)
Magna esse haec existimas quae relicturus es, et cum proposuisti tibi illam securitatem ad quam transiturus es, retinet te huius vitae a qua recessurus es fulgor tamquam in sordida et obscura **casurum**. Erras, Lucili: ex hac vita ad illam **ascenditur**.

Ep. 98 (Vergil)
Nisi te contra levitatem casus rerumque casum sequentium instruxeris, nisi illud frequenter et sine querella inter singula damna dixeris: **'dis aliter visum est'**. Immo mehercules, ut carmen fortius ac iustius petam quo animum tuum magis fulcias, hoc dicito quotiens aliquid aliter quam cogitabas evenerit: **'di melius'**.

The great majority of cases of *correctio* are not directed toward the statement of an interlocutor (whether real or imaginary). And yet the fact itself that Seneca, rather than just telling us what he believes to be true, feels the need constantly to inform us about what he believes *not* to be true means that some sort of implicit interlocutor is always presupposed by the Senecan text, an interlocutor whose ideas need to be conjured so as to be negated. Who is this interlocutor? Based on the previous section of this chapter, it is easy to answer this question: through his *correctiones*, Seneca responds to all those erroneous linguistic judgments that represent the 'normal' or 'usual' way of thinking and relating to the world. In a sense, Seneca's target is language itself, since, as we have seen above, he views language as an unreliable instrument that all too often ends up controlling those who are 'using' it, rather than being 'controlled' by them.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that Seneca often accompanies his *correctiones* with markers, so to speak, which are meant to call attention to his corrective gesture. These

markers may come in different forms, for instance as explicit claims that someone is wrong,[143] or that someone holds a certain opinion that differs from Seneca's,[144] as meta-linguistic phrases such as 'I would say that' or 'I'm not saying that',[145] as invitations to pay attention to the difference between different wordings or concepts,[146] and as self-corrections stressing Seneca's own difficulty to find the right words.[147] The ample recourse Seneca makes to such markers conveys the centrality of 'corrections' in his philosophical opus, which can truly be conceptualized as a massive attempt to 'correct' the erroneous thoughts of the non-*sapientes*.

Correctio is extremely frequent in Seneca's prose, as is demonstrated by Appendix 1 (which is extensive, but definitely not exhaustive). Here, I have organized the materials so as to achieve the following two goals: demonstrating the quintessentially meta-linguistic nature of Seneca's *correctiones*, i.e. the fact that the way he constructs philosophical arguments is based on a deep analysis of language and its nuances, ranging from the core meaning of words all the way down to almost pedantic grammatical minutiae such as cases, verbal tenses, and pronouns; and facilitating comparison with other rhetorical figures employed by Seneca (cf. B).

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[143] Prov. 4.7 ***erratis*** *enim ... quisquis uidetur dimissus esse dilatus est*; Ira 1.20.6 *magno hoc dictum spiritu putas?* ***Falleris****; nec enim magnitudo ista est sed immanitas*.

[144] Prov. 5.6 *quia non,* ***ut putamus****, incidunt cuncta sed ueniunt*; Ep. 99.7 *quem* ***putas*** *perisse praemissus est*; 117.19 *nec,* ***ut putatis****, exacuunt, sed extenuant*; 118.6 *non est,* ***ut existimant homines****, avida felicitas sed pusilla*.

[145] Const. 10.3 *non miserias animorum sed molestias* ***dixerim***; Ira 2.16.3 *quos quidem non simplices* ***dixerim*** *sed incautos*; Prov. 2.2 ***nec hoc dico****, non sentit illa, sed uincit*; Ep. 124.7 *non* ***dico*** *bonum, sed initium boni*; 124.24 *non* ***dico*** *quod malis, sed quod velis*.

[146] Ep. 108.4 ***attende quid dicam****: neglegentibus, non repugnantibus*; Ep. 118.12 ***adtende quid dicam****: quod bonum, est secundum naturam: non protinus quod secundum naturam est etiam bonum est*; Ep. 52.13 *non laudatur ille nunc,* ***si intellegis****, sed conclamatur.*

[147] Ep. 12.10 *aliquid secum fert.* ***Quare 'aliquid' dixi?*** *multum*; Ep. 16.7 *adhuc de alieno liberalis sum.* ***Quare autem 'alienum' dixi?*** *quidquid bene dictum est ab ullo meum est*; 42.5 ***mentitus sum***; 73.16 *deus ad homines venit,* ***immo quod est propius****, in homines venit*; 83.4 ***mentitus sum****; iam enim aetas nostra non descendit sed cadit*; 96.1 *solet fieri.* ***Hoc parum est****: debuit fieri. Decernuntur ista, non accidunt.*

One type of *correctio* that is particularly effective is the one I call 'Re-conceptualization' (see Appendix 1), which consists in a (often surprising) re-definition of a familiar concept. This may take two different forms. The re-definition may be introduced through the verb 'to be', according to the paradoxical pattern 'X is not X, but Y': Fortune's hostility is 'not a form of cruelty, but a challenge' (Prov. 4.12 *non est saeuitia, certamen est*); what is normally defined as 'friendship' is in fact merely a 'business transaction' (Ep. 9.10 *negotiatio est, non amicitia*); certain estates are better described as 'castles' (Ep. 51.11 *scies non villas esse sed castra*). The same re-defining effect can be achieved without explicit recourse to the verb 'to be', for instance: after death you do not 'lose light', but 'find a purer one' (Pol. 9.8 *erras: non perdidit lucem frater tuus sed sinceriorem sortitus est*); someone who misspent his life 'did not live, but rather lingered in life' (Ep. 93.3 *non vixit iste sed in vita moratus est*); some people do not 'move', but rather are 'unable to stand still' (Ep. 94.63 *non ille ire vult, sed non potest stare*). The meta-linguistic nature of both types of 'Re-conceptualization' is clear: in all these examples, Seneca sets out to re-write, so to speak, the 'vocabulary entry' of many of the most common and ordinary words, which human beings all too often use inappropriately. But aside from definitions, there are many more ways in which one can fail to speak correctly.

As emerges from Appendix 1, a great number of *correctiones* fall into a category that may de described as 'grammatical'. Seneca seems to like showing how, often, in order to reach philosophical truth, all one needs to do is to re-check one's grammar, especially the following grammatical concepts:

- (A2) Voice (e.g. Ira 1.17.1 ***habeat**, non **habeatur***; Ep. 23.8 *non **eunt** sed **feruntur***);

- (A3) Verbal tense or mood (e.g. VB 1.3 *pergentes non quo* ***eundum est*** *sed quo* ***itur***; Ep. 81.24 *non enim illum* ***accipere*** *sed* ***accepisse*** *delectat*);

- (A4) Auxiliary verb (e.g. Ep. 91.4 *cogitandumque non quidquid* ***solet*** *sed quidquid* ***potest*** *fieri*; Ep. 85.26 *scit enim illa non* ***esse*** *mala, sed* ***videri***);

- (A5) Conjunction (e.g. Ira 2.31.8 *ergo ne homini quidem nocebimus* ***quia*** *peccauit, sed* ***ne*** *peccet*; Ep. 78.16 *nec tantum* ***quia*** *pugnant ista patiuntur, sed* ***ut*** *pugnent*);

- (A6) Preposition (e.g. Ep. 41.7 *nihil horum* ***in*** *ipso est sed* ***circa*** *ipsum*; Ep. 58.21 *nec tantum* ***extra*** *opus est, sed* ***ante*** *opus*);

- (A7) Prefix (e.g. Ep. 100.2 *Fabianus mihi non* ***effundere*** *videtur orationem sed* ***fundere***; Ep. 105.5 *quibus* ***adplicari*** *expediet, non* ***inplicari***);

- (A8) Adjective, pronoun, adverb, or combination thereof (e.g. Ep. 89.23 *stude, non ut* ***plus*** *aliquid scias, sed ut* ***melius*****;** Ep. 104.8 *non* ***aliubi*** *sis oportet sed* ***alius***).

Another important type of *correctio* may be defined as 'repetition with variation'. I have distributed these materials into two distinct categories: 'Pointed addition' (A9) and 'Repetition of the same word or root with a significant variation' (A10). What I mean by this should be self-evident, and here are some examples:

- (A9) Ep. 67.6 *non enim* ***pati*** *tormenta optabile est, sed* ***pati fortiter***; Ep. 30.17 *non* ***mortem*** *timemus sed* ***cogitationem mortis***.

- (A10) Ep. 30.5 ***morientis*** *vitium esse, non* ***mortis***; Ep. 114.12 *non tantum* ***vitiosa*** *sed* ***vitia*** *laudentur*.

What these two categories have in common is that the concept or idea that is in need of correction is, as it were, only partially wrong. It simply needs to be complemented by some additional element (A9) or tweaked in some other way (A10); consequently, the same word(s) or a cognate is repeated in the second, 'amended' part of the *correctio*.

Next, in A11 I have grouped various types of *correctio* based on 'Tricky similarities' between words, such as similarity of meaning (e.g. *carere* ~ *indigere*, *accedere* ~ *pervenire*),[148] degree of intensity (e.g. *odium* ~ *fastidium*, *pungere* ~ *vulnerare*),[149] construction with the same prefix (e.g. *consequi* ~ *consummare*, *emittere* ~ *eicere*),[150] or phonic similarity (e.g. *institorem* ~ *antistitem*, *perisse* ~ *praemissum*).[151] Finally, A12 list cases in which the *correctio* substitutes an 'Antonym' for the term that is in need of correction. Taken together, A9-12 offer a whole spectrum of possible linguistic mistakes, ranging from using the right word incorrectly to using a dangerously similar, but in fact inappropriate word, all the way down to using the opposite word.

(B) Now that I have established Seneca's massive recourse to *correctio*, I turn to another major feature of his style, namely his paradoxes and *sententiae*. Differently from *correctio*, these phenomena have received enormous attention by scholars, and the bibliography on their nature and function is huge.[152] What seems to me to be one important contribution of my study to this debate is the idea that Senecan paradoxes and aphorisms are no other than implicit *correctiones*; this new, reductionistic perspective allows us to re-assess Senecan style in its entirety as an

[148] VB 7.2 *qua uirtus saepe* ***caret****,* *numquam* ***indiget***; Ep. 92.27 ***accedimus*** *ad illa,* *non* ***pervenimus***.

[149] Ep. 24.26 *vitae* *non* ***odium*** *sed* ***fastidium***; Ep. 45.9 *quem fortuna ...* ***pungit****,* *non* ***vulnerat***.

[150] VB 15.2 *sunt enim ista bona,* *sed* ***consequentia*** *summum bonum,* *non* ***consummantia***; Ep. 24.8 *spiritum* *non* ***emisit*** *sed* ***eiecit***.

[151] Ep. 52.15 *si modo* *non* ***institorem*** *sed* ***antistitem*** *nancta est*; Ep. 99.7 *quem* *putas* ***perisse praemissus*** *est*.

[152] The most important bibliography can be found, for instance, in Williams (2015) and McVane (2018).

eminently philosophical, rather than just rhetorical or pedagogical, tool. The paradoxical expressiveness and pyrotechnic artistry of Senecan style are best understood, not simply as a means to unsettle readers and direct them toward the path of philosophy and/or as a way to render the complexities of human interiority,[153] but especially as weapons/antidotes that the philosophical persona needs to create in his perennial war against language itself, which, by its very nature, is at the same time the root cause of human beings' inability to attain philosophical awareness (cf. section 1) *and*, inescapably, the only instrument through which philosophical awareness can be reached.

Appendix 2 lists numerous cases of *sententiae*, paradoxes, and similar phenomena, according to the same twelve categories that I have just used for *correctio*. A very high number of them are inherently equivalent to a *correctio*, even thought they do not have the form of a *correctio*. In the following list, each example is illustrated by a paraphrasis which takes the form of a *correctio*:

- (B1) <u>Re-conceptualization</u>

Prov. 4.16 Hoc quod tibi **calamitas** uidetur **tot entium vita** *est*.

= Hoc <u>non</u> est **calamitas** <u>sed</u> **multorum entium vita**.

Ep. 101.13 quod autem **vivere** est **diu mori**?

= Istud <u>non</u> est **vivere**, <u>sed</u> **diu mori**.[154]

- (B2) <u>Voice</u>

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[153] For instance, cf. Traina (1987), 9-23; Inwood (1995); Moretti (1995); Graver (1996); Stewart (1997); Williams (2006).

[154] Cf. e.g. Ep. 123.10 *<u>non est</u> istud **vivere** <u>sed</u> **alienae vitae interesse***.

Ira 3.3.2 ea deprimens quae **mergi** nisi cum **mergente** non possunt.

= Non tantum **mergit**, sed etiam **mergitur**.

Ep. 94.61 tunc cum **agere** alios visi sunt, **agebantur**.

= Non **agebant**, sed **agebantur**.[155]

- (B3) Verbal tense or mood

Ep. 9.7 artifici iucundius **pingere** est quam **pinxisse**.

= artificem **pingere**, non **pinxisse** delectat.[156]

- (B4) Auxiliary verb

Ep. 101.7 quid autem stultius quam mirari id ullo die **factum** quod omni *potest* **fieri**?

= id iam **factum est**, immo cotidie *potest* **fieri**.[157]

Ep. 71.36 magna pars est **profectus** *velle* **proficere**.

= velle proficere non **initium** est proficiendi, sed **magna pars**.[158]

- (B6) Preposition

Ep. 4.3 mors **ad te** venit: timenda erat si **tecum** esse posset.

= mors timenda esset si **tecum** esse posset, non quia **ad te** venire potest.[159]

- (B7) Prefix

Helv. 10.3 nec piget a Parthis, a quibus nondum poenas **repetimus**, aues **petere**.

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[155] Cf. Ira 1.17.1 ***habent***, *non* ***habentur***.

[156] Cf. 81.24 *non enim illum* ***accipere*** *sed* ***accepisse*** *delectat.*

[157] Cf. *Ep.* 49.10 ***posse*** *fieri, immo saepissime fieri.*

[158] Cf. (although it is the opposite situation) *Ep.* 124.7 *non dico* ***bonum***, *sed* ***initium boni***.

[159] Cf. Ep. 30.17 *non* ***mortem*** *timemus sed* ***cogitationem mortis***.

= A Parthis poenas **repetere** debemus, non aves **petere**.

- (B8) adjective, pronoun, adverb, or combination thereof

Ep. 35.1 cum **te** ualde rogo ut studeas, **meum** negotium ago.

= **meum**, non **tuum**, negotium ago.

Ep. 49.10 saepissime fieri ut qui **diu** vixit **parum** vixerit.

= **parum**, non **diu** vixit; *or*: diu **fuit**, non **vixit**.

- (B9) Pointed addition

Brev. 2.2 exigua **pars** est **uitae** qua **uiuimus**.

= Vita nostra non est **vita**, sed **pars vitae**.[160]

Ot. 6.5 hi multum **egisse** uisi sunt, quamuis nihil ***publice*** **agerent**.

= Non **'nihil egerunt'** sed **'nihil *publice* egerunt'**.

- (B10) Repetition of the same word or root with a significant variation

Ep. 8.6 qui nihil **agere** videntur maiora **agunt**

= Non **nihil**, sed **maiora** agunt.

Ep. 97.16 ideo numquam fides **latendi** fit etiam **latentibus**.

= Effugiunt **poenam**, non **metum**.

- (B11) Tricky similarity between words

Tranq. 17.6 multum interest, **remittas** aliquid an **soluas**.

= Potes **mitis** esse, non **mollis**.[161]

Ep. 55.4 multum autem interest utrum uita tua **otiosa** sit an **ignaua**.

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[160] Ep. 65.13 ***pars causae*** *est, non* ***causa***.

[161] Ep. 114.7 *apparet enim* ***mollem*** *fuisse, non* ***mitem***.

= Potes vivere **otiose**, non **ignave**.[162]

- (B12) Antonym or opposite meaning

Ep. 32.5 Qui **vivit vita peracta**.

= **Mortuus**, non **vivus**, est.

Ep. 124.24 **Infelicissimos** esse **felices**.

= Felices **videntur**, non **sunt**.

Note that so far I have shown that Senecan *sententiae* can be rewritten as *correctiones* by rewriting the former myself. There are cases in which a Senecan *sententia* has the same meaning of a *correctio* written by Seneca himself somewhere else, as is shown by the following examples:

(B) Ep. 79.5 **inventuris inventa** non obstant.

(A) Ep. 64.9 multum **egerunt** qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non ***per*egerunt**.

(B) Ep. 81.28 quaeris quid sit quod oblivionem nobis **acceptorum** faciat? cupiditas **accipiendorum**.

(A) Ep. 2.6 quid enim refert quantum illi in arca ... si non **adquisita** sed **adquirenda** conputat?

On other occasions, a *sententia* and a *correctio* do not have the same meaning, but share one or both antithetical words:

[162] Ep. 82.1 *in isto te vitae habitu compone* ***placide***, *non* ***molliter***.

(B) Ep. 120.18 ad mortem dies extremus **pervenit**, **accedit** omnis.

(A) Ep. 92.27 **accedimus** ad illa, non **pervenimus**.

(B) Ira 1.1.7 quid ergo interest? quod alii adfectus **apparent**, hic **eminet**.

(A) Ep. 19.2 id age ut otium tuum non **emineat** sed **appareat**.

(B) Ira 3.1.3 cetera *vitia* **inpellunt** animos, ira **praecipitat**.

(A) Ep. 97.10 non **pronum** est tantum ad *vitia* sed **praeceps.**

(C) Of course, not always a Senecan *sententia* can easily be rewritten in the form of a *correctio* combining (i) the dissolution of an established link between *verba* and *res* and (ii) a new association thereof. However, it can easily be verified that virtually all types of Senecan *sententia* involve at least one of the two movements.

(i) The emphasis is on the separation of similar or related words:

- (B1-4)

  All the examples in this categories belong to either (A) or (ii).

- (B5) Conjunction

  Ep. 104.21 *Alter te docebit mori* ***si*** *necesse erit, alter* ***antequam*** *necesse erit.*

  ('If' and 'before' are related because they refer to a situation that precedes another, logically or chronologically. But it is crucial to distinguish).

- (B6) Preposition

Ep. 90.46 ***Ad*** *hoc quidem, sed* ***sine*** *hoc nascimur.*

(A firm distinction).[163]

- (B7) Prefix

Ep. 24.20 *Tunc ad illam* ***pervenimus****, sed diu* ***venimus****.*

(These two verbs are similar, but the difference in meaning inherent in the preverb is crucial).

- (B8) Adjective, pronoun, adverb, or combination thereof

Brev. 20.1 *Hi si volent scire quam brevis* ***ipsorum*** *vita sit, cogitent ex quota parte* ***sua*** *sit.*

(Two ways of expressing the same concept, namely possession, but with a crucial difference in meaning).

- (B9) Pointed addition

All the examples in this category belong to either (A) or (ii).

- (B10) Repetition of the same word or root with a significant variation

Ira 3.30.3 *Numquam erit* ***felix*** *quem torquebit* ***felicior****.*

(Essentially, a mere difference of degree amounts to a total, zero-sum difference, counter-intuitively).

- (B11) Tricky similarity between words

Ep. 33.8 *Aliud autem est* ***meminisse****, aliud* ***scire****.*

[163] Not a *correctio* because both halves are true. But notice how easily it would be to derive a *correctio* of the canonical type through substitution of an antonym: ***ad*** *hoc, non* ***cum*** *hoc nascimur*.

(Knowledge and memory are closely connected, but it is important to understand in what they differ).

- (B12) Antonym or opposite meaning

All the examples in this category belong to either (A) or (ii).

(ii) The emphasis is on the counter-intuitive connection of unrelated or opposite words:

- (B1) Re-conceptualization

Ep. 4.11 *Cui cum* ***paupertate*** *bene convenit* ***dives*** *est.*

('Rich' and 'poor' can coexist in the same person at the same time).

Ep. 42.7 *Ea* ***gratuita*** *vocamus pro quibus nos ipsos* ***inpendimus***.

(The concepts of 'gratuitous' and 'spending' seem antithetical; Seneca shows that what is perceived to be 'gratuitous' is in fact 'expensive').

- (B2) Voice

Ira 2.15.4 *Nemo autem* ***regere*** *potest nisi qui et* ***regi***.

(The concepts of 'ruling' and 'being ruled' seem antithetical; yet there exist a sense in which they need to coexist).

Ep. 105.4 *Qui* ***timetur timet***.

(The concepts of 'being feared' and 'fearing' seem antithetical; yet one cannot exist without provoking the other, in the same person).

- (B3) Verbal tense or mood

Ira 2.36.3 *Qui ad speculum venerat ut se* ***mutaret****, iam* ***mutaverat***.

(This paradox conflates two normally incompatible chronological dimensions).

- (B6) Preposition

Ira 3.13.2 *Si eminere illi* ***extra*** *nos licuit,* ***supra*** *nos est.*

(These two prepositions in general do not have the same meaning, but here they are linked logically).

- (B8) Adjective, pronoun, adverb, or combination thereof

Helv. 13.6 *Nemo ab* ***alio*** *contemnitur, nisi a* ***se*** *ante contemptus est.*

(A passive status is the logical consequence of a reflexive action).

Ep. 4.8 *Quisquis vitam* ***suam*** *contempsit* ***tuae*** *dominus est.*

(Internal mastery equals external mastery).

- (B9) Pointed addition

Tranq. 11.4 *Saepe enim causa* ***moriendi*** *est* ***timide mori***.

(Conflation of cause and effect).

- (B10) Repetition of the same word or root with a significant variation

Helv. 1.4 *Possum instar efficacissimae* ***consolationis*** *esse ipse* ***consolator***.

(Identification of the effect and agent).

Ep. 78.17 *Quid autem interest, non* ***sit*** *an non* ***sim****? In utroque finis dolendi est.*

(Different situations, same result).

- (B11) Tricky similarity between words

Ep. 4.3 *Necesse est aut* ***non perveniat*** *aut* ***transeat***.

(Two opposite situations have the same outcome).

- (B12) Antonym or opposite meaning

Ep. 7.3 ***Inhumanior****, quia inter* ***homines*** *fui.*

(Paradox)

Ep. 49.8 ***Acutae delirationis***.

(Oxymoron)

In sum, the Senecan persona feels an insistent need to display his mastery over language. He continuously forces his own discourse to assume (apparently) unnatural configurations, connecting signifiers/meanings (*verba*/*res*) that are normally separate and separating signifiers/meanings that are normally connected. These repeated corrective gestures are motivated by the need to overcome the catastrophic consequences that an unreflective use of language may have on human existence (cf. section 1). Senecan philosophy may thus be seen as a 'theory and practice' of linguistic control: the Senecan persona often reflects on the dangerous control that is all too often exercised on the individual, from the outside, by the language of other human beings; this theoretical awareness determines an unflinching linguistic vigilance that results in the practice of a hyper-corrective style. The Senecan persona is preoccupied with 'owning', in a radical sense, his own discourse and with asserting his own linguistic power over the signifiers and meanings that he manipulates.

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This conclusion is helpful not only for our understanding of Senecan philosophy, but also because it illuminates – negatively – an important aspect of Senecan drama, which constantly calls attention to its characters' inability fully to understand the implications of what they say or hear. I discuss this in section 3, in which I question some widely held assumptions concerning Senecan tragic characters (namely self-conscious metatheatricality, doublespeak, and quasi-

authorial allusivity), arguing that even those characters who seem to be 'authorial figures' and to employ language in an assertive and powerful manner, such as Medea and Atreus, are, at a deeper level, puppets manipulated by stronger linguistic forces. The insight that Seneca's oeuvre constantly thematizes a problematic relation between the human subject and his/her own discourse thus provides, I suggest, an interesting perspective from which to 'see Seneca whole'.[164]

Moreover, the Senecan philosophical persona's preoccupation with controlling the meanings of its discourse seems to be questioned by various elements of the philosophical works. In particular, conceptual inconsistencies, incongruous metaphors, destabilizing associations and changes of topic, and other phenomena complicate the self-portrait of the Senecan persona as a coherent philosophical voice. In section 4, I will explore the possibility that the relentless, and almost paranoid, display of linguistic control presupposed by Seneca's linguistic theorization and stylistic practice (which I have described in the first two sections of this chapter) is not fully successful in keeping in check 'Other', 'intertextual' voices that make their presence felt inside the Senecan philosophical discourse and question its coherence.

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[164] Cf. Volk and Williams (2006). Notoriously, one of the most difficult and widely debated problems of Senecan scholarship is the fact that Seneca's oeuvre seems to be split into two incompatible halves (the philosophical/rational/moral philosophical works and the poetical/irrational/immoral plays): see e.g. Fantham (1982), 15-19; Rosenmeyer (1989); Biondi (2001); Gill (2003), 56-58; Schiesaro (2003); Ker (2006); Volk (2006); Ker (2009); Wray (2009); Fischer (2014); Braund (2015), 26-28; Machielsen (2015).

3. SELF-CONSCIOUS METATHEATRICALITY, AUTHORIAL CHARACTERS, AND MASTERFUL DOUBLESPEAK: THREE MYTHS OF SENECAN DRAMA

In the previous two sections of this chapter, I have shown that Seneca's prose is preoccupied by the danger of losing control over language; in this section I will discuss a few of the many ways in which this danger emerges in the tragedies. In my opinion, one defining characteristic of Senecan drama is its pervasive portrayal of the human condition as tragically incapable to control and understand language; since a full demonstration of this thesis would require a separate book,[165] in this section I will advance an *a fortiori* argument, concentrating on those characters who seem to contradict this thesis most glaringly, namely Atreus and Medea, who seem to be, and have often been interpreted as, superb exponents of linguistic control.

In Ch. 1.2 I showed that Medea first has the idea to kill her sons during a dialogue with Jason, when he declares that his sons are the dearest thing to his heart. Thus Medea does not come up with her murderous plan autonomously, but rather 'chances upon it', in Jason's words. In fact, she had already alluded to the future homicide of her children in an earlier monologue, but without realizing it. Therefore, the process through which her decision arises and receives a conscious formulation in her mind, far from emphasizing her 'agency', questions it: what Medea

[165] Demonstrating this idea would entail a large-scale analysis of the massive presence, in Senecan drama, of tragic irony, unwitting intra-textual quotations, ambiguities, misunderstandings, the clashes between meanings determined by stichomythia and *sententiae*, and the sustained explorations of the semantics of specific key-terms that characterize most Senecan plays (cf. e.g., for the *Hippolytus*, Most (1992), 394-5 on *forma* and Bartsch (2017), 91-2 on *iugum*). In texts so packed with linguistic multi-valencies and proliferating meanings, it is impossible for the characters fully to control what they say and to understand the ramifications of what they hear. By creating, in his tragedies, an infinitely intricate and dense linguistic texture, Seneca creates literary works that, far from conveying unambiguous 'meanings', in fact obfuscate and undermine clear-cut signification, calling the recipients' attention to Language itself as a problematic medium. Senecan drama programmatically evokes linguistic multi-valencies and semantic complexities, leaving recipients with more questions than answers about the possibility of offering an unambiguous and coherent interpretation of these plays. Some ideas compatible with this thesis have recently been put forward by Allendorf (2013).

perceives subjectively as a ‘decision’ had in fact already existed, in the form of a latent potentiality, in both her own and Jason’s words. Something similar happens in the scene in which Atreus comes up with the idea of punishing his brother by serving him the corpses of his sons. It is only at 277-8 that he clearly conceives and announces this plan. This moment represents the culmination of a long crescendo of excluded alternatives: at 245 the satelles starts suggesting possible punishments, which Atreus successively rejects as too mild. At 267-70 Atreus is still unsure of what exactly he will do (*nescioquid*; *haud quid sit scio*). A fortiori, at 255 a solution has not yet been found, since ‘no crime is enough’. And yet, unwittingly Atreus already conjures the idea of cannibalism at 253, when he declares that he is aiming ‘to fill himself up with some more monstrous horror’ (*impleri iuvat maiore mostro*, with obvious, although at this stage still involuntary ambiguity in the verb *implere*). Like Medea, Atreus, too, is acted upon by verbal forces that seem to pre-exist ad pre-determine his conscious choices.

Significantly, Atreus characterizes the progressive steps that lead him to develop his ghastly plan as a crazed process (e.g. 253 ‘my heart is still not blazing up with frenzy fierce enough’, 260 ‘an inner turmoil shakes and stuns me’), in which he completely loses control of his thoughts and actions (261-2 ‘I am swept I don’t know where, but I am swept’). In Ch. 1.2, I illustrated how Medea, too, in her ambiguous monologue that several scholars, such as Schiesaro and Boyle, interpret as an example of a character taking up ‘the role of writer-actor-dramaturge’, in fact finds herself in a helpless position, in which not only external events, but even her own decisions ‘happen’ to her. Even though they manage to crush their respective adversaries, and thus they are, indeed, to some extent, more ‘active’ agents than the impotent victims whom they dominate, Medea and Atreus are themselves the recipients of external linguistic influences that

dominate *them*. The strangely widespread notion that some Senecan characters are endowed with a quasi-authorial agency needs to be abandoned.

One of the most widely held assumptions in the current scholarship is that some of Seneca's characters, especially Atreus and Medea, are 'authorial' figures who engage *self-consciously* in meta-literary behaviors.[166] If this were true, these characters would represent an exception to the general interpretation of Senecan drama that I summarized in the first footnote of this section. In this section, I question the *communis opinio*, arguing that Seneca's 'authorial' characters are in fact puppets incapable to control, and manipulated by, stronger linguistic forces – not differently from all the other 'non-authorial' characters. There are three main ways by which these special characters (it is argued) manifest their authorial qualities: metatheatricality, doublespeak, and allusivity. I will address each of them successively.

Metatheatricality

'Do you recognize your wife? This is how I normally escape' (*Med.* 1021-2 *coniugem agnoscis tuam? / sic fugere soleo*). While making this statement, in the very last scene of the play, Medea jumps on a dragon-drawn chariot and flies away. Many scholars have found it irresistible to read her words as if she were deliberately referring, meta-theatrically, to the fact that, at each new representation of her tragedy, she leaves the stage in this spectacular way. Cedric Littlewood, for instance, wrote: 'she describes her departure *in a chariot drawn by dragons* as habitual' (the emphasis is mine).[167] There is an obvious problem with this conclusion: Medea does not say the she always departs 'in a chariot', but only that she habitually departs 'thus' (*sic*). Exactly what

[166] Schiesaro (2003); Littlewood (2004); Rimell (2012), 5; Boyle (2014), cvii-cxviii; Boyle (2017), cv-cxiii.

[167] Littlewood (2004), 192. So also Boyle (1997), 59.

this ‘thus’ refers to is problematic, and as a matter of fact there is a much more linear explanation: as is well known, Medea killed her little brother Apsyrtus when she left her fatherland with Jason, so now she is reminding Jason that this is how she habitually leaves a place – by killing young children. This second interpretation is confirmed by Medea’s own words at 53-54, while she was plotting her revenge: (speaking to herself) ‘How will you leave Jason? The same way that you followed him’.

Now, in no way am I trying to argue that the meta-theatrical interpretation is illegitimate; in fact, I agree with Littlewood that this is one possible meaning of Medea’s words. What I am questioning is that this is a meaning *she is aware of*. Meta-theatricality is a complex phenomenon that may take various forms. It does not have to be an effect that the characters produce on purpose or knowingly. Since (1) all through the play Medea relishes evoking her manifold past crimes, (2) the primary, text-internal meaning of this line is that she is evoking the slaughter of her brother, and (3) Senecan drama continuously presents us with characters who are unable to understand the ramifications of what they say (tragic irony), I do not see why we should interpret the metatheatrical *potential* of her words as having been created by her in a patent violation of dramatic verisimilitude. The most obvious interpretation of Medea’s unwittingly metatheatrical words is that they represent just one more instance of tragic irony, characterizing the human condition as tragically unable to understand the external forces (such as fate, history, and in the case of Medea, the literary tradition) that determine human events from the outside.

A similar reading can be applied to all the various scenes of Senecan drama that have been analyzed by modern scholars as metatheatrical: normally they assume that a metatheatrical reference has to be ascribed to the conscious intention of the character, but it does not need to be so. The deaths of Astyanax and Polyxena in the *Troades* are explicitly likened to theatrical

events from within the play (e.g. *Tro*. 1125 *theatri more*);[168] but the fact that the characters perceive those deaths as a theatrical performance does not mean that they know that they are *themselves* part of a theatrical representation.[169] The second ode of *Troades* mentions the word *fabula* twice (in the sense 'story' or 'legend', but *fabula* in general can also mean 'play', 'dramatic plot');[170] again, their using this term definitely appears as ironical to the readers/spectators of the play, but not *self-consciously* metatheatrical. Similar considerations apply to Medea forcing Jason to see the slaughter of his children, making him a *spectator* (993);[171] and to Medea expressing her satisfaction when her revenge is achieved with language that may be interpreted as referring to the end of a play (*Med*. 1019 *bene est, peractum est*, 'good, it is finished', very close to the actual end of the play).[172] (For Atreus as a stage director, see below).

Two famous passages that are frequently discussed as examples of metatheatrical self-consciousness, but in my opinion are not susceptible of such a reading, are *Med*. 171 and 910.[173] After causing the death of her rival and the destruction of the royal palace, but before killing her sons, Medea exclaims: 'now I am Medea' (*Med*. 910 *Medea nunc sum*). According to the metatheatrical interpretation, she means: 'Now I am *the* Medea of the (text-external) literary

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[168] Boyle (1994), *ad loc*.; Littlewood (2004), 173.

[169] Littlewood (2004), 172: 'Representations in the tragedies of theatres and spectators are [...] powerful vehicles of self-consciousness'.

[170] *Tro*. 371 and 405. For metadramatic readings, see Fantham (1982), 263 'this ode is not spoken by the Trojan women but from outside the dramatic action'; Boyle (1994), 34-7 and 173; Littlewood (2004), 94-5.

[171] Littlewood (2004), 181.

[172] Littlewood (2004), 184. Cf. also cf. also the Fury at *Thy*. 105 *actum est abunde*, 'it is done, and amply' with Littlewood (2004), 185; *Oed*. 998; *Ag*. 901.

[173] Littlewood (2004), 9 'The dramatic characters commonly show an awareness of their own tragic myths. Medea strives to fulfil a role she already knows (*Medea* 171, 910)'; McAuley (2016), 224.

tradition'; but a simpler and more obvious interpretation is that she means: 'Now I am myself – the same person who already committed many crimes in the (text-internal) past' (i.e. the person who is already 'a Medea' to her own and the other characters' eyes *within* the plot of the play). The second interpretation is confirmed beyond doubt by the lines that immediately precede and follow: at 904-9 she claims that all her previous (text-internal) crimes are less momentous than the one that she is perpetrating now, and at 911-15 she details those crimes.

In fact, at 910, Medea is responding (text-internally) to a previous claim she made at 171 in her exchange with the nurse (Nutrix: 'Medea...'; Medea: 'I will be!'; – *Medea... – Fiam!*). This *fiam* has been frequently taken as presupposing, on Medea's part, a self-conscious metatheatrical knowledge of herself as a tragic character, almost as she were saying: 'I will become a Medea, i.e. I will perform the role of a tragic Medea in this play'. But, again, the context makes it clear that she means something different. All through the play, Medea repeatedly evokes what we may call her criminal *curriculum vitae*, which is already remarkably rich before she takes her revenge on Jason. Therefore she is a well-established 'monster' already *within* the fictional plot of the play. Importantly, she not only portrays herself, but the other characters also see her, as a huge criminal personality, 'a Medea' – a status she has achieved through her (text-internal) past crimes, not necessarily in the text-external literary tradition.[174] The exchange with the nurse may be paraphrased as follows: 'Medea...' 'Yes, I will be true to my personality (i.e. I will show you what horrible crime I am capable of)'.[175]

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[174] Medea: e.g. 44-5 'the Isthmus will see every outrage that Phasis and Pontus saw'. Others: 361-3 'Medea an evil worse than the sea'.

[175] – *Medea... – Fiam!* may also conceal a pun by Me<u>dea</u>, about her being about to assume a quasi-divine status: at 165-6 (only 4 lines before) she explicitly equates herself to a divinity (*deos*); and at the end of the play she will depart on a winged chariot like a *dea-ex-machina* (it is well known that puns do not need to respect quantities). It is also possible that she is alluding to the Greek etymology of her name Μήδεια = 'she

Doublespeak

There is one character in particular who seems to make a masterful use of language, in contrast to almost all the other Senecan characters, who instead systematically fail to control it. This character is Atreus. Scholars have noted that, in his dealings with his brother, Atreus displays an ability to dominate his rival that emerges primarily in the duplicitous way he uses language.[176] After welcoming Thyestes to the royal palace, Atreus excuses himself saying 'I'll proceed to sacrifice the victims owed the gods' (545 *ego destinatas victimas superis dabo*); while Thyestes takes these words at face value, Atreus is obviously alluding to the slaughter of Thyestes' children, which he is about to perpetrate.[177] Atreus' linguistic domination of Thyestes emerges especially in the scene of the banquet (970-1110). For instance, when Thyestes casually asks to see his children, Atreus replies 'believe me, they are here, in their father's warm embrace. They're here and they will stay. No portion of your sons will be held back from you' (976-83), alluding to the fact that Thyestes' children are literally inside the latter. And so on.[178]

These and similar double entendres have often been viewed as evidence of Atreus' superior linguistic capabilities, and even of his status as an authorial figure.[179] Indeed, there is no doubt that Atreus successfully orchestrates a play-within-the-play, and his double entendres are one way in which he actively toys with his victim. But how much is he *really* in control of

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who μήδεται' (cf. Boyle 2014, *ad loc.*). Both etymological interpretations represent further layers of meaning that do not require us to detect conscious meta-theatricality in Medea's words.

[176] Tarrant (1985), 216 'he dominates not only on the level of action but also on that of language'; here Tarrant also provides a list of passages.

[177] Tarrant (1985), *ad loc.*; Littlewood (2004), 185; Boyle (2017), *ad loc*.

[178] See also esp. 982-3 and 1030-31 with Tarrant (1985), *ad loc.* and Boyle (2017), *ad loc*. And see below.

[179] Most forcefully by Schiesaro (2003) and Boyle (2017), cv-cxiii.

language? And – *behind* and *beyond* his own conviction to be creating his own play – is he *really* an author? It can easily be shown that there is a deeper level at which Atreus' double entendres reveal his lack of control over both himself and language. There are at least two reasons why this is the case: (i) double entendres constitute a failure of self-restraint; and (ii) double entendres are one way in which the soul of Tantalus takes control of Atreus; far from being an active stage director (an 'Author'), Atreus is in fact himself the impotent puppet (the 'character') of external forces that direct *him*.

(i) Atreus' meeting with Thyestes in Act 3 has been read as emphasizing Atreus' status as 'the crafty author and director of his own tragic play'.[180] Atreus greets his brother with the words 'I'm pleased to see my brother! (508 *fratrem iuvat videre*) and asks that from now on they 'cultivate [their] blood ties' (510-11 *sanguis / colatur*). Both phrases constitute double entendres, as is made clear by Atreus' self talking in the immediately preceding lines (491-507). He is pleased to see his brother – because thus he can take his revenge on him (cf. 491-5 in the previous aside). Moreover, at 505-7 he has been contemplating (*aspice*) his brother's dishevelled appearance with sadistic pleasure: therefore, he is happy to see him – in such a bad state. The reference to blood (510 *sanguis*), too, is explained by the words addressed by Atreus to himself only a few lines before in his aside (505 'anger hopes blood', *sperat ira sanguinem*). Thus, although Atreus orders himself to mask his emotions and make a display of affection (507 *praestetur fides*), his double entendres *reveal* his criminal intentions. Indeed, in his previous aside Atreus had repeatedly complained to be unable to keep his emotions in check (496 'my anger hardly yields to reins', 504 'when anger hopes for blood, it can't conceal itself').

[180] Schiesaro (2003), 55-58; the quotation is from p. 55.

This means that, although Atreus' attempt to deceive Thyestes is successful, his attempt to conceal what is going on in his mind is not: Atreus controls Thyestes, but not language itself. Similar considerations can be applied to Atreus' recourse to double entendres in general. Double entendres are a linguistic tool through which he victimizes Thyestes; but at the same time, they reveal an inner incapacity to refrain oneself from saying something that one would like to keep secret. Far from being a sign of authorial mastery, double entendres are in fact symptoms of emotional – and linguistic – lack of control.

(ii) All through the play, Atreus behaves as a deranged man. He is the epitome of a mind dominated by a frenzy (253 *furore*). At 260-2 he reveals that 'an inner turmoil shakes and stuns [him], a whirlwhind in [his] soul: [he is] swept [he] do[es]n't know where, but [he is] swept'. He has visions (263-6) and moments of quasi-psychotic insanity (1098-99).[181] Where does his madness come from? In the first scene of the play, a Fury compels the soul of Tantalus to return to the upper world and contaminate his household with madness (23-104: *furiis*, *furor*, *rabies*, *furorem*, etc.). This initial scene clearly invites us to interpret everything that follows in the play as the result of Tantalus' intervention: everything that the characters, including Atreus, do is directed from without by an external, overpowering force – of which they are not aware. This means that Atreus is himself a puppet of more powerful forces, even though he treats another character as his own puppet. When he complains that a strange 'turmoil shakes his heart' (260 <u>*tumultus pectora*</u> *quatit*), we are clearly meant to understand this as Tantalus executing to the letter the Fury's command to 'incite their fierce heart with maddened turmoil' (85-6 *concute* <u>*pectus tumultu*</u>).

[181] See Tarrant (1985), *ad loc.*

Crucially, the avenue in which the external, and invisible, influence exercised by Tantalus over the characters manifests itself most clearly is language. At *Thy*. 133-35 the chorus unknowingly evokes the exchange between Tantalus and the Fury that had opened the play through repetition of several phrases.[182] In the banquet scene, Thyestes says that 'wine shuns my very lips' (987 *ipsis Bacchus a labris fugit*), unknowingly picking up a line uttered by Tantalus in the prologue: 69 'let me go back to the tree of fruit that shuns my lips' (*labrisque ab ipsis arboris plenae fugas*). The messenger describes Atreus as a lion, redeploying an image evoked by Tantalus (732-4 *leo ... rictus*; cf. 78 *rictus leonum*)

Like the chorus, his brother, and the messenger, Atreus too is 'spoken through' by Tantalus and the Fury. While discussing with the satelles how best to punish Thyestes, he explains that he wants to 'fill up' himself 'with a bigger monster' (253 *impleri iuvat / maiore monstro*); without realizing it, he reveals to us that Tantalus is complying with the Fury's order to 'fill all the house with Tantalus' (53 *imple Tantalo totam domum*): the 'bigger monster' evoked by Atreus is Tantalus, and he is already inside him, dictating his behavior and speech. At 260-82, Atreus strives to identify a crime (*facinus*, *scelus*) that may be shocking enough: it has to be 'bigger' (267 *maius*, 274 *maius*) and new (267 *amplius solito*); again Atreus' decision-making is in fact controlled by Tantalus, who is implementing the Fury's commands (cf. 31-3 'let more crime, *crimen*, come; and not one equal to another: while a crime, *scelus*, is punished, let it grow'). Atreus seems to be proud of his idea to repeat and surpass the 'Thracian' banquet of Procne and Philomela (272-5 *Odrysia ... maius hoc aliquid*); this idea is in fact not his own, but has been instilled in his mind by the Fury (56-7 'let there be a Thracian banquet – with more victims', *Thracium fiat nefas / maiore numero*). By the same token, Atreus' frequent recourse to

[182] The parallels are listed in Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

double entendres, many of which involve terms connected to eating (e.g. 283 *in ora patris*, 978 *ora*, 890 *implebo*, 979 *implebo*, ecc.) has to be seen as a manifestation of Tantalus' *furor*, speaking *through* Atreus, since similar ambiguities pervade the exchange between Tantalus and the Fury (2 *ore ... cibos*, 3 *siti*, 4 *fame*, 10 *pascit*, 12 *plenum*, 22 *complebo*, 53 *imple*, 65 *exple*, 69 *labris ... plenae*, 78 *rictus*, 87 *esse*,[183] etc.).

Allusivity

Intertextual allusion is omnipresent in Senecan tragedy. A cursory look at the many existing commentaries or at the several studies of Senecan allusivity[184] reveals an intertextual density that is extraordinary even by the standards of ancient literature. Alessandro Schiesaro described the intertextual texture of Senecan tragedies as 'almost cloying' and 'hypertrophic', Cedric Littlewood noted that 'Senecan tragedy is stitched together from lines of Virgil and Ovid', and Christopher Trinacty sees Seneca's plays as 'a mosaic of [other] texts'.[185] By itself, this density determines an opacity of language that characterizes these plays in their entirety: almost at every line, one or multiple echoes of previous literature 'destabilize', so to speak, our reading/listening experience. Allusions are simply so many that one is overwhelmed and unable to make sense of this massive intertextual chamber of echoes that is Senecan theater – not just because it is impossible to find a 'meaning' for the great majority of the allusions, but also because we are so constantly reminded of 'other' texts that we almost end up losing track of the very text we are

[183] 86-7 'It is right that I be punished, not be the punishment', *me pati poenas decet, / non* ***esse*** *poenam*, with double entendre on *esse* < *sum* and *esse* < *edo*, which is not noted by either Tarrant (1985) or Boyle (2017).

[184] See esp. Jakoby (1988), Hinds (2011), and Trinacty (2014).

[185] Cf. respectively Schiesaro (2009), 234 and 2003, 221; Littlewood (2004), 6; Trinacty (2014), 233.

reading. Senecan allusivity, by virtue of its sheer pervasiveness, creates a ponderous centrifugal force that confuses the meanings of the text in front of us by continuously evoking other texts.

The great majority of allusions simply add one more ‘echo’ that complicates, rather than enhancing, interpretation. But when a thematic connection can firmly be established and is susceptible of interpretation, normally it is clear that the allusion operates *beyond* the character’s understanding, stressing that that character is totally unaware of the allusion: the literary tradition speaks *through* the character, and despite her or his best efforts to self-determine one’s actions and thoughts. At *Phoe*. 522-5 Jocasta reflects that, paradoxically, she owes to war the fact that she is finally able to see her son Polynices after so much time; she does so through an allusion to the monologue in which Scylla, in Ovid, meditates on whether she should be happy that a cruel war has brought Minos, an enemy whom she now loves, to her country.[186] Why should Jocasta ‘choose’ to quote such an ominous precedent, impersonating a female character who destroyed her own family? Why should she evoke erotic love while speaking to her son? The allusion definitely creates interpretable tensions between the intertext and the new text, but it does so by conjuring the notion of destructive and incenstuous family ties that Jocasta (if she had a choice), surely would have avoided.

Countless further examples could be listed from Senecan drama, in which allusivity works as an analogue of tragic irony. In his song after the banquet, Thyestes quotes the Vergilian scene in which Mezentius *realizes* that his son Lausus has been killed; the irony is that Thyestes

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[186] *Phoe*. 522-3 *nempe* ***nisi bellum foret*** */ ego te carerem; nempe si tu non fores, / bello carerem. Triste conspectus datur / pretium tui durumque, sed matri placet*. Cf. *Met*. 8.44-6 *laeter ... doleamne geri lacrimabile bellum / in dubio est; doleo, quod Minos hostis amanti est; / sed* ***nisi bella forent*** *numquam mihi cognitus esset*. See Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

has not realized yet that he has just eaten his own children.[187] Earlier, in one of his shallow moralistic considerations, the same character quoted a phrase from Vergil about the belly of ravenous wolves, anticipating (but without realizing it) the future events of the play.[188] In his initial monologue, Oedipus complains that 'the deadly plague unites the young with old and fathers with their sons' (54-5); this constitutes an intertextual imitation of the Ovidian narration of the plague at Aegina, but the reused phrases, without Oedipus realizing it, assume ambiguous connotations portending incest.[189] In the same play, the chorus conjures the Ovidian scene in which Acteon, now transformed into a stag, catches sight of himself on the water; of course, Acteon's self-recognition prefigures Oedipus' later self-recognition as the son of his wife (which the chorus at this point cannot possibly have forseen).[190]

Literary tradition is, after all, a form of determinism, and it often functions, in Senecan drama, as an analgoue of fate, namely as an external, restrictive force that overpowers the individual. This has amply been recognized by Senecan scholars. Anthony Boyle, for instance, emphasized the subordination of individual self-determination to the prescriptions of literary tradition in his commentary of the *Troades*.[191] For example, the fact that Andromache likens

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[187] *Thy*. 958 *mittit luctus signa futuri / **mens, ante sui praesaga mali***. Cf. *Aen*. 10.843 *agnovit longe gemitum **praesaga mali mens***. Cf. Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

[188] *Thy*. 460 ***ventrem improbum***. Cf. *Aen*. 2.356-7 *quos **improba ventris** / exegit caecos rabies*.

[189] Oed. 54-5 ***iuvenesque senibus** iungit et **gnatis patres** / funesta pestis, una fax thalamos cremat*. Cf. *Met*. 7.611-12 *indefletaeque vagantur / **natorumque virum**que animae **iuvenumque senumque***. See Jokobi (1988), *ad loc*. Note that the same passage is alluded to again later by Iocasta when she replies Oedipus' question about how old Laius was when he was killed (776 *inter senem iuvenemque*), with similar unwitting ambiguity.

[190] *Oed*. 752 *vivacis cornua cervi*; cf. Ov. *Met*. 3.194 *dat sparso capiti vivacis cornua cervi*. And: *Oed*. 760-3 *in unda cornua vidit vultusque feros*; cf. *Met*. 3.200-1 *vultus et cornua vidit in unda*. See Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.; Hinds (2011), 11-12.

[191] Boyle (1994), 26-7, 31. Cf. Trinacty (2014), 154 (also on the *Troades*) 'the characters [...] are unable to escape their previous manifestations in literature and are doomed to repeat the past'.

Astyanax to Hector in the *Troades* by repeating the words she had used, in Vergil, to liken Ascanius to Asyanax suggests a parallelism between her condition as an impotent victim of the Greeks and her status as a belated figure in the literary tradition.[192] Many of Seneca's characters either reuse words they have already used in previous authors, or are referred to by other characters with words associated with that character in the literary tradition, emphasizing the latter as an overpowering dimension. A characteristic phrase that had been employed by Phaedra in Ovid's *Heroides* referring to Hippolytus's blush is, in the eponymous play, first appropriated by the nurse and applied to Phaedra, and then reused by Phaedra herself and applied to Theseus (Hippolytus's father).[193] This example is particularly interesting because it combines intra-textual unwitting quotation between different characters and inter-textual quotation, confirming the thesis that allusivity functions, in Senecan drama, as a twin phenomenon of tragic irony. Phaedra self-quotes from the *Heroides* various other times.[194] Medea self-quotes from both the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*.[195]

The notion of the supposed 'authoriality' of some Senecan characters is in large part due to a handful of allusions that involve (i) either the presence of intertextual signposts[196] or (ii) the quotation of a metapoetical intertext. The same line of reasoning that I applied to

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[192] *Tro*. 466-8 ***sic tulit*** *fortes* ***manus****, /* ***sic*** *celsus umeris, fronte* ***sic*** *torva minax / cervice fusam dissipans iacta comam*. Cf. *Aen*. 3.490 ***sic*** *oculos* ***sic*** *ille* ***manus sic*** *ora* ***ferebat***. See Steele (1922), 16, Fantham (1982), 67.

[193] *Her*. 4.72 *flava verecundus* ***tinxerat ora rubor***; *Phae*. 376 *non* ***ora tinguens*** *nitida purpureus* ***rubor***; 652 *et* ***ora*** *flavus tenera* ***tinguebat pudor***. Cf. Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

[194] *Phae*. 653 *lacertis mollibus fortes* ~ *Her*. 4.81 *lentum valido* [...] *lacerto*. *Phae*. 665-6 *domus sorores una corripuit duas, / te genitor, at me natus* ~ *Her*. 4.63-5 *placuit domus una duabus: / me tua forma capit, capta parente soror. / Thesides Theseusque duas rapuere sorores*.

[195] Cf. 137-43 ***Quid tamen Iason potuit****, ... uiuat meus, / ut fuit, Iason; si minus, uiuat tamen*. Cf. *Met*. 7.23-5 *vivat an ille / occidat, in dis est. vivat tamen! idque precari / vel sine amore licet:* ***quid enim commisit Iason?***

[196] For this well known concept, see Hinds (1998).

metatheatricality applies to both of these cases: in terms of the *characters*' awareness, intertextual signposts and metapoetical quotations are better interpreted as involuntarily ironical rather than self-conscious.

(i) Invariably, intertextual signposts in Seneca emphasize the characters' passivity as 'objects' of the literary process rather than authorial activity. In her prophetic frenzy, Cassandra says: 'You **I follow**, Troilus: your meeting with Achilles was far too soon', which alludes to Vergil.[197] Cassandra 'follows' Troilus in her vision; but *sequor* (748) also signals that she is 'following' Vergil. Cassandra is not the active producer of poetry, but the passive mouthpiece of both Apollo (cf. 721-2) and Vergil. In no way can we conceive her as actively appropriating Vergil; rather, it is Vergil who is guiding *her*.

In a last ditch attempt to persuade Hippolytus, Phaedra says (698-703): 'I too recognize my lineage's fate (*fata*): we pursue the acts we ought to shun. But I cannot control myself (*sed mei non sum potens*). [...] Whenever you direct your steps, I'll be insanely driven. **Once again**, I grovel at your knees (***iterum*** *superbe genibus advolvor tuis*)'. Phaedra describes herself as totally deprived of agency: to fall pray to insane love passion is a biological characteristic of her family (*fata*). This emphasizes her status as an impotent victim of the literary tradition, since 'once again' (*iterum*) seems to stress that this is a repetition of a gesture Phaedra already made in Ovid's *Heroides* (*Her*. 4.153 *genibusque tuis*).

(ii) At *Oed*. 388-9 Oedipus asks Tiresias to reveal the identity of Laius' murderer. Tiresias replies that neither by observing birds nor by inspecting animal entrails it is possible to establish it, but that 'another road of prophecy has to be pursued': *alia temptanda est via* (392)

[197] 748-9 *te* ***sequor****, nimium cito / congresse Achilli Troile*; cf. Verg. *Aen*. 1.475 (of Troilus) *infelix puer atque impar congressus Achilli*.

echoes a metapoetic statement by Vergil (Geo. 3.8 *temptanda via est*; here Vergil exhorts himself to find a 'way' to differentiate himself from previous poets and achieve poetic glory). According to Trinacty, Seneca 'makes Tiresias into a rival poet figure, who must search for his own manner of revealing the truth'; for Boyle, Tiresias is 'a model of the tragic poet himself'.[198] I do not see any reason that may justify such claims. Far from being 'authorial', Tiresias' discourse is 'constricted' both by someone else's authority (i.e. by the need to reply the questions of king Oedipus) and by professional requirement (i.e. by the need to faithfully interpret what the signs dictate to him). At most, Tiresias is a reader, and he is not even able to perform this role to perfection: he does not realize that while uttering the words *temptanda via est* (392) he is portending Oedipus's future blindness[199] – precisely as he does not realize that he is quoting Vergil. The quotation produces an involuntarily ironical effect: Tiresias, unwittingly, announces a *change* through a verbatim *repetition*.

[198] Trinacty (2014), 192; Boyle (2011), lxxxiv.

[199] Cf. Laius' threatenting words later at 656-7 (*reptet incertus* ***viae****, / baculo senili triste prae****temptans iter***) and Oedipus' own words while debating on how he should punish himself (949-51 ***quaeratur via*** */ qua nec sepultis mixtus et vivis tamen / exemptus erres*).

4. SENECAN VOICES

So far I have presented a 'dualistic' interpretation of the Senecan oeuvre: on the one hand, there is the Senecan persona, who appears solidly to be in control of his own discourse, and engages in a series of stylistic maneuvers meant to assert this control (section 2); on the other hand, there are the unphilosophical human beings criticized in the prose works (section 1) and the fictional characters of the plays (section 3), who, although in different ways, fail to control their discourse. In this final section, I set out to complicate this picture by focusing on some aspects of the philosophical persona that seem to question his status as a 'master of the meanings'. I will try to ask the question of whether the Senecan persona is a masterful 'author' who retains full control over the philosophical text that he weaves in front of our eyes (namely the 'text' both of his *Letters* and of his Self), or whether there are fissures in this 'text' – fissures that expose it, at least in part, as the product of 'intertextual' forces that the Senecan persona is not able to keep in check.[200]

The idea that the Senecan persona is not monolithically singular is not new. In fact, it dates back to Seneca himself, who states that it is an inherent feature of all human beings, himself included, to be *multiformes*, which may be translated as 'multiple' or 'incoherent'.[201] In a famous paper, Catharine Edwards (2008 [1997]) devotes a few pages to exploring the

[200] On the issues of authorial control and intertextuality, see my discussion in Ch. 1.6.

[201] Ep. 120.22 'That is how a foolish mind is most clearly demonstrated: it shows first in this shape and then in that, and is never like itself – which is, in my opinion, the most shameful of qualities. Believe me, it is a great rôle – to play the rôle of one man. But nobody can be one person except the wise man; the rest of us often shift our masks (*ceteri multiformes sumus*). At times you will think us thrifty and serious, at other times wasteful and idle. We continually change our characters and play a part contrary to that which we have discarded.'

implications of this statement for our reading of Seneca's *Letters*.[202] She perceptively observes that there are 'fissures and slippages in the picture of the authorial self' and discusses some examples in which Seneca seems to 'shift voice [...] dramatically' (p. 97). The various Senecan voices she identifies are that of the Stoic sage, that of a lowly aspirant to philosophical improvement, that of the traditional Roman moralist, that of the retired Roman senator concerned with his estates, that of an elderly invalid (p. 98). She wonders whether this continuous voice-switching by the Senecan persona is a rhetorical strategy to avoid monotony (p. 98), but concludes that, in fact, a more serious philosophical message may be at stake, namely that of problematizing the self: 'The Senecan self is multiple, fragmented, and riven with conflict. Dramas are enacted within the self, new roles assumed at every moment. The self of Seneca's *Letters*, then, is only apparently revealed to the reader; ultimately it proves quite elusive' (p. 99). Crucially, all of the Senecan 'selves' that emerge from Edward's analysis are aspects of the Senecan persona that, although distinct from, and in tension with, one another, the Senecan persona at different points in time *chooses* to identify with. Edwards' analysis, ultimately, is a strong-author reading of Seneca as an author able constantly to change his mask in order to keep his readers interested and/or to convey a philosophical message. What I propose to do in this section is to explore the idea that things might be more complex.

After Foucault's seminal work on the 'care of the self',[203] scholars have recognized that the chief importance of the Senecan philosophical corpus in the history of ideas resides neither in the (rather unoriginal) philosophical theories that it espouses, nor in its supreme artistic

[202] The ideas expressed by Edwards (2008 [1997]) at the end of her paper (pp. 96-101) about the plurality of the Senecan 'voices' are cited approvingly e.g. by Montiglio (2006), 566 and Citti (2012), 12-13. The thesis of this section is different from Edward's, but compatible with it, because my goal is to analyze a 'deeper' aspect of the Senecan persona.

[203] Foucault (1986) and (1988).

achievement (even though Seneca is objectively a master stylist), but primarily in its anthropologically revolutionary preoccupation with self-fashioning and self-regulation and its 'intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the object of one's acts'.[204] As Shadi Bartsch recently wrote, 'Seneca's self-understanding [...] is there staged for us to see, preserved in his own words as he discusses the path of self-formation for the aspiring Stoic. [...] The true Stoic sage is a rare man and may never have existed. It is the *pursuit* of the ideal that is portrayed in the *Epistles* as the full-time occupation of the actual Senecan self'.[205]

In this section, I propose a reading of Seneca's philosophy that emphasizes how the Senecan persona's process of self-fashioning is much more complicated and ambivalent than it has been recognized so far. Due to space constraints, here I can outline my ideas only in an extremely condensed and suggestive form, reserving to return to this topic in the future. My reading is based on the interpretation of Stoicism as a narcissistic-masochistic system that I offered in Ch. 1.4. On this view, Stoicism is a coping mechanism that provides its practitioners with a highly gratifying sense of perfection, autonomy, and superiority; but it comes at a cost: the Stoic practitioner has to embrace passivity as a form of superior activity, has to renounce or moderate the enjoyment of many pleasures that are considered normal and natural by most people, and, in short, has to disown important aspects of his/her own humanity. If this interpretation of Stoicism is right, a crucial corollary is that a human being will never be able to embrace Stoicism without some degree of ambivalence: however appealing Stoic perfectionism

[204] Foucault (1986), 41.

[205] Bartsch (2015), 187-8 (the Italics are hers); cf. also p. 198 'In the end, Seneca's most impressive act of self-shaping was not himself – though perhaps he got close between 62 and 65 CE – but his *portrayed* self in [the *Epistles*]'. Among the many studies of Senecan self-fashioning, fundamental contributions are Edwards (1997), Cooper (2004) and (2006), Reydams-Schils (2005), and the collective Bartsch and Wray (2009). Bartsch (2015) is a recent overview of the *status quaestionis*.

might be for some parts of his/her psyche, there will always be other parts that, although disowned, will not cease to be operative – and that, therefore, may manifest themselves, one way or another. The circumstance that Seneca offers us the report of the *process* of his own 'becoming' a Stoic, rather than a static description of Stoic perfection, provides us with an opportunity to test the corollary that I have just formulated: in this process of philosophical self-fashioning, is the Senecan persona's voice successfully and fully able to prevent any non-Stoic internal 'voices' from emerging into his Stoic discourse?

This (I argue) is certainly not the case. I propose that a highly meaningful way of reading Senecan philosophy would consist in viewing the Senecan text as an avenue of tensions between different aspects of the Senecan persona in competition with one another. I will call these aspects 'voices', retaining Edwards' terminology, but assigning a different ('intertextual' rather than 'allusive') meaning to it.[206] Of course, this is a highly unbalanced competition, in which the Stoic persona has all the power, whereas the 'Other', repressed voices find a way to surface only in indirect or disguised form. We saw in Ch. 1.4 that Senecan Stoicism recreates, within the individual, the same dynamics of power and coertion that are typical under monarchical rule. Textually, this manifests itself as an imperialistic Stoic voice that systematically tries to repress some of its most human aspects. However, the presence of these secondary voices is significant; in fact, I believe that it is precisely their presence that renders reading Seneca's philosophy such a humanly rewarding and relatable experience. I will now discuss four different ways in which the 'secondary' voices may emerge: (a) conceptual inconsistencies; (b) incoherent metaphors; (c)

[206] Again, for my employment of the concepts of 'allusivity' vs. 'intertextuality' cf. my earlier discussion in Ch. 1.6.

destabilizing associations or changes of topic; (d) philosophy as a form of failed escape from Nero.

(a) To start with, Senecan thought is characterized by a series of irreconcilable dichotomies, only in part deriving from the traditional apparatus of Stoic *paradoxa*; these dichotomies create ambiguities and in some cases even fissures in the conceptual structure of Senecan philosophy, undermining its rational credibility precisely as they seem to 'humanize' it. For instance, the concept of determinism is split in Seneca's thought. E. Asmis has shown that Senecan philosophy continuously oscillates between a conception of Fatum as a benevolent, supremely just, and divine entity that should be followed with devotion, and a conception of Fortuna as a malignant, evil, unjust, capricious, tyrannical, cruel adversary that should be fought against heroically. But Fatum and Fortuna refer to exactly the same thing, namely the external circumstances that the individual cannot control. As is typical of much scholarship on Seneca, Asmis ultimately falls short of calling the Senecan persona out for this blatant inconsistency, preferring to focus on how he 'reshaped' Stoic thought and on the political connotations of his 'refashioning' Stoic ethics according to the parameters of Roman heroism.[207] But why should we try to save Seneca from inconsistency at all costs? A simpler, less idealizing, and more humanly engaging explanation is that the Senecan persona is trying to eat the cake and have it too: the 'primary' voice clings to Stoic orthodoxy and advocates for compliance to Fatum, while other parts of the Senecan self push for a more exciting understanding of human existence.

[207] Asmis (2009), 135 'We may, I suggest, save consistency in two ways'; 118 'transformation'; 119 'reshaped'; 135 'reshaped'; 137 'refashioned'.

The concept of 'humanity', too, is split. The *sapiens* is repeatedly portrayed by Seneca as a quasi-divine figure able to wander through space and time with his mind.[208] Apparently, this goal is not so unreachable: Seneca describes himself in similar terms.[209] But Stoic wisdom also means becoming aware of the extreme weakness and even the nothingness of the human condition.[210] It is tempting to view the two sides as directly connected: the Stoic practitioner's idelism would emerge as a form of delusional overcompensation (a 'defense mechanism', in psychological terminology) for one's anxious awareness of human frailty and mortality.

I believe that a similar reading, emphasizing the human-all-too-human inconsistencies of Senecan thought, can be fruitfully applied to many other aspects thereof, including the notion that philosophy is both a form of freedom and slavery,[211] the gendered ambiguities inherent in Stoicism,[212] the overlapping of the categories of active and passive,[213] the concept of 'nature', which Seneca alternatively refers to as something that should be followed or fought against,[214]

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[208] Cf. e.g. *Ep*. 53.11 'The wise man's life spreads out to him over as large a surface as does all eternity to a god', *quantum deo omnis aetas*; 59.15.

[209] Cf. e.g. *Ep*. 62.2, esp. *in quocumque saeculo*.

[210] Cf. e.g. *Ep*. 101.1 'Every day and every hour (*omnis dies, omnis hora*) reveal to us what a nothing (*nihil*) we are, and remind us with some fresh evidence that we have forgotten our weakness; then, as we plan for eternity, they compel us to look over our shoulders at death'.

[211] Cf. Ch. 1.4.

[212] The goal of Stoicism is *vir-tus* ('manliness'), its primary method *patientia* ('passivity'), which in Rome had markedly feminine associations (cf. Ch. 1.4). The dichotomy *fatum~fortuna*, which I discussed above, is also gendered.

[213] Cf. Ch. 1.4.

[214] The goal of a Stoic life is defined as 'conquering nature' at *Brev*. 14.2 (*hominis naturam vincere*); but one of the most basic tenets of Stoicism, and a mantra frequently repeated by Seneca himself, posits that the ultimate goal of Stoic philosophy is 'to live according to nature' (e.g. VB 8.1-2 *natura enim duce utendum est [...] idem est ergo beate vivere et secundum naturam*; Ot. 5.1 *solemus dicere summum bonum esse secundum naturam vivere*; *Ep*. 5.4; 41.8; 50.9; 66.39; 124.7.

travelling,[215] glory.[216] Stoic life is conceptualized both as a retreat inside the soul and as an expansion into the cosmos.[217] The Stoic *sapiens* is repeatedly compared to a general or helmsman; but also to a soldier obeying the commands of fate or philosophy.[218]

As we saw at the beginning of Ch. 2.1, Senecan philosophy seems to be split between a recurrently evoked need to focus on content, *res*, instead of form, *verba*, and a manifest failure to do so; Seneca's creation of a philosophical corpus that is highly artistic and quasi-poetic can be seen as a compromise formation through which the requirements of the orthodox Stoic persona on the one hand and the needs of the 'other', more vital and emotional voices find a way to speak together. This is especially evident in his use of metaphors (b) and associations (c).

(b) Senecan metaphors often present readers with puzzling associations that have the potential to destabilize their Stoic message. For instance, in *Letter* 53.9-10 Seneca casts philosophy as a merciless tyrant such as Alexander, who bullies his subjects with tyrannical arrogance:

> <u>Philosophy wields her own kingly authority</u> (*exercet philosophia regnum suum*); she appoints her own time and does not allow it to be appointed for her. She is not a thing to be followed at odd times, but a subject for daily practice; <u>she is mistress, and she commands our attendance</u> (*domina est, adest et iubet*). <u>Alexander</u>, when a certain state

[215] Seneca's contradictory pronouncements about travel are discussed by Montiglio (2006), who concludes that they are best interpreted through Edwards (1997 = 2008)'s concept of a polyvocal Seneca, which I discussed above. Cf. e.g. Montiglio (2006), 566 on *Ep*. 104 'Seneca's voice shifts from stigmatizing the ineffectiveness of traveling to embarking on an alluring journey. He is himself transported by the distracting activity that he censures'.

[216] Edwards (2017), 171 notes a 'tension' between Seneca's insistence on the intrinsic value of virtue and his assertion of the fame attained by great philosophers in *Ep*. 79; she also observes (p. 171 n. 35) that Newman (2008, 321)'s attempt to resolve this tension is not convincing.

[217] Cf. e.g *DVB* 7.16.3 *quid extrinsecus opus est ei qui omnia sua in se collegit?*; but compare *Ep*. 62.2 'I spend my time in the company of all the best; no matter in what lands they may have lived, or in what age (*in quocumque loco, in quocumque saeculo*), I let my thoughts fly to them'.

[218] General or helmsman: e.g. *Ep*. 73.12. Obedient soldier: e.g. *DVB* 15.5-7; *Ep*. 107.7-10.

> promised him a part of its territory and half its entire property, replied: 'I invaded Asia with the intention, not of accepting what you might give, but of allowing you to keep what I might leave'. Philosophy likewise keeps saying to all things: 'I do not intend to accept the time which you have left over, but I shall allow you to keep what I myself shall leave'.

Of course, Seneca's point is simply that philosophy demands one's full focus. However, the terminology and imagery are perplexing. Throughout the Senecan corpus, Alexander is repeatedly and consistently mentioned as a standard example of foolish, un-Stoic behavior, especially of brutal cruelty.[219] By establishing a connection between philosophy and the un-philosophical Alexander, *Letter* 53 creates a jarring friction between seemingly incompatible concepts. The ramifications of this juxtaposition may be far reaching, because (as I discussed in Ch. 1.4) Stoicism required from its practitioners a passive acceptance of pain and external adverse circumstances, and imposed on them a sort of emotional self-castration, in exchange for a sublimated form of pleasure. The masochistic qualities of Stoicism imply a certain degree of cruelty directed toward oneself. Therefore, one possible way of reading the puzzling equation of philosophy and Alexander is that it conveys, implicitly, the ambivalence that, to some extent, must have characterized the relation of any Stoic with one's own philosophical beliefs. Of course, this is just one possible reading, and not everybody will be willing to accept it. Seneca, for one, surely would have rejected it, claiming that his metaphor was simply meant to be witty, humorous, or therapeutically shocking. Yet, my point is precisely that this alternative reading is *possible*. The text does present us with a fissure that, if pressured, might allow for a

[219] Alexander is presented as a human embodiment of cruelty (*crudelitas*) at *Clem*. 1.25.1 and *Ira* 3.17 and 23; and of drunkenness (*ebrietas*) at *Ep*. 83.19 and 23. He is described as a 'crazy man' (*vesanus homo*) at *Ep*. 91.17; as an unhappy man run by madness (*furor*) and beastly cruelty (*crudelitas inmanium ferarum modo*) at *Ep*. 94.62-63; as a brutal conqueror of peoples, but a slave of anger and regret at *Ep*. 113.29-30; and as a fool who remains 'poor even after conquering the Persians and Indians' at *Ep*. 119.7.

deconstructive reading thereof; I am convinced that an extensive analysis of Senecan metaphors will reveal this phenomenon to be recurrent.

Let us have a look at a similar example, contained in the two letters that open Book 8. *Letter* 70 is an apology of suicide, which (Seneca's argument goes) sometimes represents the only viable option if one is to retain one's dignity as a human being. In the early part of the letter, at 4, Seneca observes that 'life carries some men with the greatest rapidity to the harbor of death, which they were bound to reach even if they tarried on the way, while others it exhausts and boils down (*alios maceravit et coxit*)', concluding that 'one should not cling to life at any cost, because to be alive is not a good in itself, but rather to be alive *well*'. In this context, the verbs *macerare* and *coquere* metaphorically describe a life that ceases to be worth living because of its length.[220] The same two verbs make a second joint appearance in the next *Letter* (71), a rather long essay containing diverse considerations about the 'supreme good'. At 71.31, Seneca illustrates the difference between philosophy and other disciplines[221] through a metaphor:

> Just as wool takes up certain colors at once, while there are others that it will not absorb unless it is soaked and steeped in them many times (*nisi saepius macerata et recocta*); so other systems of doctrine can be immediately applied by human minds after once being accepted, but this system of which I speak, unless it has gone deep and has sunk in for a long time, and has not merely colored but thoroughly permeated the soul, does not fulfill any of its promises.

[220] *Macerare* and *coquere*, which originally mean 'to make wet, soak' (cf. OLD s.v. 1) and 'to boil' (cf. OLD s.v. 1) respectively, are normally applied to material objects such as food and metals.

[221] Or between Stoicism and other philosophies. Either interpretation is fine for my reading.

Like the process of wool dyeing, Stoic philosophy needs to be absorbed through repeated ‘bathing’ (*macerata*) and ‘boiling’ (*recocta*). The peculiar combination[222] that in the previous letter cast old age as a protracted, slow torture that one is better off terminating through suicide refers, here, to the process of philosophical improvement, which requires a patient long-term commitment on the part of the Stoic student. This combination appears to emphasize the negative connotations that are inherent in the terms *macerare* and *recoquere*. In his philosophical works, Seneca repeatedly employs the term *macerare* to describe negative psychological states in the sense ‘to torment mentally, worry, vex, annoy’ (cf. OLD s.v. 4ab);[223] *coquere* has similarly negative connotations when applied to emotions (cf. OLD s.v. 6).[224] Like the Alexander example, the comparison of *Ep*. 71 has the implicit potential to express an idea that is opposite to the text’s ostensible meaning: namely, that Stoic self-improvement is such a long and toilsome process that it is *not* worth the effort.

Seneca’s philosophy presents us with many more figural incongruities that would allow for this type of deconstructive reading.[225] This is surprising. Obviously, when a philosopher uses a metaphor (think only of Plato’s so-called ‘myths’), he does so in order better to convey his message. Metaphors, in other words, are for philosophers teaching tools, meant to illustrate philosophical concepts. What else should they do? There exists a huge bibliography on Senecan

[222] In the entire Senecan corpus, the verbs *macero* and *coquo* (or cognates) appear in the same clause only in these two passages, and in the same sentence only at *NQ* 1.3.12 in a technical description of the textile dyeing process.

[223] *Pol*. 9.3 *Quid itaque eius desiderio maceror?*; *Ep*. 49.6 *Quid te torques et maceras?*; *Ep*. 104.19 *Ista urguebunt mala macerabuntque per terras as maria vagum*.

[224] Cf. Verg. *Aen*. 7.345 *femineae ardentem curaeque iraeque coquebant*; Sil. 14.103 *quos ira metusque coquebat*. For the combination of *macero* and *coquo* with negative connotations cf. also Plaut. *Trin*. 225 *egomet me coquo et macero et defetigo*.

[225] There are many more examples, which I cannot comment upon here due to space constraints.

metaphors, which is understandable given Seneca's extensive and refreshingly diverse recourse to this device.[226] The standard, and so far unchallenged, consensus is that Senecan metaphors and images are just a didactic instrument and any other function that they may perform (for instance, artistic) is either ancillary to or aligned with the primary pedagogical purpose. This *communis opinio* is espoused even by those scholars who note inconsistencies between Seneca's images and Stoic doctrine. It is well-known to any reader that Senecan metaphors and analogies often evoke realms of human life that have nothing to do with philosophy, and that in fact normally stimulate or facilitate the manifestation of unphilosophical passions and vices. These realms include, for instance, money, commerce, warfare, voyaging, the law, and politics. In her fundamental study of Senecan metaphor, M. Armisen-Marchetti explains this feature of Senecan philosophy in terms of a purely cognitive and didactic need: Seneca employs images of what is graspable, concrete, familiar, and socially expected in order to express concepts that may appear as too abstract or socially unacceptable to Roman readers.[227] From a philosophically more technical perspective, Inwood (2005) studies the imagery used by Seneca to describe the Stoic theory of the passions and comes to the conclusion that sometimes his images may indeed be misleading and misrepresent Stoic doctrine; this, however, does not mean that Seneca's understanding of the passions is incoherent, but only that, occasionally, he makes an imperfect use of metaphors and we should not take his metaphors too literally. Bartsch (2009) surveys

[226] The fundamental work on Senecan *imagines* and rhetorical tropes is Armisen-Marchetti (1989). Steyns (1906) and Smith (1910) offer extensive and varioulsy organized lists and catalogues. Most recently on Senecan metaphor: Sjöblad (2015) (an analysis of Senecan metaphors from the perspective of cognitive linguistics) and the forthcoming book by Tommaso Gazzarri, *The Stylus and the Scalpel* (whose chief purpose is to study 'the use of writing and of metaphors to produce physical reactions' in Senecan prose; I am grateful to him for allowing me to read the draft of the book before its publication).

[227] Armisen-Marchetti (1989). In a later study, she reflects on the fact that combining metaphor with philosophical abstraction may produce paradoxical outcomes, but again concludes that metaphor is just a way to help readers understand abstract concepts (Armisen-Marchetti 1991).

three figural domains that Seneca frequently applies to the self: the self as inner space, the self as commodity, and the self as work of art. When using these images, Seneca exploits pre-existing modes of thought or attitude to convey less familiar ways of thinking, often creating frictions between the image he uses and Stoic doctrine. These frictions, according to Bartsch, are deliberate, and are meant to shock readers and spur them to take philosophical action.[228] Armisen-Marchetti, Inwood, and Bartsch, despite differences from one another, agree that there is no real problem with Senecan figures; they are representative of virtually all scholars who have written on this topic. I question this view of Senecan metaphors as exclusively ancillary tools. I suggest that the figural inconsistencies of Senecan philosophy emphasize metaphors as a locus of tension between signifiers. Senecan metaphors reveal an internal conflict *within* the 'Senecan voice' that is behind the text we are reading.

(c) A further way in which the different 'voices' inhabiting the Senecan persona may be detected is through analysis of one of the most peculiar feature of Senecan philosophy, namely the tendency to change topic abruptly, often in a way that does not seem to make logical sense. One example is *Letter* 12, which is characterized by a bipartite structure. In Part A (1-9), Seneca returns to a country estate where everything reminds him of his old age (1-3). Instead of being discouraged by this experience, he is able to appreciate the 'pleasures' of old age (4): 'Let us cherish and love old age; for it is full of pleasure (*voluptatis*). [...] Each pleasure reserves to the end the greatest delights which it contains (*quod in se iucundissimum omnis voluptas habet in finem sui differt*; here Seneca even seems to compare old age to orgasm). He then elaborates for a

[228] Bartsch 2009, 216-17 'In using non-orthodox propositional content to accomplish philosophical goals, in backing abstract ideas with the force of social and legal necessity, and in supplementing the syllogistic argument that Seneca finds unsatisfactory as the basis of a living and lived philosophy, Senecan metaphor might well spur the *proficiens* to action more effectively than orthodoxy ever could'.

few paragraphs on the fact that, if lived well, each new day should be celebrated as a source of great joy (6-9). Overall, A is a hymn to life, which B (10-11) strangely disrupts, since Seneca, with no apparent logical connection, moves to commenting on suicide. Whereas in A Seneca is grateful to the gods for every new day that they keep him alive (9 ‘if god is pleased to add another day, we should welcome it with glad hearts’), in B he invites Lucilius to ‘thank god that no man can be kept in life’ (10 *agamus deo gratias quod nemo in vita teneri potest*). This last sentence is revealingly ambiguous: its meaning in the context is that we should be happy that it is possible to commit suicide if life becomes unbearable; but it can also be translated as a radical negation of the sense of gratitude expressed in the previous section: ‘let us thank god that at some point each of us is doomed to die’ – almost as if too much life and pleasure are intolerable to the Senecan persona. The Senecan voice, thus, undergoes a radical shift in moving from A to B. One gets the impression that the joyous appreciation of life’s pleasures contained in A has gotten a little bit too far, requiring the orthodox (i.e. idealistic/masochistic) voice to intervene and bring back a more Stoically appropriate gloom at the close of the letter.

A comparable example is *Letter* 11, which too is divided into two clearly demarcated halves. In part A (1-7) Seneca updates Lucilius about an encounter he had with an unnamed young man, who, in the presence of the older and eminent Seneca, could not refrain from blushing (1): ‘he could scarcely banish that hue of modesty, which is a good sign in a young man: a blush (*rubor*) spread all over his face, rising from the depths (*ex alto*)’. Next, Seneca reflects that blushing is just one example of a larger category of stress-related psychosomatic phenomena that beset public speakers throughout their careers, such as sweating, trembling, teeth chattering, tongue faltering, and lips quivering. After commenting on some famous cases of people who were prone to blushing (3-5), Seneca returns to his main point that *sapientia* is

powerless (6 'wisdom (*sapientia*) can never remove these reflexes'; 7 'wisdom (*sapientia*) will not assure us of a remedy, or give us help against it; it comes or goes unbidden, and is a law unto itself'). Part A, in short, documents how a minor, apparently innocuous episode of blushing, initially saluted as a positive sign of modesty, reminds Seneca that human nature (cf. 1 *naturalia*, 2 *natura*) includes an incomprehensible dimension that is deeply rooted in the physical body and that is totally inaccessible and impermeable to *sapientia*, a notion that, of course, is in tension with the orthodox Stoic view that wisdom consists in 'following nature'. For obvious reasons, this realization must have constituted a major source of concern for a Stoic, since this philosophy placed such a great emphasis on the need for the rational, directive part of the soul (the 'hegemonikon') to exercise as great a control as possible on psychic processes.[229]

In the second half, namely part B (8-10), Seneca encourages Lucilius to redouble his efforts to become a *sapiens*, by conjuring an internal, spiritual 'watchman' (*custos*) in his own mind (8): 'We must choose some man of high character, and keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them'. An ideal candidate for this role is Cato the Censor (9).[230] The final goal, of course, is to improve oneself : 'we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters; you can never straighten that which is crooked unless you use a ruler (*nisi ad regulam prava non*

[229] In this respect, it interesting to note the parallelism between the idea that 'nature exerts her own power' (2 *natura vim suam exercet*), which this letter refers to the psychosomatic issues of public speakers, and the considerations about the irrepressible power of animal love expressed in the first Chorus of Seneca's *Phaedra* (347-52): 'The lions of Carthage shake up their manes when love has aroused them. The forests then groan with the murmurs of beasts. The giant of the frothing sea loves, and the elephant too. Nature claims all as her own' (*vindicat omnes natura sibi*).

[230] Seneca does not specify explicitly which 'Cato' he is talking about, but there can be little doubt that he has the Censor (not the Uticensis) in mind, for two reasons: first, he is evoking a 'moral judge' par excellence, and the Censor fits this role better than the Uticensis, who was rather a champion of political freedom and philosophical coherence; second, Seneca immediately mentions Gaius Laelius, a contemporary of the Censor, as a milder alternative.

corriges)'. This is, in fact, a surprising goal, since the first half of the letter reflected so obsessively on the impossibility to 'straighten' one's nature fully.

If we read parts A and B in succession, it is clear that the letter narrates the emergence of a fear (A) and the Senecan persona's subsequent reaction to that fear (B), even though these two movements are not explicitly presented as causally related. In fact, the transitional wording employed by Seneca at 8 seems to suggest that their juxtaposition in this letter is random; the most recent commentator notes that 8 'introduce[s] a new subject'.[231] However, A and B are indeed connected, but at a psychological rather than logical level. The thought that there are internal, visceral (cf. e.g. 1 *ex alto*, 'from the depths') areas of the human self that are not reachable by wisdom and therefore cannot be corrected through it (11.1 *nulla sapientia*, 11.6 *nulla sapientia*, 11.7 *nihil sapientia*) determines, inside the soul, an urgent need to exercise an even stricter control over itself.[232] B makes sense if interpreted as an emotional reaction to the emergence of anxious feelings.[233]

(d) Roman Stoicism, as I illustrated in Ch. 1.4, is a deeply conflicted cultural phenomenon, which politicizes the internal dynamics of the self by re-projecting political slavery inside the human soul. The self is at the same time its own master and slave. In such circumstances, the practice of philosophy becomes dangerously similar to a form of self-oppression, and the Senecan persona becomes his own 'internalized Nero'. Seneca

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[231] Richardson-Hay (2006), 344.

[232] Cf., crucially, 9: 'the soul (*animus*) should have someone through whose authority it may make even its inmost part (*secretum suum*) more hallowed'.

[233] The commentary of Richardson-Hay (2006) fails to detect the various incongruences and inner tensions of the Senecan text. Barton (1999) is a valuable psycho-sociological analysis of blush in Roman culture, but is unhelpful for my reading of *Letter* 11 because her focus is primarily on the social aspects of blushing, whereas here I am interested in the purely personal and internal psychological response of the Senecan persona.

systematically avoids commenting in the *Letters* on the repressing tyrant who dominated his world;[234] yet the 'ruler' is inevitably a crucial archetype (so to speak) that, like a powerful center of gravity, attracts and orients Senecan thought. The *animus*, for instance, is an internal king (114.23; cf. Ch. 1.4). Philosophy is an internal Alexander (53.10; cf. above in this section). Crucially, 'if you want to dominate everything [like Nero], let Reason dominate you [like Seneca does]' (37.4 *si vis omnia tibi subicere, te subice rationi*). Seneca's commitment to Stoicism can suggestively be seen as a self-victimization by which he does to himself what Nero does to him, but also as an indirect way of appropriating the status of a new 'Nero'.

The 'emperor' archetype emerges both concetually and linguistically. In Senecan prose, metaphors of enslavement figure prominently, signifying relations (in both directions) between the mind and body, the mind and passions, the individual and external goods. Moreover, Seneca repeatedly redefines the concepts of slave and master: (literal) slaves can be freer that free men, and rulers are especially prone to being slaves to passions. But there are many more complexities inherent in this imagery, which include the fact that Seneca himself was implicated in slavery as a master who owned (literal) slaves. Seneca's famous advocacy for a human treatment of slaves (*Ep*. 47) may be read as a self-serving plead to Nero to treat his senatorial slaves (like Seneca) with dignity.[235]

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[234] Many possible indirect allusions to Nero have been detected: cf. e.g. Heinz (1948), 92-3; Griffin (1976), 360; Asmis (2009), 131.

[235] On the ambiguities inherent in Seneca's appropriation of slavery terminology, Edwards (2009), which I have paraphrased in this paragraph, is especially useful, but she could be bolder in tracing the connection between Seneca's status as Nero's slave and his recurrent employment of slave metaphors: cf. p. 57 (the emphasis is mine) 'A factor which *perhaps* gives Seneca's recurrent engagement with the idea of slavery particular bite is [...] freedom in the political sphere'; and at p. 158 she hesitatingly asks: 'What happens if we read *Letter* 47, thinking now of the emperor as master and senators as slaves?'

As a writer, Seneca may be seen as behaving as an 'emperor' of language. He seems to treat signifiers and meanings as objects that he can easily dominate, almost as if the latters were his own subjects, as I showed in Ch. 2.2. Through his highly personal, artificial, and abrupt style, the Senecan persona goes out of his way to establish himself as the owner of a discourse that is totally liberated – therefore, as an analogue of Nero, the only person in Seneca's world who could say whatever he wanted. I suggest that there is a vague parallelism between, on the one hand, the fetters of habitual errors, intersubjective influences, and the intrinsic opacity of language, which the Senecan persona obviates through his stylistic pirouettes, and, on the other, the oppressive influence of Nero, which distorts everybody's – Seneca's included – relation to language at his court. Can the massive display of linguistic mastery enacted by the Senecan persona (cf. Ch. 2.2.) be read as a paranoid, displaced reaction that aims to compensate for the traumatic loss of linguistic agency entailed by court life?

Chapter 3

Lucan: The Mind in Conflict

SUMMARY

In this chapter I argue that ‘civil war’ is not just the subject matter of Lucan’s poem, but also its most pervasive trope, figuring the neurotic conflict that is internal to the narrator’s psyche. Rather than narrating and commenting on external historical events, throughout the poem the narrator gives free rein to his own internal neurosis, projecting *himself* onto the world. The ‘narrator’, therefore, is in fact a ‘narrated’: far from being an active literary agent, he is passively controlled by his mental illness, his own ‘work’, and previous literature. Based on the psychoanalytic concept of neurotic conflict, I offer a profound refinement of the two currently dominant interpretations of this poem, namely Henderson (1987)’s hypothesis that the *Bellum Civile* is a poem where language is at war with itself, and Masters (1992)’s concept of a ‘fractured’ narratorial voice. I propose a more psychologically calibrated and humanly relatable interpretation of the narrator’s bizarre postures and multiple incoherences by analysing his inability to control language, ‘meanings’, and the very content of his thoughts. His uncontrolled recourse to allusivity, which I view as a literary manifestation of ‘traumatic memory’, reflects the narrator’s obsessive and masochistic personality. At the end of the chapter, I will explore various possible interpretations of the secret pleasure that, through the agony that he inflicts on himself while composing the poem, the narrator may be unconsciously seeking.

1. LUCAN'S CHARACTERS: FICTIONAL HYPERBOLES OR NEUROTIC PERSONALITIES?

'We sing of a mighty people attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand' (1.3).[236] At the very beginning, programmatically, the narrator declares that this is a poem about self-destruction. Civil war is metaphorically presented as a suicide that an entire people performs on itself. The theme of civil war as an act of self-injury emerges on several other occasions. For instance, before the decisive battle at Pharsalus the narrator complains that 'each desires to hurl down to ruin his own fate and the state's' (7.51-2); and again a few lines later: 'we charge to disaster, demanding warfare which will injure us' (7.60). In an earlier battle, the Pompeians are described as 'rushing toward the enemy suicidally' and 'proceeding purposely to certain death' (4.270-2).

However, participation in the civil conflict is only one way in which the characters of this poem inflict death or pain on themselves. Somewhat paradoxically, suicide and self-harm are strategies by which civil war is not only waged, but also avoided. At 3.342-50 the Massilians list all the painful things that they are ready to endure in order to resist Caesar's request to take part in the incipient civil conflict, including having their houses destroyed, licking the soil for water, eating repulsive substances, and committing a collective suicide. Similarly, at the beginning of Book 2, the unnamed old man recalls that in order to avoid Sulla's revenge many citizens committed suicide by hanging themselves, by throwing themselves from a cliff, and even by preparing their own funeral-pyre and leaping into it (2.154-9).

[236] Translations of Lucan are adapted from Braund (1992).

One recurrent motif is the self-sacrifice that a character decides or plans to perform in order to save his fellow-citizens or family members from civil war. During the naval battle, a soldier with both hands chopped off 'protects with naked breast his brother's shield; he stands firm, though pierced by many a spear, and in a death already well earned he receives the weapons which in their fall would have killed many of his own people' (3.618-22). Similar is Cato's fantasy in his dialogue with Brutus (2.306-11):

> O if only this head, condemned by heaven's gods and Erebus, could be exposed to every punishment! When Decius offered his life, enemy squadrons overwhelmed him: let me be pierced by twin battle-lines, let Rhine's barbarous horde aim its weapons at me, let me, exposed to all the spears, standing in the middle, receive the wounds of all the war.

Each character has his own reasons for harming himself. During the sea battle an old man subjects himself to a 'double suicide' (he stabs himself to death and drowns himself simultaneously) so as to be sure to die before his mortally wounded son (3.741-51). In his exhortation to the troops before Pharsalus, Caesar promises that, should they lose, he will stab himself so that his future in death may be carefree (7.308-12). Vulteius's main incentive for seeking death and for encouraging his comrades to do the same is glory.[237] In a famous passage, Scaeva faces an entire army alone, ending up with wounds in literally every part of his body. His behavior stems from a combination of blind devotion to his leader, misconceived heroism, and an overwhelming *mortis amor*.[238] At Pharsalus, Pompey wishes 'that the first lance of deadly war may strike [his] head' (7.117); he does not state exactly why, but this is obviously connected to

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[237] 4.478-80 'Life which remains is short for no one who finds in it the time to seek death for himself; and the glory of death is not diminished, men, by advancing to meet a fate close at hand'; 509-12 'O I wish that they would promise pardon, bid us hope for safety, so that our unique death would grow in fame, to prevent them thinking we have given up hope when we pierce our guts with the warm sword'.

[238] 6.245-6 'your love of Pompey and of the Senate's cause is less than mine of death'.

his condition of profound dejection. His wife Cornelia expresses her desire for death on many occasions, always out of a deep guilt complex for having supposedly caused her husbands' ruin (8.60-61, 8.97-105, 8.653-61, 9.101-108).

In Lucan's world, suicidal impulses are not confined to the Roman people, but are truly universal. At 8.363-4 the Northern peoples are approved of as 'lovers of death', and in the list of Eastern peoples in Book 3 one of them is praised because it builds its own pyres and jumps in while still alive (3.240-1). Even Jupiter is self-destructive. In the famous thunderbolt simile, we encounter a puzzling phrase according to which the *fulmen* 'rages against its own precincts' (*in sua templa furit*). Whether *templa* here means 'temples' or 'specific regions of the sky', the phrase portrays Jupiter as aiming his thunderbolts at his own property.[239]

All through this poem, self-destructiveness is presented in surprisingly positive terms, as is shown, in the previous paragraphs, by Scaeva's heroic 'love of death' and the Northern peoples' characterization as 'lovers of death'.[240] Some passages are striking because they explicitly associate pain and pleasure. During the Spanish campaign Caesar expects that, while being slaughtered, his opponents 'will rejoice to shed their blood' (4.276-8), a prediction that, for instance, is realized by Domitius, who at Pharsalus 'falls gladly under a thousand wounds' (7.7.603-4). Cornelia 'enjoys her tears and loves her grief' (9.111-12). Cato reminds his soldiers that 'serpents, thirst, and heat of sand are sweet to heroism; endurance in adversity rejoices; happier is courage whenever it costs itself a great price' (9.402-4). Aulus is so thirsty that he 'derives pleasure' from drinking sea water (9.757). Medusa is 'delighted' when the snakes on her

[239] For the interpretive issue concerning *templa*, cf. Nix (2008), 283.

[240] On the concept of *amor mortis* in Lucan, see Rutz (1960).

head lash her neck (9.633). According to Vulteius, 'death is a blessing' (4.517-20), and his men, while dying, 'delight to feel death' (4.570).

In this context, it is interesting to note that one of the most peculiar of Lucan's stylistic devices, voice-reversal, often describes situations in terms of an *active* embracing of pain.[241] Scaeva exhorts his comrades: 'break their weapons with the impact of your breasts, blunt their swords with your throats' (6.160-1). In the reciprocal killing performed by Vulteius' men, 'the wound is not produced by the sword's deep thrust but the weapon is struck by the breast and the hand attacked by throat' (4.560-1). Caesar expects that his enemies 'will fall upon [his men's] swords' (4.278). The battle of Pharsalus is 'a war waged with throats' (7.533).

As the previous paragraphs show, the characters of this poem exhibit unmistakable masochistic tendencies. Equally detailed lists could be compiled to document the multiple indicators of their other mental illnesses.[242] Take, for instance, narcissism. Almost all the characters of this work display a disturbing tendency to see themselves as much more important and powerful than they really are. Caesar is, of course, the clearest example of an overblown self.

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[241] On voice-reversal, see Bartsch (1997), 22-29 with further bibliography. On the reversal of the active-passive dichotomy as typical of self-destructive mental pathology, see Ch. 1.5.

[242] For my recourse to the concept of 'mental illness' (the vagueness of which I deliberately embrace in order to offer a literary rather than rigidly clinical interpretation), methodological considerations apply similar to those that I expressed, in the Preface and Ch. 1.3, about my employment of the concept of 'neurosis' and in general my recourse to psychoanalysis. I am aware that some readers will find my application of modern constructs to ancient literature and merely literary entities (such as Lucan's characters or internal narrator) problematic. But I remain convinced of the soundness of this method, primarily because of the idea of a shared humanity between the ancients and us (when, *exactly*, does our contemporary understanding of the human psyche cease to be a viable tool to interpret past human action or linguistic production? – the congress of Vienna? the Renaissance? the fall of the Roman empire?). Also, as I explained in the Preface, readers have ample liberty on how to interpret my study: those who find my method illegitimate from a literal, i.e. historicist, perspective, may still appreciate it as an instance of reader-response literary criticism. For sensible, but to my mind not decisive, considerations about the difficulties inherent in comparing the semantics and cultural meanings of pathological concepts such as 'illness', 'disease', 'sickness', 'disorder', etc. across cultures and ages, see Goyette (2015), 38-42, 227 (with n. 7), 231-233, 357. More specifically on the dangers connected to applying a concept such as 'mental illness' to classical literature, see Simon (1978), 31-34 and Bosman (2009), 1-3.

Suffice it to quote the speech by which he tries to convince the sailor Amyclas to set sail on a raft despite the innumerable signs of an approaching tempest (5.578-93):

> Despise the sea's threats, entrust your sail to the raging wind. *If you refuse Italy at heaven's command, seek it at mine*. The sole legitimate cause of fear for you is this: ignorance of who your passenger is, *someone never deserted by gods, someone who is treated ill by Fortune when she comes only after his prayers*. Secure in my protection, break through the gales' midst. *That toil belongs to the sky and sea, not to our ship: weighed down by Caesar, its load will defend it from the surge*. And no long duration will be granted to the winds' fierce frenzy: *this boat will help the waves*. [...] You do not know what is made ready in such vast destruction: *by turmoil of the sea and sky, Fortune seeks to favor me*'.

We might suspect that Caesar's behavior throughout the poem presents the symptoms of the so called 'hybris syndrome', an extreme manifestation of narcissistic behavior that is typical of political leaders: Caesar possesses almost all of the fourteen 'clinical features' associated with this personality disorder.[243]

Caesar's delusions of omnipotence and quasi-psychotic confidence do not need to detain us since this is a recurrent motif that every reader is familiar with. But many other characters display a similarly megalomaniac attitude, Pompey and Cato prominent among them. So, for instance, Pompey is keen to remind his troops that 'no region of the world is without [him], but the entire earth, whatever sun it lies beneath, is filled by [his] trophies' (2.583-4). He is also convinced that civil war is a ruse of the gods specifically designed to destroy *him* (7.659-65). Cato thinks, rather messianically, that 'he was born for the entire world' (2.383). Is not there something hybristically 'Caesarean' in the often quoted sententia to the effect that 'the winning

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[243] Owen & Davidson (2009).

cause was pleasing to the *gods*, the losing one to *Cato*' (1.128)?[244] In Book 9, Cato in effect causes an entire army to undergo inhuman sufferings for no obvious reason; several scholars have found his behavior on this occasion to be, not so much a display of Stoic virtue, but rather an unnecessary, insensitive, and extraordinarily egotistical act of fanaticism.[245] In his speech to Brutus, which I quoted above (2.306-11), Cato asks to 'be exposed to *every* punishment' and prays that he, 'exposed to *all* the spears and standing in the middle', may 'receive the wounds of *all* the war'. In this, Cato is hardly different from another hard case of masochistic narcissism, namely Scaeva, who prays to be 'attacked by *all* the enemies, by *all* the weapons: *every* hand was surely aimed, *every* lance successful, and Fortune sees clash a novel pair of adversaries, an army and a man' (6.189-92).

Cato's desire for 'standing in the middle' also reveals an exhibitionistic agenda that reminds us of both Vulteius' (4.489-98) and Scaeva's (6.158-60) obsession for being witnessed amidst acts of extreme self-sacrifice. The exhibitionism of Lucan's characters, who are often preoccupied with having an audience for their sufferings, has been noted by many readers.[246] Another character in whom a hypertrophic conception of her own 'grandiose self' is inextricably interlaced with masochistic impulses is Cornelia. Every time she comes onto the stage the atmosphere becomes gloomy. She never misses a chance for self-condemnation on the obviously false assumption that she is responsible for the ruin and death of her current and previous

[244] Cf. e.g. Caesar's words at 5.579-80: 'If you refuse Italy at *heaven*'s command, seek it at *mine*'.

[245] E.g. Johnson (1987), 55; Leigh (1997), 274-82.

[246] Cf. 4.492-95 with e.g. Eldred (2002), 61; and 6.159-60 with e.g. Conte (1988), 72-75, 102-3.

husbands. Her guilt complex, as well as her exaggerated conception of her role in human events, is clearly pathological.[247]

Other examples of mental illness in the poem include Pompey's defeatism and passivity – a tendency manifested on so many occasions, and so similar to what we would nowadays style as a chronic depression;[248] then there is the sense of overwhelming and paranoid anxiety that defines various characters such as the prophetic figures at the end of Book 1,[249] the old men at the beginning of Book 2,[250] the entirety of humanity in Book 7,[251] and Pompey at the beginning of Book 8.[252] For reasons of space, I will not present a detailed account of all the psychological disorders affecting Lucan's characters; but such a presentation would show that the poem is a casebook of mental pathology.

One conspicuous aspect of the characters' neurosis is their self-contradicting behavior and illogical reasoning. A good example of paradoxical self-contradiction is offered by the speech of the Messenians at 3.307-55. One of their strongest arguments for not engaging in a civil war is that they want to avoid the risk of having to fight brother against brother and sons against fathers, which represents the typical scenario of a civil war (326-7). But at the end of

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[247] For an ample analysis of Cornelia as an 'eroina del lamento', see Sannicandro (2010), 43-81. On the absurdity of her self-attacks and in general of her showy displays of emotion, cf. the colorful remarks by Nisard (1834, 281-282).

[248] Cf. e.g. the desolate melancholy of 7.7-44 and 8.18-108.

[249] 1.523-695 (e.g. 479-86 'they picture him not as they remember him: in their thought he seems greater, wilder, more pitiless (...). So by his panic each gives strength to rumour, and they fear ungrounded evils of their own invention'; 673; 676).

[250] 2.67 'seeking a precedent for his mighty fear'.

[251] 7.127-138 (e.g. 127-29 'the camp roars in a tumult of agitated haste, and fierce spirits hammer against their breasts with irregular blows'; 133-4 'each man is unaware of his own dangers, stunned by a greater dread'); 7.185-191 (e.g. 186 'the people tremble with distracted fear'; 190 'he mourns, not knowing the reason, and rebukes his aching mind, unaware of what he is losing on the fields of Emathia').

[252] 8.5-8 (discussed in the next paragraph).

their speech they state that, precisely in order to avoid civil war, ‘wives shall ask for death at their dear husbands’ hands and brothers will exchange death-wounds’ (353-4). When the inhabitants of Rimini see Caesar’s army approaching after crossing the Rubicon, they bitterly complain that they are the only people in the world unable to experience quiet (1.250 *quies*); but then they are so paralysed by fear that their town plunges into the deepest quiet (1.261 *quies*). Another blatant example of non-logical reasoning is offered by Pothinus’ speech, which is sprinkled throughout with absurdities such as ‘on crosses and in flames we shall pay the price, if he [the king] finds his sister beautiful’ (10.365-6) and ‘which of us, who did not have sex with her, might she believe to be innocent?’ (10.369-70). Not even the philosopher Cato is immune to the disease of illogicality that affects so many of the characters. In his celebrated speech at 2.286-323, in which he uses Stoic terminology in an unorthodox manner,[253] he uses language in a way that repeatedly contradicts itself. Line 287, *sed quo fata trahunt uirtus secura sequetur* (‘but where the Fates lead, confident will Virtue follow’), seems to imply that Cato identifies with virtue and embraces the *securitas* that it entails, but later in the same speech he affirms that he cannot feel *securus* while Rome is falling. At 292 he defines the Roman civil war as a *furor*, which clearly implies that he rejects that activity as insane, but in the very next sentence, at 297, he declares that it would be *furor* if he did *not* engage in the conflict. Pompey, too, surprises us with his emotional instability (a strong argument against Marti (1945)’s idea that Pompey is characterized as an apprentice Stoic on a path of improvement): at the end of Book 7, once he

[253] At 2.287 (quoted below in this paragraph), the choice of the verb *traho* is dissonant with the mantra of the Stoic sect as translated by Seneca, *ducunt uolentem fata, nolentem trahunt* (cf. Sen. *Ep*. 107.11), where *trahunt* designates the situation of the foolish men who try to resist fate. At 290 *expers ipse metus* means that Cato *disavows* the status of a Stoic *sapiens* unaffected by fears.

realizes that the war is lost, he is a paragon of firmness and courage,[254] but when we encounter him again at the beginning of Book 8 he is overwhelmed by a panic attack that forces him to flee from Pharsalus at breakneck speed![255]

To conclude this preamble, character behaviour is almost never justified by a rational evaluation of the circumstances. For most of the time, their actions are unnecessarily extreme. In the scholarship on Lucan, the abnormal behavior of the characters has usually been ascribed to the author's overblown style, his penchant for paradox, or even his or his times' bad taste (see Section 3 below). But a more obvious explanation exists, which I will articulate in the the rest of this chapter. 'Irrational' is not necessarily a synonym of 'unrealistic'. Newspapers and, indeed, the daily experience of all of us offer plenty of examples of people behaving in disproportionate, self-destructive, or otherwise illogical ways. We all know that irrational and self-damaging tendencies are part of human nature.[256] Lucan's characters may be larger-than-life, but there is a deeply human dimension to them, which we will miss if we choose to look at them as merely fictional figures, the constructions of misplaced grandiloquence. In sum**,** Lucan's characters are not unrealistic. They are deeply neurotic, and as such deeply human. This chapter explores the *Bellum Civile* as an artistic reflection on that perplexing enigma, the human psyche.

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[254] 7.678-9 'Not fearing (*non ... paventem*) weapons from the rear, but going to meet his final destiny with enormous courage (*ingentes animos*)'; 7.687 'now you have put aside the weight of destiny, and you depart, free from care (*securus abis*)'.

[255] 8.5-8 'He panics (*pavet*) at the noise of forests moving in the winds, and any of his comrades who rejoins him from behind alarms (*exanimat*) him in his dread (*trepidum*) and terror (*timentem*)'. Fratantuono (2012), 288-289 notes the incongruence, but concludes that it is 'a careful characterization' and a 'purposeful confusion of tracks' by the poet. For a discussion of the bibliography on Pompey's incoherent behavior in this episode, see D'Urso (2019), 14-23 and 91-95.

[256] Psychoanalysis, for instance, considers pathology and physiology not as discrete poles, but as the two extremes of a continuum. 'Normality' is not defined by an absence of masochistic, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, etc. tendencies, but rather by their existence in a functional and socially adjusted form. Cf. e.g. Brenner (1974), 193-237; Quinodoz (2003); Ferro and Nicoli (2017), 143-144.

2. A NEUROTIC NARRATOR

There is one character in particular who displays a profoundly neurotic nature, namely the narrator.[257] I will now briefly analyze some of the clearest symptoms of the narrator's illness.

In the first place, he is a masochistic narrator. As I have illustrated in the previous section, he is fascinated by the concept of *amor mortis* and often indulges in the narration of scenes of self-inflicted or voluntarily embraced pain. More importantly, he deliberately makes the object of his hate, i.e. civil war, the object of his poem, thus aligning himself with the masochistic tendencies of his characters. The second half of the poem is largely made up of his bitter and rambling rants about the horror of civil war and, moreover, his own sense of despair and impotence regarding those events.[258] Why narrate something that gets so much under your skin? Why inflict this pain on oneself? Such behavior is obviously pathological.

As many scholars have noted, the narrator frequently seems to lose touch with reality, in a number of ways. He demonstrably distorts historical events, sometimes to absurd effect.[259] He

[257] It is, of course, open to debate whether and to what extent Lucan's narrator, the 'voice' speaking to us from within the text, may represent a text-internal projection of Lucan the real person. I will refer to this voice as the 'narrator' to stress that I am talking about a fictional, literary entity, not a real human being. 'Lucan's narrator' seems to me preferable to 'Lucan's persona' because the latter might seem to imply that the narrator is, indeed, to some extent a literary alter-ego of Lucan; although I find this thesis plausible, committing to it is not necessary to the purposes of this chapter. I will, however, speculate on the possibility that the narrator is, indeed, a literary transposition of Lucan in Appendix 5.

[258] Cf. the bibliography on the Lucanian narrator's reluctance to narrate that I quote in Ch. 1.1.

[259] For instance, the entire Erichtho scene takes place before the battle of Pharsalus, but at the same time it presupposes that the battle has already taken place: e.g. Duff (1928), 348 n. 1; O'Higgins (1988), 218-219. On the account of Domitius' death as an absurd lie, see Masters (1994), 164-168 (esp. 164 on its falsity, 167 on its absurdity).

distorts geography.[260] He often describes nature in a way that is obviously non-realistic, projecting onto it the 'doubleness' of civil war (and, as we will see, of his own psyche): double rivers, double seas, double mountains, etc. proliferate in the poem.[261] He often poses as a contemporary of the events, generating the impression that the events of the war are still to come and not yet in the past; but equally frequently he writes as a Neronian of the 60s CE.[262]

The narrator's disregard for the 'reality principle' is especially evident in his self-contradictions. One example is his preamble to the Delphi episode, where, after devoting seven lines to saying that Apollo is the divinity that governs that place (5.79-85), he startlingly moves to asking which god lies concealed there (86-101).[263] Another example is the scene featuring Vulteius. Before the battle, the Caesarians complain that they are *not* held captive with their parents and children (4.503-4), since the presence of the latter among them, paradoxically, would have increased the glory of what they are about to do; but when they finally commit a collective suicide, the narrator comments that 'brothers charge at brothers and son at father' (4.563). The narrator's remark, at 3.36-40, that Pompey 'rushes toward war', at a moment when the latter is in

[260] The Thessalian excursus (6.334-412) is full of geographic blunders (e.g. at 336 Mount Pelion is located diametrically opposite to the position it occupies in reality; at 352 Dorion is a town in Messenia, not Thessaly). To the narrator's eyes, Egypt is an extension of Thessaly (8.188).

[261] 1.100-3 (twin seas), 1.550-2 (twin flames), 1.626-8 (twin heads of the liver), 2.399 (twin waters), 4.19-23 (double rivers), 4.157 (twin crags), 5.71-8 (twin mounts), 5.461-6 (twin rivers), 9.719 (a two-headed snake), etc.

[262] E.g. Masters (1994), 161 with abundant bibliography on this oscillating attitude at notes 47-48.

[263] Cf. esp. 5.84-7 'he [= Apollo] hid himself in the sacred caves and there, become a prophet, Apollo settled on the shrine. Which of the gods lies concealed here? Which power sinking from the ether condescends to live enclosed in these blinds caves?'

the process of abandoning Italy and running away from his rival is totally illogical, as I will discuss in more detail in Ch. 5.2.[264]

Evidence of the narrator's mental instability resides in his disproportionate and totalizing views, which are comparable to those typical of clinical depression and mania. Unable to ponder the nuances and ambiguities of life and history, and to put things into perspective, the narrator only sees things in black and white, 'all' or 'nothing'. These totalizing views are conveyed especially through the overabundant use of terms such as *cunctus*, *totus*, *omnis*, *nullus*, *numquam*, *semper*, etc.: strong terms that 'absolutize' the narrator's assertions, making them exaggerated and therefore incredible. Here is a selection of examples from Book 7 alone:

> 131-3 It is clear that the day has come which will establish the destiny of human life forever;
> 387-8 These sword-hands will achieve things that no future age can make good nor humankind repair in all the years, though it be free from warfare;
> 421 Every war gave you nations, every year Titan saw you advance toward twin poles.
> 426 The fatal day of Emathia [was] equivalent to all the years;
> 444 Of all the peoples who endure tyranny, our situation is the worst;
> 638 From this battle the peoples receive a mightier wound than their own time could bear; more was lost than life and safety: for all the world's eternity we are prostrated. Every age which will suffer slavery is conquered by these swords;
> 834 Never was the heaven clothed with such a cloud of vultures, never did more wings crush the air. Every forest sent its birds and every tree dripped with bloody dew from gore-stained wing;
> 851-2 Every crop will rise discoloured with tainted growth. With every ploughshare you will desecrate the Roman shades.

This 'totalizing' tendency is one of the most pervasive and peculiar features of the poem. A full analysis of the totalizing assertions made by the narrator is, in my opinion, one important desideratum in the scholarship on Lucan, and I am convinced that it would refine considerably

[264] For further examples of, and some bibliographical discussion on, the narrator's inconsistencies, see O'Hara (2007), 131-139.

our understanding of the poem and its narrator, by showing the utter unreliability of this narrator. His totalizing views are one aspect of the poem's enormous recourse to hyperbole and exaggeration, on which more below.

Another element that contributes to our perception that the narrator is dissociated from reality, and solipsistically lost (as it were) in his fictional mental world, rather than a credible interlocutor who is trying to communicate with his readers, is his highly obtrusive recourse to apostrophe, which is often noted by scholars.[265] An entire book has been devoted to the topic (D'Alessandro Behr 2007), making a case that the purpose of this device is to guide the *readers'* moral conscience. This thesis can hardly be accepted: one of the most defining features of Lucanian apostrophes is that, on so many occasions, the narrator *interrupts* his communication stream towards the readers external to the text in order to direct his words toward the characters internal to the text. A more natural interpretation is that apostrophes constitute, for the narrator, so many regressions from a reality-oriented engagement with the external world into a delusional internal world.

Finally, the narrator also displays behaviors that are typically associated with obsessive-compulsive disorders, in particular his penchant for intra-textual repetition[266] and for abnormally long, and apparently unnecessary, lists.[267]

The combination of all these bizarre elements renders the *Bellum Civile* a very strange animal: a confused and confusing poem that the narratorial voice itself seems to have little

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[265] E.g. Williams (2017), 100.

[266] See esp. Housman (1927), xxxiii; Schönberger (1968); and the last chapter of Dinter (2012).

[267] For example, here are a few of the most impressive lists in the poem: 1.392-465 (74 lines listing Gallic tribes); 1.522-83 (62 lines listing the *omina* portending civil war); 2.403-27 (25 lines listing Appennine rivers); 3.169-297 (129 lines listing Eastern peoples); 6.461-91 (32 lines listing things that the Thessalian witches are able to do); 6.670-84 (24 lines listing the filthy ingredients used by Erictho).

interest in organizing into a coherent whole. Scholars such as Syndikus, Johnson, and Masters have discussed how the narration of events, due to the omission of important facts, excessive compression, excessive digression, the replacement of irrational and arbitrary motivation for rational causality, and the systematic inclusion of superfluous and insignificant details, fails ultimately to 'make sense' to the eyes of a rationally oriented reader.[268] All three scholars insist that this effect is 'deliberate' on Lucan's part.[269] But is it? All we can safely say is that the narratorial voice fails to be lucid and coherent. This might well be the result of a sophisticated quasi-postmodern experiment by the external narrator – but how can we know? A whole series of alternative interpretations of the relation between Lucan and his narrator are possible, including the simplest one: that of an almost total, unmediated coincidence between the ranting narrator and the poet enraged at Nero after the end of their friendship. Rather than focusing on a slippery unknown such as the intentionality of the external author, in this chapter I intend to linger on (and stress) what the text, objectively, offers us: a (text-internal) individual who, as so many symptoms indicate, is affected by mental illness.

In conclusion, the analysis presented in this section has shown that our narrator is in his own way no less neurotic, irrational, and incoherent than his characters. Significantly, many of them have been interpreted as authorial figures. Arruns, Figulus, the matron at the end of Book 1, the old man of Book 2, Phemonoe, the corpse resuscitated by Erichtho, the priest Acoreus: all of these vatic figures represent alter-egos of the narrator in an obvious way, because they are characters who narrate rather than act. The various suicidal characters, such as Vulteius, Scaeva, and Cato, constitute as many projections of the narrator's masochistic tendencies. The narrator is

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[268] Syndikus (1958), 8-31; Johnson (1987), 109-110; Masters (1994), 153-163.

[269] 'Deliberate': (Syndikus) 1958, 29; Johnson (1987), 110; Masters (1994), 153.

as depressed as Cornelia, and he shows a certain paranoia in his conviction that he is ‘the most unlucky’ in the universe like the inhabitants of Rimini in Book 1 and the old men of Book 2.[270] He is bold and megalomaniac like Caesar, but also shares Pompey’s dejection, despair, passivity, and he is moved about by the events without being able to modify them, thus effectively identifying and siding with both parties.[271] He indulges in elaborate lists like several of his characters.[272] Like them, he repeatedly contradicts himself and expresses over-generalizing, exaggerated views.[273]

In the final analysis – and this will be the starting point for the next steps of my argument –, I argue that the poem has just one character, a central, internally fragmented narratorial character, who recasts himself in countless hypostases. As a whole, the poem is a repetitive and obsessive re-enactment, by the narrator, of his own neurotic tendencies: a re-enactment that he performs in part through his own voice and in part through a multitude of distinct literary projections, namely his characters.

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[270] Narrator: 7.444 ‘Of all the peoples who endure tyranny, our situation is the worst’. Rimini’s inhabitants: 1.248-257 ‘How unlucky are these city-walls [...] Throughout all peoples [...]. We were the first [...]’. Old men: 2.45 ‘O how unfortunate that we were not born in the time of the Punic war, etc.’

[271] As famously discussed by Masters (1992), on which more below.

[272] E.g. Pompey: 2.583-95 (13 lines on the peoples he conquered), 2.632-44 (13 lines on the Eastern peoples his son was supposed to visit). Cotta: 3.155-68 (14 lines on peoples conquered by the Romans). Amyclas: 5.539-56 (18 anxious lines on the signs portending a storm). Acoreus: 10.199-209 (planets), 219-67 (causes), 269-82 (tyrants).

[273] For the self-contradictions of the narrator and those of the characters, see above. For the totalizing views of the characters, apart from the passages quoted so far, cf. for instance the numerous instances in speeches by Pompey in Book 8: 130 ‘*no land* in all the world deserves more gratitude’; 138 ‘I must pursue my destiny *through all the world*’; 186 ‘*this alone* you must see to in our journey *over all the sea*, that our ship is *always* far from the Emathian shores’; 319 I ‘conspicuous *in all the world*’; 622-3 ‘future ages which never will be silent about the toils of Rome are watching now, and time to come observes *from all the world* the boat and loyalty of Pharos’. In the same book cf. also, not by Pompey, but on him: 167 ‘he consults the helmsman of the ship *concerning all the stars*’.

3. THE MIND IN CONFLICT

The scholarship on Lucan of the last two centuries has for the most part identified rhetorical excess as the main characteristic of Lucan's style, and has attributed this phenomenon to the overbearing influence of the ancient rhetorical schools and the practice of declamation.[274] According to this view, Lucan's imagery and concepts are often overly paradoxical, emphatic, theatrical, and in a word 'excessive' *because* of the author's adherence to the stylistic mannerisms of the day. More recent criticism has inverted the terms of the issue: distorted imagery and conceits are not seen as the result of the adoption of a distorted style; instead, the excessive, abnormal nature of the content (the horrors of civil war) could be adequately expressed only through a particularly extreme, almost absurdist use of rhetoric. It is now recognized that hyperbole and paradox are two defining features of the poem not because Lucan, through them, intended to put his skills on display, but because they amount to a use of language that attempts to match the inexpressibly horrendous subject matter. This perspective is shared by the best recent scholarship on Lucan, including Martindale (1976 and 1993), Henderson (1987), Masters (1992), Bartsch (1997), and others after them.

What both the standard and the more sophisticated recent approaches have in common is an emphasis on rhetoric as an artificial apparatus that Lucan chooses for, and bestows on, his work – whether because he is following the fashion of his time or because he needs a tool to express the inexpressibility of civil war. On either interpretation, the stylistic 'excess' that characterizes the poem is the result of a consciously artificial operation. Charles Martindale, for

[274] Already in antiquity, Quintilian famoulsy wrote that Lucan 'should be imitated by orators rather than poets' (*Inst*. 10.1.90). Cf. e.g. Heitland (1877); Morford (1967); etc.

instance, remarks that Lucan's poetry has an 'essentially intellectual appeal' and that his style is 'intellectually astringent';[275] Philip Hardie comments on the poem's 'studied artifice';[276] and Gian Biagio Conte goes so far as to argue that 'a radical and cold intellectualism, paradoxically,' was for Lucan 'the only way to communicate authenticity'.[277]

This emphasis, I believe, fails to capture the inner essence of the *Bellum Civile*. In the previous two sections, I have offered a completely different account of the poem's 'excesses', one that removes the words 'rhetoric' and 'style' from its hermeneutic vocabulary. In particular, I have shown that the ways in which reality and logic are pervasively distorted by the narrator and his characters are identical to those that are typical of personality disorder and mental illness. In the rest of this chapter, I will eleborate on this premise, arguing that the origin of the poem's anomalies and powerful poetic tension lies neither in the adoption of a certain 'style', nor in its choice of 'subject matter', but rather, more simply, in the fact that the narrator's perception of the world, and, as a consequence, the behaviors of his characters, are distorted by mental illness. Moreover, I will argue that not only the rhetorical form, but also the politico-historical content of the poem is ultimately a trope – a huge, monopolizing metaphor for the real subject matter of the poem: the conflict that is internal to the narrator's psyche.

The poem opens by casting, metaphorically, the self-destructive Roman people as a suicidal human being (1.3). The obtrusive centrality of the masochistic narrator invites us to invert the terms of this programmatic metaphor, suggesting that the civil war may be a symbol

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[275] Martindale (1976), 45.

[276] Hardie (2013), 225.

[277] Conte (1988), 44-46, esp. p. 45 'per ritrovare il loro peso, i fatti devono venir deformati dall'intervento soggettivo di motivazioni *freddamente intellettualistiche*. Ed è proprio questo *intellettualismo* amaro il momento più dolorosamente significativo del discorso: Lucano comunica, per assurdo, la sua autenticità solo attraverso il concettismo retorico' (the emphasis is mine); cf. also p. 93 (*ad* 6.211-213).

for the man, rather than the other way round: ‘We sing of a desperate man, attacking himself like the Roman people suicidally did in 49-48 BCE’. After all, the previous section of this paper has shown that ours is not a reliable narrator. To take him at his word and to read the *Bellum Civile* simply as a poem about a civil war would be as naif as to take a neurotic’s explanation of his behavior at face value. Rather than the narration of *external* events *by* a narrator emotionally involved in these events, I view Lucan’s poem as the story *of* a neurotic narrator who, in narrating certain events of Roman history by which he is obsessed and on which he projects his own psychic troubles, in fact comments upon *his own internal story*.

In most psychoanalytic schools, neurosis is viewed as the result of the mutual interference between opposing currents of an individual’s psyche – a ‘mental conflict’ that may well be described as as a psychic ‘civil war’.[278] When two or more psychic constituents, impulses, or desires conflict, a compromise becomes necessary, which enables the internally-split subject to preserve some sort of mental order, however disturbed and precarious. This compromise may take the form of behaviors that realize simultaneoulsy, and symbolically, two incompatible desires, or of behaviors that combine the disguised enjoyment of a forbidden desire and its punishment. In a typical example of neurotic behavior, a teenager girl felt an irresistible, although for her extremely disturbing, need to go into the bathroom every night and turn on and off the hot and cold faucets for hours in a row, feeling unable to decide how to end the sequence; her analysis revealed this behavior to be a displaced and camouflaged enactment of her intense conflicts over wanting to be ‘turned on’ and wanting to ‘turn herself off’, in an attempt to gain

[278] For instance, Freud (1966 [1917]), 363-4, 372-3, 474; Fenichel (1945), 129-40, 192-3, and *passim*; Brenner (1974), 171-237; Shedler (2010), 15-21. Brenner (1982) is the psychoanalytic treatment of ‘psychic conflict’ that has most influenced my reading of Lucan. The title of this chapter alludes to the title of that book.

mastery over her own sexuality.[279] As this simple example suggests, a neurotic's relation to his/her own illness is ambivalent: s/he needs to perform certain neurotic behaviors that s/he, at the same time, hates and would like to avoid. A neurotic act is thus defined by the simultaneous presence of a pleasurable and of an unpleasurable component: it is a masochistic act that cannot be avoided, because at the same time it realizes, symbolically, a desire that cannot be realized otherwise.

In my view, the *Bellum Ciuile* is nothing other than a (massive) neurotic symptom. The powerful poetic tensions of this poem can be fruitfully examined as the result of a deeply neurotic personality (the narrator) that projects, describes, and often simply gives vent to his own neurotic compulsions, enjoying the mixture of pain and pleasure that this activity entails. Of course, I am not the first to notice that the narrator behaves irrationally. Some previous scholars have occasionally commented on this figure through the employment of psychopathological terminology, for instance through adjectives such as 'mad', 'crazy', 'furious', and 'schizophrenic', but without elaborating on their hints.[280] Yet the patterns of the narrator's behavior are so consistently and pervasively neurotic – in the clinical sense of the term – that this should not be just one exegetical metaphor, but a major interpretive key. My aim in this chapter is to explore the inner, unconscious 'logic', so to speak, that operates 'behind the scenes' and informs the poem's seemingly chaotic 'irrationality'. In this respect, the concept of neurotic conflict is exceptionally useful, because it offers an explanatory model for making sense of

[279] Mitchell and Black (1995), 16-18.

[280] E.g. Henderson (2010 [1987]), 436 'schizophrenic drivenness'. On the poem itself: Pandey (2014), 109 'schizophrenic'.

human behaviors that, like those of the Lucanian narrator, might seem at first glance paradoxical or even senseless.[281]

Apart from clarifying why the narratival voice does not seem to be able to stop composing a poem whose performance causes him such an intense pain, this hypothesis also helps to explain, and further refines our understanding of, aspects of the narrator that some of the most perceptive readers have recognized as his defining features. In particular, Jamie Masters (1992, 87-90)'s fortunate concept of a narratival 'fractured voice', alternately Pompeian and Caesarian, can fruitfully be compared to a neurosis; but whereas Masters assumes that the narrator's internal schism has simply to be accepted as a psychotic and schizophrenic absurdity, about which nothing else can be observed apart from the fact that it represents 'a mimicry of civil war', I will show that the narrator's oddities do in fact make a lot of sense. Moreover, whereas Masters (p. 143) believes that 'the poet finds himself embroiled in the very madness he is describing', I argue that the opposite is the case, namely that it is the poet's narratival persona that is 'mad' in the first place, and that – *only as a consequence* – he ends up talking about madness. I question the notion that 'the poet writing of the evils of *furor* is himself *furens* – like Phemonoe, like Appius' (p. 143); rather, I argue that, *because* the narratorial personality is *furens*, he cannot help but write of the evils of *furor* (and therefore, *Phemonoe and Appius* are

[281] It is surprising that almost no attempts have been made to study Lucan's work through the lens of psychoanalysis, despite its obvious thematic potential for it. Even recent studies such as Walde (2011; a socio-cultural interpretation of the *Bellum Civile* as 'literature of trauma' from the perspective of historical traumatology) and Backhaus (2019; a purely rhetorical analysis of the representation of physical violence in Seneca and Lucan) fail to recognize the centrality, in this poem, of neurotic and psychotic mental processes. The only exception is Walker (1996), a Freudian exploration of aspects of Lucan's poem. Walker interprets the *Bellum Civile* as a poem of loss shaped by the poet's mourning the absence of the object of his desire, namely the idealized Rome of the past. According to Walker, Lucan figures the fall of the republic as an oedipal drama, which stages the violation of the mother-land and intergenerational conflict in a pattern of endless repetition. The differences between my reading of Lucan and Walker's should be obvious; in particular on my skepticism about Freudian criticism, see Ch. 1.6 (although I make a partial exception in Appendix 4.

like him, not the other way around). Analogously, it seems to me misleading to say that ‘civil war is so pervasive as to be reflected in everything’ (p. 110), because it is not civil war that is pervasive, but rather the mind of the narrator that is paranoid and, erroneously, ‘recognizes’ civil war wherever it turns (more on this below).

In sum, the motto of this chapter may be: *Quae rhetorice fuit facta psychologia est.* Contrary to the standard view, I submit that to narrate the events of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey is not the narrator’s primary goal, a supposedly ‘didactic’ goal that forced him to make recourse to stylistic excess and to take on a certain narratorial stance characterized by indignation and despair. Rather, it was the neurotic, i.e. depressed, masochistic, and obsessive-compulsive nature of the narrator that prompted him to write a poem concerning his mental conflict. The ‘civil war’ is not a real historical event, but a literary projection of the narrator’s struggle with his own internal obsession. There is, indeed, a deep interrelation between the narrated loss of *political* freedom by the Roman people, on one hand, and the loss of *psychological* freedom by the narrator, on the other. The compulsive composition of the poem is the result of the narrator’s self-incarceration in the prison of neurosis. On this approach, the plot as a whole becomes a gigantic trope: ‘civil war’ is the mind in conflict. A decisive component of this psychic war is language: far from being an expressive tool at the disposal of the narrator, language proves to be an overpowering force that subjugates and crushes him, as I shall discuss next.

In one of the laudatory sections on Cato in Book 9, the narrator exclaims: ‘This triumphal march through the Syrtes and remotest parts of Lybia I would rather make than climb the Capitol (*Capitolia*) three times with Pompey’s chariot, than break Jugurtha’s neck (*frangere colla*)’ (9.598-600). This statement is really puzzling, and not simply because Cato’s is not a triumph, but an excruciatingly painful and unfortunate expedition, during which he and his soldiers are exposed to terrible thirst and snakes. The reasoning seems to be the following: ‘I admire Cato so much that I would prefer to endure pain and defeat with him than to celebrate a triumph with Pompey or Marius’ (the latter famously conquered Jugurtha in 104 BCE). But after Pompey’s dismal destruction, which has just been narrated at the end of the previous book, how can the idea of a Pompeian triumph sound like something that anybody might desire? And why on earth should the narrator mention the Jugurthine War, which took place in the 2nd century BCE, *at this point*? Marius’ triumphs over Jugurtha and the German tribes had been notoriously short-lived, since they were soon followed by Sulla’s dictatorship, during which period Marius narrowly escaped capture and death on several occasions. The old man of Book 2 explicitly comments on Marius’ catastrophic reversal of fortune, which took place right after he celebrated these triumphs.[282] Therefore, what is the point of claiming, as the narrator does in Book 9, that he would renounce Marius’ triumph, as though this represented a huge act of self-denial? As a matter of fact, this would be an obvious thing to do!

[282] 2.68-70 ‘The commotions caused by Fate were just the same when Marius, victorious after his Teutonic and his Libyan triumphs, in exile, hid his head in muddy sedge’. The text goes on detailing how Marius had to hide in swamps and spent time in prison.

The only way to make sense of what the narrator says is, counter-intuitively, to disregard the literal content of his statement and to focus, instead, on the latent ideas behind it. The idea 'Pompey on the *Capitolium*' has come to his mind because, after narrating Pompey's decapitation at the end of Book 8, the narrator cannot stop thinking about 'Pompey's *capite*'. This is confirmed by the juxtaposition of the totally unnecessary reference to Jugurtha's 'broken neck'. First, it is fair to say that to evoke the notion of 'Marius' triumph' (the required meaning) by mentioning how his rival was executed is not the most obvious thing to do.[283] Jugurtha's neck becomes relevant only when we recognize it as a stand-in for Pompey's neck. Second, that Marius' triumph on Jugurtha is only a screen, whereas the real content of the narrator's thoughts is Pompey's decapitation, is also suggested by the very name of *Iugurtha*, which is phonically reminiscent of *iugulum*, 'throat (as the part exposed to weapons)' (OLD s.v. 2a-b), a term obsessively employed in the *Bellum Civile*.[284]

The text asks to be read associatively rather than rationally, almost as though it were a dream and we were the narrator's analysts. Consider the very next sentence (still about Cato): 'Look – it is the real father of his country, who most deserves your altars, Rome: you will never be ashamed to swear by him and you will make a god of him, now or in the future, if you ever stand with neck unfettered (*ceruice soluta*)' (9.601-604). Again, a neck. A neck, besides, that will be, the narrator seems to hope, 'free' (if we supply: from the yoke of tyranny), but that, if

283 Jugurtha died in prison several days after having been paraded in the triumphal ceremony. The mode of his death is controversial: apart from Lucan, only Eutropius, writing in the 4th century, mentions strangulation; according to Plutarch, *Marius* 12, instead, Jugurtha was starved to death.

284 Some 29x occurrences, always as the object of a physical aggression: e.g. 1.376, 2.129, 2.317, 3.110, 3.135, etc.

one is willing to put some imaginative pressure on the phrase *ceruice soluta*, is dangerously remindful of Pompey's and Jugurtha's 'untied' necks.[285]

Is this approach too extreme? Certainly not, because, as we proceed reading, the text keeps suggesting similar associations in our minds. It is precisely at this point that the section on the snakes starts; it is full of Pompeian 'heads', as we will see below. Lines 604-618 narrate how Cato's army reach a spring infested by serpents, and Cato dispels his soldiers' fears by being the first to drink the water. This brief episode introduces the mythological excursus on Medusa (9.619-99), which I discussed in Ch. 1.2. The narrator tells us that this segment is meant to provide readers with an explanation of why snakes are found in such a great quantity in Africa; but this explanation is totally unnecessary in the context, and the narrator himself, oddily, tells us that it is false. The obvious reason why he is evoking Medusa' decapitation is that he has narrated the beheading of Pompey at the end of the previous book, and his psyche, although evidently not his awareness, is still under the shock of that trauma.

This chain of linguistic and symbolic distortions exemplifies one of the most peculiar characteristics of Lucan's poem, namely what we may call its semantic instability. The words of this poem seem continuously to change their meanings and referents. In an extreme manifestation of tragic irony, at 8.187-188 Pompey urges his helmsman: 'This alone you must see to in our journey over all the sea: that our ship is always far from the Thessalian shores (*Emathiis litoribus*)'. There can be no doubt that the helmsman complies with this order, since Pompey's fleet will eventually arrive in Egypt. But later, at 10.58, the narrator defines Ptolemy's Egyptian court as a 'Thessalian palace' (*Emathiis tectis*, explained by the fact that the ruling

[285] Cf. e.g. (of a bodily violation) Sen. *Phae*. 53 'you use your curved knife to extract (*solues*) the innards'. For *soluo* = 'to cut open' (of veins) cf. OLD s.v. 2e.

family of Egypt, many generations before, originated from Macedonia). This means that, after all, Pompey was indeed killed on an 'Emathian shore'.[286] Pushed (as it were) by an imperialistic urge to conquer new semantic territories, the words of this poem restlessly cross the Rubicon of their obvious primary 'sense' to signify something else. How should we interpret this linguistic fluctuations?

In his seminal article on this phenomenon, John Henderson (1987) argues that the *Bellum Civile* is a self-deconstructing work where the 'word' is at war with itself, ultimately producing a 'self-destruction of the language'.[287] His reading is fascinating, but it remains unsubstantiated. In the first place, since the deconstructionist methodologies that Henderson applies to the study of Lucan are in fact applicable to any text, his paper fails to delineate clearly what is peculiar to Lucan (in the course of his career, Henderson has, indeed, applied the same methodologies to a wide array of Latin texts). Second, the long series of puns and disorganized considerations that constitute his paper are often far-fetched and unconvincing, even by the rather loose standards of deconstructionist criticism; while reading it, one frequently has the impression that Henderson has, indeed, identified a crucial aspect of Lucan's work (namely the ultimate unreliability and instability of its language) but did his best to *undermine* his argument by disseminating it with useless and distracting quirks.[288] Henderson's article, not undeservedly, has had a crucial

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[286] Henderson (2010 [1987]), 438-9. Although Henderson's article was first published in 1987, for my quotations in this and the following footnotes I will use the reprint in Tesoriero (2010).

[287] Henderson (2010 [1987]), 476. Cf. also e.g. 436 'found for [...] the Latin Language [...] her predestined deconstruction'; 444 'the sign *Scaeua* commits suicide'; 450 'smashing the denotation of its language'; 458 'the fracture of the signifier [...] incest with the sign [...] the deconstructive freight of Lucan's *carmen*'; 461 'a drama within the sign'; 490 'the collapse in Word and World'.

[288] Puns are among the most irritating elements. For example: Henderson (2010 [1987]), 441 n. 30 *Scaeua~uacasse~uixisse*; 442 *Scaeua~saeuus*; 446 'in *Sulla* hear *Salus*'; 447 *Sullution*; 447 '*exiles* – you should say *ex-Sulla-s*'; 458 *Caesar~sacrae*; 458 *Pharsalia~pars alia*; 463 *manus~Magnus*; 471 *Anxurus~axurus*; 471 *Caesar~arces*; 476 *Pharsalia~Allia*; 477 *caespes~Caesar*; 482 *Caesar~caedo*; 485 *Rome~amor*. Henderson's paper is practically structured as a series of puns. But, even if these puns were not

influence on the subsequent scholarship, but its conclusions must be severely qualified if we are to understand the inner workings of Lucan's text.[289]

Henderson bases his study on what I think to be an erroneous (albeit charmingly simple) concept, namely that, in a poem where everything is at war with itself, language, too, must be internally lacerated: 'the word is caught up in the 'civil war' of Lucan's text, where opposed senses tear themselves up and rip the signifiers away from signification'.[290] The problem with this approach is that, at the textual level, in Lucan's poem there is no such reciprocal annihilation and conflict of meanings. On the contrary: there is a triumph of signification. The narrator's obsession with civil war brings about a sort of collaboration of all meanings, which converge toward the *one*, all-powerful idea that monopolizes his mind – civil war itself, with its corollaries, the loss of freedom of the Roman people and Pompey's decapitated body. All meanings, far from being at war with each other, ultimately unite into one single 'signified', with a coherent and unidirectional movement, as we will see very soon.

There is, indeed, all through the poem a constant 'translation of meanings' (in Henderson's formulation), but this shifting has a single, inescapable core: it is that self-centered and monomaniacal shifting of meaning that is typical of many neuroses such as obsession, narcissism, and depression. The poem surely presents us with self-contradictions and internal tensions, but these are primarily represented by the narratorial ambivalence towards the subject matter, as brilliantly demonstrated by Henderson himself and Masters, and as I will further

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farfetched and dubious, the point is that puns play only a marginal role in Lucan's poem, as will emerge from my analysis in the rest of this paper (Lucan is not a Plautus or an Apuleius, as one might think based on Henderson's paper).

[289] Cf. also e.g. the reservations on Henderson's methodology in Zetzel (1998).

[290] Henderson (2010 [1987]), 444. Cf. also e.g. 458 'la bataille de la phrase'; 475 'Words are already split and doubled, the signifiers are at War'; 491 'The Word at War'.

elaborate below. However, as far as *language* itself is concerned, I argue, things are different: if there is a war involving language, this is a war between the narrator and language itself, which functions as a monolithic block, not a war internal to language. It is a war in which the narrator's attempts to articulate meanings are systematically frustrated by his own obsession, which distorts his outlook on literally everything and thus transforms each and every 'sign' into a trope signifying 'civil war'. In this poem, it is not the word that is 'at war' with itself (to quote the title of Henderson's article), but rather the narrator's psyche. Therefore, I reject Henderson's Derridean approach and adopt, instead, a broadly psychoanalytic methodology, founded on the conviction that the extremely complex workings of language in this poem are not, ultimately, chaotic and meaningless; rather, they follow a logic of their own – like the human unconscious.

The poem's neurotic shifting of all meanings into one is visible in a number of different phenomena. In this fourth section, I offer an overview of the most important ones. My analysis, at this stage, is deliberately minimal because I do not need to convince my readers of the obvious fact that each of these phenomena is pervasive in the poem. I will put forward two theses.

(1) My first thesis is that all these types of linguistic distortions have to be studied together, not as idiosyncratic poetic *tropes*, but as *symptoms* of the narrator's delusional outlook on the world; taken collectively, they represent one of the major dynamic components of the poem – the relentless metamorphosis, operated by mental illness, of a pluralistic and diverse reality into the obsessive oneness of a single dominant idea: a tyrannical and sadistic (and therefore, so to speak, Nero-like) idea that tortures the neurotic narrator. One important corollary of this thesis is that many of the most quirky features of Lucan's style, such as paradox, allusivity, lists, and digressions, which have been widely studied, but mostly as mutually

independent elements, can be seen as alternative realizations of the same creative gesture. Ultimately, they are different symptoms of the same neurosis.

(2) The second thesis I advance in this section has far-reaching consequences for one of the most crucial interpretive issues of Lucanian scholarship, namely the narrator's notorious proneness to various types of 'digression', such as geographical lists and mythological excursuses. This second thesis can be articulated in the form of a law: *Whenever the narrator seems to stop the narration of civil war through a digression or list, he is in fact continuing it, although in disguise*. In other words, whenever the narrator attempts to resist or suppress his urge to go on with the narration, he systematically ends up enacting a neurotic compromise formation, in which he simultaneously achieves, and fails to achieve, his goal. To my eye, this perspective constitutes a significant improvement on our understanding of Lucan's poem, because the standard interpretation still posits that Lucan's digressions are completely, or almost completely, detached from the rest of the poem.[291] In my view, instead, they are always integral and central parts of the poem; indeed, they are not even digressions. Let us now see how this neurosis works in practice.

- *Prophecies and omens*. The divinatory segments have often been considered as not well integrated into the structure of the poem, and even useless.[292] On the contrary, the narrator's obsession with prophecies and divination is key to the interpretation of how this poem treats 'signs' in general, as suggested by the poem itself, which devotes the last third of Book 1, programmatically, to a sequence of omens (522-583) and prophecies (Arruns: 584-638; Figulus:

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[291] Cf. e.g., among the recent publications: Esposito (2009), 275 'col trattamento riservato costantemente da Lucano all'inserzione degli *excursus* mitologici, proposti come pezzi manifestamente staccati dal resto della narrazione'; Seewald (2008), 352. Cf. also e.g. Duff (1928), xii 'his frequent digressions are often irrelevant'; Morford 1967, 87. There are some recent exceptions: cf. Walde (2007), Manolaraki (2011), Bexley (2014).

[292] E.g. Morford (1967), xi.

639-72; and the frenzied matron: 673-95). Two other scenes of divination play a prominent role in later books, that of Phemonoe at Delphi (5.64-236) and that of Erichtho in Thessaly (6.667-830). Divination is itself a form of neurotic behavior, a distortion of the reality principle that interprets disparate aspects of the world as signs of totally unrelated future events. One example will suffice to illustrate this idea. In Book 1, before introducing the three prophetic figures, the narrator lists a series of omens that portend the approach of civil war. Many of these omens involve references to real or metaphorical 'heads' (1.523-83).[293] This anomalous concentration of 'head' terminology, although only associatively, sows the idea of Pompey's decapitation in readers' minds.

- *Astronomical references*. Description of astronomical events often conjures civil war in unexpected ways. Pompey reaches the estuary of the Nile on the autumnal equinox, when the duration of day and night is exactly the same. The periphrasis, which extends over three lines, reminds us of the duality inherent to civil war, but also betrays an unstated wish of the narrator: 'It was the time when *Libra balances the level hours*, *equal* for one day, not more, and the light, diminishing, *repays* to winter's night the *compensation* for its spring-time loss' (8.467-469). The repeated hints at the perfect astronomical parity characterizing that day (Libra = 'balance scales'; *pares horas*; *aequa*) and the legal terminology portraying the inalterable rule of law in the sky (*rependit solacia damni*) strike readers as inapposite at a moment when a long and unlawful war has just been decided in favor of one party (and, indeed, the unlawful one).[294] This micro-excursus on Libra encapsulates the typical feature of all the narrator's digressions, lists, and

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[293] The 'hair' of a comet (529 *crinem*, 530 *cometen*), the 'top' of a hill (536 *Latiare caput*), the 'head' of the sun (540 *caput*), the hair of the Gauls (566 *crinem*), the top of a tree (573 *vertice*), the hair of an Erinys (574 *comas*). The most evocative is 582 *caput ... Anienis ad undas*, combining references to a head and to a river (Pompey was beheaded at the mouth of the Nile).

[294] A war that has never been 'equal' from the beginning: cf. 1.129 *nec coiere pares*.

paradoxes: it is both an escapist attempt that tries to oust civil war from its own discourse (here, it is an example of wishful thinking, in that it seems to repress the thought that Pharsalus has *decisively changed* the course of history) and, at the same time, an evocation of civil war (through the inherent duality of the concept of scales).

A similar reading can be applied to a previous equinoctial mention of Libra (4.58-59: 'soon the hours had again been balanced, *aequatis*, according to rightful, *iustae*, Libra's weights and the day had won', portending the development of the Spanish war)[295] and to the astronomical explanation offered by the helmsman to Pompey's inquiries at 8.172-80: repeatedly, he refers to the two Bears – *maior* and *minor* – and their reciprocal positions in the sky, which change based on the ship's direction.[296] The two Bears, which (I suggest) unbeknownst to the helmsman figure the two Roman generals, are at the same time seen as collaborating (cf. 175 = wishful thinking) and pointing to different directions, one dominating the other (cf. 179-81 = hard reality).

The helmsman's answer also prefigures, unwittingly, Pompey's imminent death in Egypt through the gratuitous mention of the star Canopus, which happens to bear the same name as the locality where Pompey will be killed.[297] At 1.658-63, the astrologer Figulus says that the sky is dominated by Mars, the war planet, but this is certainly false, since this situation is astronomically impossible in that period of the year.[298] The characters' experience of the world is so distorted by civil war that even an expert like Figulus mistakenly sees war (= Mars) in the sky,

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[295] 'Balanced' = wishful thinking, countering the awareness that the Pompeians are about to be defeated; 'the day had won' = hard reality, i.e. the victory of one party. On a different aspect of the civil-war symbolism of 4.58-9 cf. Masters (1992), 61.

[296] 8.175 *gemina Arcto*, 176 *minor Ursa*, 180 *Arctophylax* (= Ursa major), 180 *Cynosura* (= Ursa minor).

[297] 8.181. Cf. Tracy (2010).

[298] Morford (1967), 63; Roche (2009), 362-3 with further bibliography.

where it cannot possibly be. Figulus' episode thus exposes prophecy to be, in this poem, not a reliable source of information, but the projection of the characters' subjective state of mind. At 2.691-2, the narrator uses astronomical imagery in a completely erroneous way. Again, it has been shown to be a distortion of reality that has a symbolic meaning: it signals the departure of Justice (*Virgo*) and the approaching of war (*Chelae*).[299]

- *Nature and terrestrial imagery*. The same principle that is at work in divination is present all through the poem in the narrator's description of nature and his general use of imagery (e.g. divided fires, couples of antagonistic rivers, etc.).[300] This suggests that there is an ideal continuity between the hallucinatory dimension of prophecies proper, which marks the characters' outlook, and the distorted view of the world of the narrator. For instance, Arruns finds civil war in the bowels of a bull in the form of a double liver and divided organs (1.623-9); analogously, the narrator finds civil war in the twin peaks of mount Parnassus (5.71-8). Nature's duality emerges not only through the proliferating pairs of equal elements, but also through juxtapositions of opposites, most prominently when these characterize the same scene (e.g. the battle of Massilia blends water and fire to paradoxical effect)[301] or two consecutive scenes: for instance, the Spanish episode in Book 4 is marked by the sequence of a cataclysmic deluge (76-120) and a terrible siccity (292-336); and the famous tempest of Book 5 (597-677) is preceded by an anomalous absence of winds, which proves to be so dangerous that the sailors even pray to be shipwreck (430-455). Should one stress how utterly unrealistic and unbelievable this massive natural duality is? Obviously, this is all a mental mirage, a projective externalization of the

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[299] For both Mars and Virgo: Barrenechea (2004).

[300] A fuller list above in this chapter.

[301] E.g. 3.680-1 'yet no scourge caused more destruction on this water than the enemy of the sea: for fire is spread, etc.'; 688-690.

delusive narrator (the currently standard interpretation, however, is that nature participates in, shares, or reflects civil war).[302]

- *Ethnography and geography*. Lists and geographical excursuses are a recurrent feature of this poem. Precisely in these sections, where Henderson and Masters (rightly) see evidence that the narrator delays and sabotages the progression of his narration,[303] language continuously opposes this centrifugal resistance by conjuring the idea of civil war and Pompey's head. A good example of this is the notorious list of serpents at 9.700-839, which immediately follows the Medusa excursus, and therefore continues the chain of indirect evocations of Pompey's slaughter that starts with the narrator's statement on the *Capitolium* and Iugurtha (discussed above in this section). The list of snakes, like the Medusa excursus, seems at a first glance just a digression, which stops the narration of the civil war – an erudite collection of zoological mirabilia, reassuringly far removed from the historical events of 48 BCE. But various elements bring us back to the main topic. The very first item in the list conjures, once again, Pompey's beheading: 9.700-1 'here the gore, which from the dust was first to push a head (*caput*), raised up the Asp inducing sleep with swollen neck (*ceruice*)' (note, in the Latin text, the physical and syntactical distance of the asp's head and neck, amounting to a textual decapitation). Similarly, a few lines later, we encounter a double-headed snake: 719 *et grauis in geminum uergens caput amphisbaena*, 'and dangerous Amphisbaena, which moves towards both its heads'. The list

[302] Henderson (2010 [1987]), 489 'The text's Stoicizing hylozoism makes all sentience, growth, life itself, know pain, share the hurtability of human beings'; Walde (2011), 300.

[303] Henderson (2010 [1987]), 450 'distracting narration away from its narrated events'; 453 'the poem has abused this necessity precisely to interrupt its telling of the tale [...] the recalcitrant bard [...] this narrator loathes the progress of his story of Caesarian triumph, loves *mora*, delay, obstruction, diversion'; 454 'Lucan hates, spurns, defers, resists his projected narrative [...] Lucan refuses to narrate'; similarly Masters (1992) *passim*.

culminates in the description of a Caesarean 'basiliscus' (king-serpent) which, additionally, presents us with an allusion to Vergil's description of civil wars.[304]

The Nile excursus, which is apparently disconnected from the main plot of the poem, originates from Caesar's obsession with the 'head of the Nile' (10.191 *caput Nili*) just after contemplating Pompey's head close to the Nile's outlet (9.1010-10.1). In the latter passage, the narrator complains for dozens of lines that Caesar's refusal even to look at Pompey's head is obviously insincere. In his learned account of the Nile, a river whose *caput* nobody has ever *seen*, Acoreus employs 'head' terminology all through, thus playing with the new master's clear desire to continue enjoying the spectacle of Pompey's decapitated head.[305] From the perspective of the narrator, talking about the 'source' of the Nile represents an attempt to go 'as far away as possible', geographically, from the locale of Pompey's murder, namely the Nile's estuary. But this attempt evidently founders through a form of self-sabotage, and confirms that the narrator's mind is unable to stop ruminating on the locale of Pompey's murder – the Nile.

(I discuss numerous additional examples of ethnography, geography, mythology, and more in Appendix 3).

- *Paradox*. Prophecies, imagery, myth, ethnography, and even isolated words function, in this poem, in an analogous way: they present us with a superficial meaning that immediately, by association, evokes a second, 'metaphorical' meaning, which we realize to be the one more truly operative in the semiotic system of the text. Again and again, in the most imaginative and surprising ways, the text conjures that which we do not want to read, and the narrator wished he did not have to tell. We end up seeing it everywhere. All meanings converge into the One

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[304] 9.726 ~ *Geo*. 4.90, which I will discuss in Ch. 5.

[305] Cf. 10.213-14 *Nili ora latent*, 223 *caput fluvii*, 295 *arcanum natura caput non prodidit ulli*.

meaning. Paradox, in its own way, reproduces this two-movement mechanism: the first stage presents us with a certain meaning, which seems impossible; in the second stage, we realize that that impossibility is in fact not only possible, but perversely real. We discover that that meaninglessness, in fact, makes sense: 'for subduing foreign races you will scarcely escape punishment' (1.288), 'they flee toward war' (1.504), 'who will not wish to die upon your sword?' (2.264,), 'an army made of generals' (2.566), 'it is not you they flee, but I they follow' (2.575), 'accompanied by nations, an exile' (2.730), 'no office you hold will make you deserving of Caesar's wrath' (3.136), 'snow scorched the mountains' (4.52), 'he kills with grateful blow' (4.547), 'law and justice make many guilty' (8.484). And so on.

Defying the laws of the universe, this poem sets out to materialize before our eyes what is by definition unreal, impossible, unthinkable. As the various excursuses examined above *fail* to offer an escapist solution to the concrete horrors of civil war, so paradox *fails* to dissolve this horror into absurd nonsense. Our narrator makes such an unrestrained recourse to paradox, in part, because it provides him with a way to try and escape his topic; it offers him the prospect of incommunicability. But in the world of civil war (= in the alternative reality of the neurotic), this escapism simply cannot exist, because everything is (as sign of) civil war (= for the neurotic everything is a trigger). The absurdity of the war of the same against the same (= the distorting filter through which the neurotic experiences life) is all too real and inescapable. However the narrator may try to bend and distort language, his contortions will nonetheless convey the evils of civil war (= neurosis is a linguistic prison from which you cannot escape).[306]

In conclusion, what all these diverse phenomena suggest is that the narrator is constantly dominated and overwhelmed by language. All signs ultimately merge into the one cluster of

[306] More on Lucanesque paradoxes below in Section 6.

meanings with which he is obsessed and which he hates: civil war, political subjugation, and the body of Pompey. The entire poem is a massive trope signifying ‘civil war’, where all articulations of meanings different from this inescapably dissolve – a *reductio-ad-unum* that is typical of neurotic and psychotic mental processes.

5. TRAUMATIC MEMORIES

In allusivity the narrator's neurotic patterns manifest themselves in a way that is similar to the unification of meanings that I have described in the previous section. Wherever the narrator looks, be it to geography, the sky, or myth, he finds civil war, catastrophe, and dead Pompey. The same happens when he turns his attention to the literary tradition. The quotation or reworking of previous material almost invariably ends up conjuring the same archetypal motifs that obsess him. The narrator does not seem so much to quote previous literature because he remembers it, but rather because he cannot forget it. The picture that will emerge from my analysis of Lucanesque allusivity is that of a narrator who is constantly overwhelmed by the language that he finds in his readings, i.e. the discourse of the Other (cf. Ch. 1 and Ch. 5).

Lucanesque allusivity is best understood, I propose, as a form of traumatic memory. Traumatic memory is defined as the 'distressing and intrusive reexperiencing of trauma', and represents a hallmark symptom of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[307] Trauma survivors report being haunted by memories of traumatic experiences which intrude on and disrupt their daily lives. They may feel unable to get certain unwanted images out of their heads, and they may have recurring nightmares or flashbacks, in which they lose contact with current reality and respond as if the trauma was happening at that moment.[308] 'In PTSD, a wide range of situations can trigger intrusive memories, including those that do not have an obvious meaningful connection with the trauma and those that the individual does not recognize as triggers. This has

[307] DSM-IV = American Psychiatric Association (1994).

[308] Freud (1920); Ehlers, Hackmann, Michael (2004).

the effect that intrusions may appear to come out of the blue'.[309] Traumatic memories may be remarkably unreliable, despite their vividness.[310] In this section, I set out to analyse Lucanesque allusions as intrusive, unwanted, and often unreliable trauma memories. Precisely as in prophecies, imagery, lists, and paradoxes the unwanted negative meanings surface *despite* the narrator's wish for a different outcome, so allusivity continuously evokes the same negative ideas by which the narrator is obsessed and which he is unable to get rid of**.**

One of the most intensely discussed cases of Vergilian allusivitiy in the *Bellum Civile* is 1.685-6: *hunc ego fluminea deformis truncus harena / qui iacet agnosco*, 'him I recognize, lying on the river sands, an unsightly headless corpse', which alludes to *Aen*. 2.557-8 *iacet ingens litore truncus, / avulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus*, 'he lies a mighty trunk upon the shore, the head torn from the shoulders, a nameless corpse'. The frenzied matron, who utters these words in Lucan, *recognizes* Pompey's body in her prophetic vision of what will happen to the senatorial leader later in the poem (8.698-711), despite that body being *unrecognizable* (*deformis*). As has been illustrated by previous scholars, the term *agnosco* plays (at least) a triple function:[311] literally, it signifies the matron's recognizing Pompey; on a different level, it signposts the readers' recognition of Lucan's allusion to Vergil; on a still deeper level, *agnosco* points to the fact that Vergil's text itself is susceptible of being read as a veiled allusion to Pompey's death.[312] The matron's words thus call attention to the problematic and slippery nature of interpretive processes. How can she recognize a corpse that is formless? How can we, readers

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[309] Ehlers (2010). Cf. also Ehlers *et alii* (2002).

[310] Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart (1995); Van der Kolk (2002) with further bibliography.

[311] Fundamental treatments of this allusion are Narducci (1973) and Hinds (1998), 8-10.

[312] Cf. Servius ad loc. *iacet ingens litore truncus: Pompei tangit historiam, cum 'ingens' dicit, non 'magnus'*.

of Lucan, recognize Priam in the unrecognizable Pompey? And how could a reader of Vergil recognize Pompey in the nameless trunk of Priam? The point is precisely that there is no objective way of answering these questions. Recognition is subjective. Since you can only recognize what you already know, what you will see in a given object will depend on your personal perspective, i.e. on the interpretive tools (so to speak) which you already store in your mind.

The matron, who recognizes that which cannot be recognized, figures the narrator of the *Bellum Civile*, who cannot help interpreting everything (in both the external world and the literary tradition) as civil war. Later in the poem, while talking of Pompey's dead body, the narrator remarks: *una nota est Magni capitis iactura revulsi*, 'the single mark of Magnus is the absence of the torn-off head' (8.711). This paradox encapsulates the subjective, distorting, and neurotic point of view adopted by our narrator. He sees Pompey everywhere because, in his obsessed state of mind, Pompey is the only thing he is able to see. I will devote the rest of this section to exploring a selection of ways in which past literature engages him, arousing his passions and exacerbating his internal conflicts. The image that will emerge is that of a narrator who is no less hysterical and delirious than the unnamed matron: a narrator dominated by intrusive memories that have taken control of his mind.

Despair is one of the narrator's most characteristic attitudes. The first case of intrusive memory that I will discuss is his fixation on *Aen*. 2.353-4, a passage that conveys feelings of irredeemable despair in vivid terms: *moriamur et in media arma ruamus. / Una salus victis nullam sperare salutem*, 'let us die et let us rush in the middle of the battle. The only refuge for the defeated is to have no hope of refuge'. During Troy's final night, Aeneas exhorts his comrades to die fighting, now that all hope of salvation is lost. By my count, Aeneas' words are

evoked no less than ten times in the poem, amounting to a remarkable average of one per book. Sometimes it is *in propria persona* that the narrator quotes them. At 1.495-8 *sic turba ... velut **unica** rebus / **spes** foret **adflictis** patrios excedere muros, / inconsulta **ruit***, he is describing the Romans irrationally fleeing from Rome at the news of Caesar's arrival.[313] The narrator uses similar vocabulary in Book 10 to describe the apparently hopeless situation of Caesar while he is besieged in Alexandria (10.538 ***via nulla salutis**. / Non fuga non virtus. Vix **spes** quoque **mortis** honestae*). On other occasions the Aeneid passage is evoked in the words of the characters: the old man recalling the brutality of previous civil wars in Rome (2.113 ***spes una salutis** / oscula pollutae fixisse trementia dextrae*); Pompey after dreaming of Iulia (3.37 *maior **in arma ruit** certa cum mente malorum*); Vulteius while inviting his companions to embrace death (4.510 *iubeant **sperare salutem**, / ne nos, cum calido fodiemus uiscera ferro, / **desperasse** putent*); the unnamed Cilician who challenges Cato's will to continue civil war after Pompey's death (9.246-7 *clausa fides miseris, et toto **solus** in orbe est / qui velit ac possit **victis** praest**are salutem***); Cato himself in a later speech to his men (9.379-80 *o quibus **una salus** placuit mea castra secutis / indomita cervice **mori**!*); Caesar in the speech in which he feigns sadness after being informed of Pompey's death (9.1065-7 ***unica** belli / praemia civilis, **victis** don**are salutem**, / perdidimus*).

The fact that these quotations occur in the words not only of the narrator, but also of so many different characters, confirms that, as I argued in the initial part of this chapter, the characters of this poem are not to be viewed as independent figures, but rather as multifarious projections of one and the same personality, namely the narrator. This is especially evident in the tempest scene of Book 5. Here the narrator refers to the desperate situation in which Amyclas

[313] Apart from the correspondences in bold, note also the structural similarities between the two lines: [dative plural] > [caesura pent.] > [acc. adj.] > [caesura hept.] > [pres. act. infinitive] > [acc. noun].

and Caesar find themselves in the middle of the Adriatic sea; that desperation is conveyed by means of a quotation of the Aeneadic passage in question (5.636 ***spes una salutis**, quod tanta mundi nondum* ***periere ruina***). In doing so, the narrator is also echoing the words Amyclas has uttered only about one hundred lines before when he tried to persuade Caesar to return to the shore (5.575 ***desperare** uiam et uetitos conuertere cursus /* ***sola salus***).

The combined effect of all these different reformulations of the same Vergilian context suggests that the narrator is unable to get rid of a motif that is stuck into his head, an ear worm (so to speak) which emerges again and again in a compulsive way. The standard interpretation of Vergilian allusions in Lucan is that they are meant to inject additional meaning into each of these passages by connecting them to the Vergilian model, either through similarity or reversal. In this view, an allusion is just a superstructure, an addition to the text that somehow intensifies, deepens, or modifies its meaning.[314] First comes the content the poet intended to convey, and only then the allusion is devised and adapted to that content. But this is just one of the possible interpretations. In consideration of the fact that this passage is quoted so often and in such disparate situations, the contextual relevance could not have played such an important role in the mind of the narrator. Rather, the impression is that the literal content of Lucan's text is less central than the quotation itself. The narrator is so obsessed by the Virgilian passage that he is unable to avoid using it, possibly (one suspects) even bending the content itself of the poem in order to make room for the quotation. In other words: first comes a need to allude, i.e. an irrepressible memory surfaces, and then a certain content is created so as to allow for the release, so to speak, of the allusion in question. If viewed in this light, far from being ornamental additions meant to 'enrich' the meaning of the poem or 'teach' readers, allusions represent a

[314] Cf. my observations in Ch. 1.6.

constitutive part of the real subject matter of the poem, namely the narrator's obsession.

The same considerations can be extended to the entire recourse to allusivity made by the narrator. The poem is steeped with allusive clusters that participate in the general unification of all meanings described above. One example is the insistence with which the idea of death is conjured through allusion to previous poets. For instance, in the space of little more than one hundred lines in the sea battle episode, the narrator reworks the famous Virgilian phrase *plurima mortis imago* (*Aen*. 2.367), which describes the reciprocal killing of the Trojans and Greeks during Troy's last night, no less than four times. The first and most direct quotation is 3.633-4 *multaque ponto / praebuit ille dies* ***varii miracula fati***, which introduces the section about the spectacular deaths occurred during that battle.[315] After the deaths of Lycidas and of the crew of a capsized ship, the next death to be narrated is that of a man transfixed by the beaks of two vessels simultaneously, introduced thus: 3.652-3 *tunc* ***unica*** *diri conspecta est* ***leti facies***.[316] After the narration of several other grotesque deaths, the narrator caps the extraordinary proliferation of killing in this naval battle by remarking that ***mille modos*** *inter* ***leti mors una*** *timori est / qua coepere mori* (3.680). Later, a man commits a double suicide (by both stabbing himself and leaping into the sea) in order to avoid dying before his son: 3.751 *animam ...* ***morti non*** *credidit* ***uni***.[317] The entire naval battle seems an exercise in the variation on the theme of death; the obsessiveness of the list of spectacular deaths is paralleled by the obsessive repetition of the Vergilian tag, reformulated and varied in ways as surprising and imaginative as the multiplicity of mortal wounds they comment upon.

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[315] A triple case of synonymic allusivity (cf. Ch. 5.5): *plurima~uarii*, *mortis~fati*, *imago~miracula*.

[316] Where *unica ~ plurima* represents an example of antonymic allusivity; *leti~mortis* and *facies~imago* are cases of synonymic allusivity: cf. Ch. 5.5.

[317] *Non unica ~ plurima*: negation + antonym = synonym (cf. Ch. 5).

In Book 4, several allusions involve death. The inundation, at 4.98-102 *iam flumina cuncta / condidit una palus* ***uasta****que* ***uoragine*** *mersit ... et reppulit* ***aestus***, is pictured in terms that remind us of *Aen*. 6.296-7: ***uasta*** *...* ***uoragine*** *gurges /* ***aestuat***, therefore of the Underworld. A later episode of the Spanish campaign, 4.316-7 *tunc herbas* ***frondes****que terunt et* ***rore madentis*** */ distringunt ramos*, which refers to the extreme thirst of the Pompeian army, is also based on a Vergilian passage about death (Palinurus' death: 5.854 ***ramum*** *Lethaeo* ***rore madentem***).[318] At 4.538 the striking exclamation *tanta est fiducia mortis!*, said by the narrator of Vulteius' men's resolution to die, surely reworks the Ovidian *tanta est fiducia formae!* (*Met*. 2.731 and 3.270), with the significant intrusion of the idea of death into a context about beauty (as we saw above, traumatic memories can be unreliable).

In Book 9, two allusions involving death are likely to have been created as a couple of twins, because they play on the same word, *letum*; the allusions are less than one hundred lines apart from one another.[319] At 9.732 *datis* ***omnia leto*** */*, the clausula occurs only in one other passage in the entirety of extant Latin literature, surely one that had impressed our narrator, given its emphasis on hopelessness (cf. above) and desolation (see below): Catull. 64.186-7 *nulla fugae ratio, nullast spes: omnia muta, / omnia sunt deserta, ostentant* ***omnia letum***. – Later in the same book, line 9.819, too, ends with the word *letum*: *... corrumpunt* ***pocula leto*** */*. As I argue in Ch. 5.6, this clausula is likely to have been inspired, phonically, by Verg. *Geo*. 2.383 *... atque inter* ***pocula laeti*** */* and 3.379 *... et* ***pocula laeti*** */*.

[318] Thompson an Bruère (1970), 159-60. For this allusion see my discussion of screen allusivity in Ch. 5.2.

[319] Cf. my reading of the synonymic twin allusions of Book 7 at the beginning of Ch. 5.5.

Hor. *Od*. 1.16.78-9 *Hoc sentit* *'moriar'*. ***mors*** ***ultima*** *linea* ***rerum*** *est*, in which terms designing death appear twice, is evoked on at least two occasions, phonically:[320] by Caesar's men at 5.692-3 (*s**ors ultima rerum** / in dubios casus et prona pericula morti*) and by Pompey at 7.122 (*omne malum uicti, quod s**ors** feret **ultima rerum***). – The same poet's exclamation *non omnis moriar!* (*Od*. 3.30.6) is conjured up by Pompey after Pharsalus: 8.266-7 ***non omnis*** *in arvis / Ematiis* ***cecidi***.

Apart from death, the narrator is fixated on a few other ideas that he repeatedly evokes through allusion. One of them is *furor*. At the outset of the poem, Lucan programmatically joins two Virgilian passages about civil discord. In both passages we find a question containing the vocative *miseri*/*ae cives* and a question asking an explanation for what the speakers perceive to be acts of sheer folly (1.8 ***quis furor***, *o* ***ciues***, *quae tanta licentia ferri?*; cf. *Aen*. 5.670 ***quis furor*** *iste nouus? quo nunc, quo tenditis, inquit, / heu miserae* ***ciues***? and *Aen*. 2.42-3 o miseri, *quae tanta insania,* ***cives***?). The phrase *quis furor* returns in the words of the frenzied matrona (1.681 ***quis furor hic***, *o Phoebe, doce*)[321] and of Pompey before Pharsalus (7.95 ***quis furor***, *o caeci, scelerum?*). – At 3.315 the phrase *furor arma dedisset* (in the speech of the Massilians to Caesar) echoes *Aen*. 1.150 *furor arma ministrat*.

Next, we have a cluster of allusions involving the adjective *uacuus*, which is intimately connected to the concept of civil war since one of the most visible consequences of the latter is the depopulation of cities and fields.[322] Both Pompey and Caesar, in different parts of the poem, are pictured as fleeing in terms evocative of Polites' unsuccessful flight from Pyrrhus at *Aen*.

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[320] Cf. my discussion of phonic allusivity in Ch. 5.6.

[321] In the following line *bellumque sine hoste est* is also inspired by *Aen*. 5.670-1 *non hostem inimicaque castra.*

[322] Cf. e.g. 7.398-9 *crimen ciuile videmus / tot uacuas urbes.*

2.528 *porticibus longis fugit et* ***uacua atria lustrat***. Pompey after Pharsalus: 8.61-2 ***lustrat uacuas*** *Pompeius harenas*.[323] Caesar in Alexandria: 10.460 *incerto* ***lustrat uagus atria*** *cursu* (in the latter passage *uagus* ~ *uacua*, an example of phonic allusivity similar to the ones that I will discuss in Ch. 5.6). – 9.162 *Linquam* ***uacuos cultoribus agros*** derives from Ov. *Met*. 7.653 ***uacuos*** *priscis* ***cultoribus agros***. A first emergence of this echo already at *BC* 2.602 *uacuosque per agros*. – In Chapter 5 I will discuss how 9.726 ***in uacua regnat*** *basiliscus harena* alludes to *Geo*. 4.90 *melior* ***uacua*** *sine* ***regnet in*** *aula*, a line that must have aroused the interest of the narrator because, although referring to bees, it is strongly evocative of civil war and the necessity of getting rid of the leader of one of the two parties.

I close this section with four examples in which allusivity conjures up Pompey. In different ways, these examples show that the narrator 'sees' Pompey even where no other reader would.

(i) In the last line of the poem, 10.546 *obsedit muris calcantem* ***moenia Magnum***, I believe it very likely that the final clausula originates from *Aen*. 3.159-60 *tu* ***moenia magnis / magna*** *para longumque fugae ne linque laborem*, where the conspicuous repetition of the adjective *magnus* was particularly prone to evoke the idea 'Pompey' in the mind of someone who is obsessed by the figure of Magnus (Pompey's nickname), despite the fact that, of course, no such intention can be attributed to Vergil.

(ii) Analogous, and therefore confirmatory, is 8.717 (of Cordus): *infaustus* ***Magni fuerat comes***, which was triggered by *Aen*. 6.166 (of Misenus) *Hectoris hic* ***magni fuerat comes***.[324] As in the previous case, a non-capitalized *magn-* reminds the Lucanesque narrator of Pompey.

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[323] Well discussed in Narducci (2002), 295.

[324] Brennan (1969).

(iii) As I will discuss in Ch. 5.6, the sparagmos performed on Gratidianus during the Sullan purges of 82 BCE, which is narrated by the old man at the beginning of Book 2, is full of abrupt intertextual segments mentioning bodily parts (2.181-5 *cecidere manus ... lingua palpitat ... spiramina naris aduncae ... euoluit sedibus orbes*). Since all through the poem dismemberment is a trope signifying Pompey, it is not surprising that the text, starting in the very next line, evokes his corpse in a simile (2.186-90):

> Vix erit ulla fides tam saeui criminis, unum
> tot poenas cepisse <u>caput</u>. Sic mole ruinae
> fracta sub ingenti miscentur pondere membra,
> nec magis <u>informes</u> ueniunt <u>ad litora</u> <u>trunci</u>
> qui medio periere freto.
>
> Hardly will a crime so savage be believed, that a single <u>head</u> can incur so many tortures. Limbs look like this when crushed and smashed by falling building's mass beneath the mighty weight; no worse <u>disfigured</u> do <u>headless corpses</u> come <u>to shore</u>, perished in mid-sea.

Various elements evoke Pompey's death in our mind, in particular: (a) the emphasis attached to Gratidianus' head; (b) the fact that these *trunci* are portrayed as ending up on a shore, portending the circumstances of Pompey's death on the shore of Egypt as they will be described later in the poem (e.g. 9.53 *litoribus ... truncus*); (c) the phrase *informes trunci*, which conjures the matron's words in the previous book (1.685 *fluminea <u>deformis truncus</u> harena*), which is a prophecy about Pompey; (d) the clausula *litora trunci*, which alludes to Priam's nameless body in Vergil (*Aen.* 2.557 *litore truncus*), which as we saw above was read by the ancients as an allusion to Pompey's death.

(iv) The term *truncus* is a key-word in the poem. It is prominent in the matron's vision of Pompey's corpse in Book 1 and has no less than seven occurrences in the narration proper of

Pompey's death.[325] But even before this culminating event, every time it occurs it invariably reminds us of Pompey – even when in the context it refers to literal logs or people other than Pompey. The term *truncus* is, in itself, a trigger-reference to 'Pompey'. The connection is established early on by the first two occurrences of the term, both in Book 1: the first is in the famous simile in which Pompey is compared to a dead oak (1.139-40 *nudosque per aera ramos / effundens trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram*); the second occurs in the matron's delirious speech (1.685 *deformis truncus harena*). The oak simile is particularly important because it sets a precedent, so to speak, in which Pompey, who is destined to become a human *truncus*, is metaphorically associated with a tree trunk. This association will remain operative in our minds as we proceed with our reading, since it is reactivated again and again by the text, for instance by the phrasing used to describe the sacred grove that Caesar violates near Massilia (3.412-3)

simulacraque maesta deorum
arte carent caesisque extant **informia truncis**.

and by the description of the death of Nasidius (9.800-1)

tumidos iam non capit artus
informis globus et **confuso** pondere **truncus**,

Both of these passages remind us of the *deformis truncus* recognized by the matron.

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[325] 8.674 *postquam trunco ceruix abscisa recessit*, 'but after the severed neck was separated from the torso'; 698-99 *truncusque . . . iactatur aquis*, 'the corpse is tossed by the water'; 721-22 *aequore truncus / conspicitur*, 'the corpse is visible in the water'; 753–54 *ad truncum, qui fluctu paene relatus . . . pendebat*, 'to the corpse, which, almost carried off by the waves, was hanging [on the edge of the shore]'; 774-5 *inueniat trunci cineres et norit harenas / ad quas, Magne, tuum referat caput*, 'let him find the ashes of your torso and let him recognize the sands to which he must restore your head'; 9.14 *risitque sui ludibria trunci*, 'and laughed at the insults to his torso'; 9.52-3 (quoted in the previous paragraph).

Analogously, 9.528-30 (in a descriptive excursus on Hammon's sanctuary in Egypt)

> hic quoque nil obstat Phoebo, cum cardine summo
> stat librata dies; **truncum uix protegit arbor**,
> tam breuis in medium radiis conpellitur umbra

reminds us of the oak simile, in which Pompey is portrayed as a tree which has lost its leafage and is therefore exposed to the elements. The examples may be multiplied.

My fourth case of 'Pompey allusivity' concerns the bull simile in Book 2 (2.601-9):

> When a bull is banished from the herd after his first fight, he heads for the forests' recesses and through empty fields in exile he tests his horns on tree-trunks (*explorat cornua truncis*) as opponents and does not return to pastures until satisfied with vigorous muscles, his neck' strength recovered (*cervice recepta*): soon victorious, he leads his regained multitude, accompanied by bulls, to whichever groves he likes, against the herdsman's will: like this, Magnus, in strength unequal, surrendered Hesperia and, fleeing through Apulia' lands, withdrew into Brundisium's safe citadel.

Of course, the main model of this simile is the bull fight in Vergil's *Georgics* (3.209-241).[326] The problem that has puzzled many scholars is that a bull fighting in order to have intercourse with a cow seems a rather odd point of comparison for Pompey, the noble defender of the senate and republican Rome. If one assumes that a Poet is always in full control of his Meanings and able to control the implications of what he says, one has to conclude that either Lucan, here, was not able to convey his Message, or that we are not able to understand it fully. Looked at from the perspective that I have adopted in this chapter, however, the issue resolves itself. Our narrator is not an architect carefully and rationally crafting a balanced, functional structure, but a neurotic

[326] A simile Vergil himself reuses at *Aen*. 12.101-6 and 12.716-22, with many verbatim repetitions and similar imagery.

persona who is constantly reacting to the various triggers that his own obsessive imagination projects into the world. Here, as usual, he is not alluding to the Vergilian passage in order to make *us* think about it, but rather he is creating this text simply because *he* cannot forget what he has read. And he cannot forget what he has read in Vergil because he has 'recognized' Pompey in it. In Vergil, a *defeated* bull is forced to *leave his homeland* and, once he comes back to dethrone his *rival*, prepares for the fight by shaking his *head* against a *trunk* on a *sandy* field: the combination of these elements proves more than enough to remind the narrator of Pompey dying away from Italy, *having been driven out of his homeland by his rival*, *a head*less *trunk* on a *sandy* shore.[327]

That, while describing the bull, the narrator is already thinking about Pompey's severed head is reflected by the puzzling phrase *ceruice recepta* (604), which in the context refers to the bull's recovered strength, but taken out of context, more literally and more idiomatically, can be translated as 'having recovered his neck'.[328] It may also be observed that this allusive simile is a clear example of wishful thinking: differently from the bull, Pompey will never return to take his revenge, and he will never get his *ceruix* back. Alluding to this successful bull, thus, constitutes a typically neurotic act. The narrator is unable to stop torturing himself by ruminating about Pompey's defeat, but also, at the same time, allows himself a brief moment of pleasure in the form of an intertextual daydream that rewrites history (cf. several of the examples discussed in Section 4 above).

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[327] Geo. 3.232-6 *et temptat sese atque irasci in cornua discit / arboris obnixus trunco, uentosque lacessit / ictibus, et sparsa ad pugnam proludit harena*.

[328] Cf. my discussion of 9.603 *ceruice soluta* at the beginning of section 4.

The bull simile rewrites an entire Vergilian scene, in which the narrator has ‘recognized’ Pompey as one of the two parties involved in a duel. Something similar happens in the African excursus on Hercules and Antaeus of Book 4, which, as all scholars note, rewrites the fight between Hercules and Cacus of *Aeneid* 8. As I illustrate in Appendix 3, scholars have had a hard time trying to decipher the possible correspondences between Hercules and Antaeus, on one hand, and Pompey/Caesar/Juba/Curio, on the other. Recognizing the African excursus as a ‘traumatic memory’ of the Virgilian scene may help us to understand why the former has proved so difficult to make sense of. The point is that there is no perfectly engineered equation to be discovered, because the allusion was not created by a rational and coldly intellectual process. Rather, we can surmise that our narrator, being obsessed by the struggle between Caesar and Pompey, has been profoundly impressed by a Vergilian passage that, *to his mind*, evoked that struggle, and that he has been unable to forget the shock that reading that scene caused him.

6. NEUROTIC PLEASURE (I): FREEDOM

In a classical manual of psychoanalysis, O. Fenichel (1945, 221) writes: 'The mechanism of Midas' punishment can frequently be observed in all types of neuroses, in compulsion neuroses perhaps still more frequently than in hysteria. Obsessions may express the idea: "You shall get what you wished for, but in a way, to a degree, or at a time where it shall destroy you".' The same can be said for the *Bellum Civile*'s neurotic narrator. Like King Midas, he transforms everything he touches (sees, reads, writes) in civil war – the fixation that destroys him, but also the object of his desire. He cannot help writing and commenting on events that he hates because this activity, like neurotic illness to those who are affected by it, ultimately gives him pleasure.

What is, to use Freudian terminology, the 'gratification through illness' that he is seeking? What is the symbolical pleasure that hides behind, and gives rise to his painful writing? In the rest of this chapter I will offer one possible solution to these questions, a solution that is purely literary and keeps the notion of neurosis well within the boundaries of an interpretive metaphor. In Appendix 4, I will offer a second interpretation, which makes a step forward and situates itself in the realm of psychoanalysis proper. Appendix 5 provides a third interpretation, which is historico-psychological rather than psychoanalytic, and tries to read the poem as a document reflecting Lucan's tortured state of mind as a conspirator, i.e. a plotter of 'civil war' in real life. I propose that these three interpretations, however disparate, are mutually compatible; but I will have achieved my goal if I convince my readers of at least one of them.

One crucial point on which any interpretation of this poem must be based is, in my opinion, the following: the *b/Bellum c/Civile*, both as an event and as a poem, is a moment of supreme freedom just as much as it causes/reproduces the destruction of freedom. The narrator, I

am sure, would subscribe to Figulus' last words at 1.670-2: 'Rome, prolong your chain of disaster without a break and protract calamity for lengthy ages: only now, in civil war, are you free (*ciuili tantum iam libera bello*)'. Civil war constitutes the end of freedom, because it marks the advent of the principate, and yet, paradoxically, it represents an even freer historical period than the previous republican regime; in fact, it is the freest period in history, because the rule of law is suspended. In a famous passage of Book 7, the narrator refuses to proceed with the narration – a proclamation that, characteristically and significantly, he immediately disregards (7.552-4):

> Mind of mine, shun this part of battle and leave it to darkness and from my words let no age learn of horrors so immense, of how much is permitted in civil war (*quam multum liceat bellis ciuilibus*).

In civil war, everything is permitted: a catastrophic scenario, but with the potential for thrilling developments. In fact, Lucan's civil war has something in common with the Saturnalia, namely the December festival during which social roles and rules were suspended and slaves were allowed to treat their masters as peers: both are based on the triumph of freedom (*licentia*).

A profound, unresolved need for freedom is what moves our narrator. It was, paradoxically, in the events of 49-48 BCE that he found what he was looking for. Civil war brings about an extreme, intensified form of *libertas*, allowing for the most unspeakable crimes, but also enabling artistic creation. Thus it happens that a poem that, in infinite ways, thematizes and complains about loss of freedom is in fact an uninhibited, exuberantly personal enactment of freedom.

My first explanation of the narrator's internal conflict is that the painful act of narrating civil war is more than compensated for by the extraordinary opportunity it offers for unleashing

his creativity. Writing poetry is for the narrator a way to come to terms with his lack of psychological freedom through the medium of stylistic and linguistic freedom. This literary freedom is evident on various levels, which include, for instance, the remarkably original transformation of the epic format, which, as all scholars observe, with Lucan received its most idiosyncratic treatment. One of the most interesting aspects of this poem's 'freedom' is paradox, a pervasive feature of the work and one of its defining tropes. Its paradoxes may sometimes sound far-fetched or even distasteful, but they are always supremely creative. Refreshing and shocking at once, they are one of the major contributors to the strange fascination that this poem elicits from its readers. Due to the high frequency with which they arise in Lucan's pages, they determine and continuously renew the unresolved tension that constitutes the imaginative engine of this masterpiece. To the narrator's eyes, paradox represents a form of liberation because it is the device that enables him to appropriate, distort, and recreate language, and in a sense reality itself, in the most extreme fashion. To write about civil war is excruciatingly painful, but at the same time precisely the unreal, irrational, subversive nature of civil war provides the narrator with ways of expressing his free agency and of unleashing his fantasy in the only realm where he felt this remained possible for him, that of poetry.

As I argued above in section 4, this attempt is never totally successful: in the war between language and the poet, the latter is constantly defeated, and paradox, if considered as a failed attempt to disarticulate unwished-for meanings, embodies this defeat. The trope of paradox thus encapsulates the conflicted status of our neurotic narrator, who enjoys *and* hates his own engagement with the poem he is creating. At 6.147-8, in one of the most famous of his paradoxes, he complains that Scaeva 'did not know how great a crime is valour *in a civil war*': obviously, a testament to the narrator's disgust for civil war, and yet, at the same time (in as

much as it states something that seems impossible) a proud display of originality on his part, one that, as the very wording of the statement shows, the narrator would not be able to perform were it not for civil war. The narrator's composition of the poem as a whole can be seen as a sort of paradox: it is at one and the same time a form of liberation-through-style and, at a more recondite level, a form of obsessive and masochistic compulsion. It is not my interpretation that tries to 'have it both ways'; rather, it is the narrator's behavior that is deeply neurotic.

Paradox is the most evident, but by no means the only, type of behavior in which our narrator unites a self-destructive and a self-indulgent component. This is the structure of everything he does. The active *engagement in the narration* of the war, as we have just seen, is for him painful and exciting at the same time. The same mixture of opposite tendencies also characterizes all those moments in which he seems to *delay, resist, or stop the narration*. In section 4 of this chapter, I emphasized how civil war invariably surfaces even when the narrator turns his eyes to something else, such as nature, ethnography, or previous literature. This failure to 'escape', so to speak, is just one side of the coin, the other side being that initial attempt to leave the horrors of civil war behind and enjoy doing something else. It is very important, and not adequately highlighted by scholars, that so many of the narrator's lists and digressions take the form of an evasion toward fantasy or toward the exotic.[329] Some examples: two of the longest lists consist of the enumeration of scores of remote Gallic and Asian peoples, each with their own peculiarities, which must have stirred the curiosity of ancient Romans as it stirs ours (1.392-465 and 3.169-297); the Nile excursus takes us to the extreme confines of the world; the Medusa

[329] This aspect of Lucan's poem is frequently noted upon by scholars, but only briefly (cf. e.g. Warwick Bond 1932, 172 and Esposito 2009, 275 on Africa as a land of marvel). There are almost no in-depth studies. Tracy (2014) obviates this desideratum for the Egyptian sections. Serban (1973) is unsatisfactory; his mostly philosophical interpretation of Lucan's recourse to fantasy as the result of a Stoic outlook on the world seems to me, based on what I have argued all through this chapter, way off the mark.

excursus is the story of a monster killed by a hero; the snakes of Book 9 are scary and deadly, if met in person, but in a book we end up marvelling at their zoological variety; the various lists on the Thessalian witches also play with our emotions, since the frightening and disgusting things they do morbidly attract our interest.

This strong fascination for the Other, the Unknown, the Different, the Mysterious is the counterpoise of the monomaniacal and obsessive slippage of all meaning into One that I described above. And it is a counterpoise based on the thrilling pleasure of the exotic, of fantasy, and, ultimately, of freedom: Perseus flies in the sky, the foreign people are, by definition, free from the rule and the costumes of Rome, the Nile disobeys the laws of nature which are respected by all other rivers, and is free from the intellectual control that would derive from knowing its origin, the Thessalian witches are free to violate the laws of nature (6.461-91):

> Natural changes cease; postponed by lengthened night, the day comes to a halt; the ether does not obey the law; the racing universe is paralysed once the spell is heard; and as Jupiter drives on the sky on its speedy axes, he is amazed that it does not move. Sometimes they drench everywhere with rains and cover burning Phoebus with clouds, and heaven thunders without Jupiter knowing; with these same words they shake out wet mists extending far and wide and rain-clouds with their strands undone. Though winds are still, the sea swells up; again, forbidden to feel the gales, the sea falls silent though Notus runs amuck and ship-speeding sails swell out against the wind. The rigid torrent hangs from precipitous cliff and the river runs, but not downhill. Nile does not rise in summer, Maeander straightens his course, and Rhône as he delays is swept along by Arar. Mountains dip their peaks, smooth their ridges out; from below Olympus looks up at clouds, and snows of Scythia melt away without the sun while winter freezes. When Tethys by the moon is driven forward, a Haemonian spell thrusts her back, defending the shore. Earth too shakes the axis of her unmoved weight, the thrust which tends toward the center of the world falters. The weight of such a mighty mass is shattered by the voice and it recedes to give a view of Olympus gliding round. Every deadly beast and creature born to injure fears Haemonian experts and gives them means of killing. Hungry tigers and the high-born wrath of lions fawn on them with gentle mouth; for them the snake unfolds his chilly circles and stretches out on frosty field, and vipers' knots are wrenched apart and joined again, and serpent dies when breathed upon by human poison.

No reader can fail to perceive the uncontrollable pleasure that our narrator experiences when he can talk about the Impossible, evading reality and its laws, as he does in this long list, which represents a triumph of inversion, and therefore of freedom. A few lines before, he had explained that the witches 'can be surpassed by no invented horror of a free imagination; their art (*ars*) is the unbelievable' (6.436-7). The witches achieve all the subversions of natural laws listed above by the power of their 'voice', 'words', and 'song' (445 *uox*; 446 *uerba*; 452 *carmine*; 467 *uocibus*; 483 *uoce*). The witches, thus, are authorial alter-egos of our narrator, who is a singer of impossibilities. He cannot resolve his ambivalent feelings for this 'hideous race' (444 *dira gens*), who, like civil war, enables him to give free rein to his fantasy.

Horror and pleasure, pain and excitement, centripetal obsession and escapist fantasy – the same and its opposite are invariably mixed, neurotically, in whatever the narrator does and says. The *Bellum Ciuile* is no doubt one of the most extensive and sustained 'compromise formations' in the history of Western literature.[330]

[330] I discuss my second and third interpretations of the narrator's behavior in Appendices 4 and 5.

Chapter 4

The Neurosis of Neronian Prosimetra

SUMMARY

This chapter explores the relation between prose and poetry in the Neronian prosimetra, namely Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Petronius' *Satyrica*. One of my main contentions is that these two works exploit the notion, widespread among Latin speakers, according to which prose is a discourse that is *solutus* ('free/liberated') and poetry a discourse that is *uinctus* ('constrained/controlled'): in both works, in different yet comparable ways, prose and poetry interact with each other, creating a dynamic of liberation and loss thereof. In the *Apocolocyntosis* this dynamic obsessively reenacts the sense of liberation felt by the narrator at the death of Claudius. Vice versa, in the *Satyrica* the movement seems rather to be from freedom to enslavement, since poetry is portrayed as a force that continuously takes possession of the characters and dominates their perception of themselves and of the world. The prosimetric structure of these two works can be seen as a textual enactment of, respectively, stammering and impotence, the two dysfunctions (both consisting in an individual's inability to assert oneself) that characterize their main characters, Claudius and Encolpius. Although in different ways, both works thematize the human subject's inability fully to control his/her own discourse. In the Neronian prosimetra (like in Nero's court), language is a profoundly politicized dimension, where the human self, incessantly, has to negotiate a balance between an ideal aspiration toward independence and the unavoidable, contagious presence of the Other.

1. ‘I SHALL SAY WHATEVER TRIPS OFF MY TONGUE’: STAMMERING FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS*

In ‘Beyond the pleasure principle’, Freud describes a game played by a two year-old child that has become one of the most famous case studies in the literature on infantile psychology, the *fort/da* game.[331] The game is not in itself a neurotic behavior, but, in Freud’s argument, it helps to clarify the paradoxical fact that so many neurotics have a tendency to repeat unpleasurable behaviors and reenact past trauma, thus violating the common-sense notion that human beings naturally avoid pain and seek pleasure. Hans, a child, did not cry when his mother left him for a few hours; however, he ‘had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, [or] under the bed’, while crying out loud the word ‘fort!’ (German for ‘gone!’). A short time later, the child would cause the same object to return into view and hail its reappearance with a joyful ‘da!’ (‘there!’). In Freud’s interpretation, this was a way of coping with a painful experience such as the absence of the loved mother by symbolically reproducing it: ‘at the outset he was in a passive situation – he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took an active part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not’.

A similar psychological pattern, consisting of a staged ‘loss’ that enables the subsequent ‘finding’ of the lost object, is (I propose) the structural motor of Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*. Like little Hans in the *fort/da* game, the narrator compulsively stages his text’s loss of freedom, in the

[331] Freud (1990 [1920]), 12-17, from which all the quotations in this paragraph derive. The psychoanalytical literature on game as a symbolization of unconscious processes is vast: cf. e.g. Klein (1932), Ferro (2015).

form of the poetic segments, so that he may then enjoy his ability to reaffirm it, through the liberating return to the prosaic format. The *Apocolocyntosis* is a carnivalesque, and in some respects childish, parenthesis ideally placed between the death of a monarch and the reign of the following one. In this fleeting but intense *interregnum*, the sense of regained freedom and the anxiety at its inevitable, imminent loss are conveyed, among other things, through the obsessive textual repetition of the pattern 'loss of freedom' > 'regained freedom' > etc.

The content and form of the *Apocolocyntosis* are related at a deep level. The content has an unmistakably carnivalesque dimension,[332] due primarily to the fact that political roles are now inverted. At the celestial court, emperor Claudius is a subject, not the ruler. He has to go through two trials, in which he has to comply with the authority of judges more powerful than him: the members of the divine council at first, and later Aeacus in the Underworld. The terminology adopted by the narrator to describe Claudius' new status as a 'subject' is, unequivocally, one of power and ownership: at 14.4 Aeacus 'orders' (*iubet*) him to play dices with a broken dice-box as a punishment for his wrongdoings; in the last line of the work he is assigned as a slave, of all people, to one of his former freedmen (15.2).[333] With the emperor impotent and humiliated, the people, conversely, regain their freedom. When Claudius returns briefly to Rome and chances onto his own funeral, 'everyone was happy and merry: the people of Rome were walking about like free men' (12.2 *omnes laeti, hilares: populus Romanus ambulabat tamquam liber*). The author makes no mystery of his participation in the general merriment. Significantly, at the very

[332] Nauta (1987), Versnel (1993).

[333] 15.2 'Gaius Caesar suddenly made an appearance and began to ask for Claudius to be his slave (*petere illum in servitutem coepit*). He brought forward witnesses who had seen Claudius being thrashed by him with whips and canes and fisticuffs. The adjudgement was made. It was to Gaius Caesar that Aeacus presented him (*illum Aeacus donat*). Gaius handed him over (*tradidit*) to his freedman (*liberto*) Menander to be his secretary for petitions'. Translations of the *Apocolocyntosis* are adapted from Eden (1984).

beginning of the work, he suggests an assimilation of political freedom and authorial freedom (1.1):

> I want (*volo*) to put on record the business transacted in heaven on the thirteenth of October in the new year which began an era of prosperity. No concession will be made to umbrage taken or favor granted. This is the authentic truth. If anyone inquires about the source of my information, first, if I do not want to, I shall not reply (*si noluero non respondebo*). Who is going to compel me? (*quis coacturus est?*) I know that I have become free[334] (*me liberum factum*) ever since time was up for the man who gave truth to the proverb that one should be born either a king or a fool. If it takes my fancy to reply, I shall say whatever trips off my tongue (*si libuerit respondere, dicam quid in buccam venerit*).

The narrator makes it clear that the work he is introducing is an act of freedom and self-assertion. In what follows, I aim to show how this liberated atmosphere is formally reflected, but also implicitly questioned, by the text's neurotic alternation of poetical and prosaic segments.

We come across the first poetic segment in the first page, when the narrator moves from presenting his informant to narrating Claudius' death (1.3-2.2):

> Ab hoc ego quae tum audivi, certa clara affero, ita illum salvum et felicem habeam.
>
> Iam Phoebus breviore via contraxerat arcum
> lucis et obscuri crescebant tempora Somni,
> iamque suum victrix augebat Cynthia regnum,
> et deformis Hiems gratos carpebat honores
> divitis Autumni, iussoque senescere Baccho
> carpebat raras serus vindemitor uvas.
>
> Puto magis intellegi si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III idus Octobris.
>
> What I then heard from him I am reporting plain and clear – as surely as I wish him safe and sound.
>
> Phoebus had already drawn in the arc of his light with a shorter path, and the periods of darkling Sleep were growing, and Cynthia was already triumphantly extending her sway, and foul Winter was snatching at the welcome splendours of

[334] I depart here from Eden (1984)'s translation 'that I have had freedom of choice', agreeing with Nussbaum (2009, 96 n. 15)'s observation that freedom of speech is more pertinent to the context.

> wealthy Autumn, and, with Bacchus commanded to age, the belated grape
> harvester was plucking the sparse grapes.
>
> I think this is better understood if I say: the month was October, the day the thirteenth.

The verse section begins and ends unexpectedly, with no indicator signalling the break. The six lines are entirely taken up by a single, interminable sentence, replete with personifications, metaphors, and topoi that are typical of elevated poetry. The convoluted periphrases, frequent enjambments, and overly dense recourse to tropes all contribute to make the little poem difficult to decipher. Despite of the narrator's claim that he would report 'plain and clear' facts (1.1), what he presents us with is the opposite: a remarkable display of poetic obscurity. The six lines determine a sense of unresolved tension, which is finally snapped, and debunked, by the return of the prose: 'I think this is better understood if I say: the month was October, the day the thirteenth' – this is, finally, 'plain an clear'! It is with a sense of puzzlement that, as first-readers, we discover that the six pretentious lines were meant to signify – simply a date.

This first example is characterized by a pattern that we will encounter in the other verse sections of the work. All-through, poetry is the discourse of mystification, obscurity, and pretentiousness, and it is always with a sigh of relief that we readers welcome the lighthearted prose that dispels it. Let us read the immediately following lines (2.2-4):

> Horam non possum certam tibi dicere (facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conveniet), tamen inter sextam et septimam erat. 'Nimis rustice! <adeo his> adquiescunt omnes poetae, non contenti ortus et occasus describere, ut etiam medium diem inquietent: tu sic transibis horam tam bonam?'
>
> Iam medium curru Phoebus diviserat orbem
> et propior Nocti fessas quatiebat habenas
> obliquo flexam deducens tramite lucem:
>
> Claudius animam agere coepit nec invenire exitum poterat.
>
> I cannot tell you the exact hour (it will be easier for philosophers to agree than clocks!) but it was between twelve noon and one o'clock. 'Far too unsophisticated! All poets, not

> satisfied with describing sunrises and sunsets, indulge themselves in these practices so much that they disturb the noontide siesta as well: will you pass over such a good hour like this?'
>
> > Phobus in his chariot had already passed the middle of his orbit and, closer to Night, was shaking his weary reins, leading down his redirected light by a sloping path:
>
> Claudius began to gasp his last, and could not find any way to go.

Again, as in the previous poem, this poetical insert starts with the metaphor of the sun's chariot (2.3 *iam ... curru Phoebus*, cf. 2.1 *iam Phoebus breviore via*), a repetition that seems to me important. It sets the tone for the following poetic inserts by characterizing the kicking in of poetry as a moment of regression and repetition, not simply because it is the repetition of something we have already read a few lines before, but also because it is the repetition of a hackneyed topos: essentially, the repetition of a repetition. The fact that the second poem starts as just a permutation of the first establishes a pattern, repeatedly to be confirmed in the rest of the work, casting poetry as the discourse of tradition, repetition, and normativity. The blatant self-repetition of the first line also highlights the rigid and artificial nature of the following two. After the long, insipid periphrasis, which wearies us like the Sun's reins (*fessas habenas*) and appears as devious as his path and light (*obliquo flexam*), how refreshing is the prosaic joke that follows! (2.4 'Claudius began to gasp his last, and could not find any way to go').

The next poetic section is an elaborate 32-line poem in hexameters describing how Lachesis starts preparing Nero's yarn while Apollo sings for her (4.1). A series of miracles announces the establishment of a new Golden Age. For instance, the yarn takes on a new color (lines 6-7) and the work speeds of its own accord (12-13), surpassing the years of two proverbially long-lived men such as Tithonus and Nestor. Apollo announces the birth of someone who is his equal in looks, grace, and musical skills (22-3), and compares Nero to Lucifer, Hesperus, Aurora, and (again) the Sun himself (25-30). As P.T. Eden remarks, these

hexameters present ‘expected images in formalized word-patterns with insipid blandness [...] the author makes his literary point by holding a mirror up to uninventive mediocrity’.[335] The unthinking application of stock motifs produces a series of notable inconsistencies, which undermine the credibility of this piece. For instance, at line 11 we are told that the work creates itself ‘with no toil’ (*nulloque labore*) by the Parcae, but only five lines later, at 17, we find out that Apollo ‘beguiles their toil’ as they work (*fallitque laborem*).

The poem represents a moment of ideological pomposity and artificial mannerism,[336] which jars with the joking atmosphere of the work in general, and in particular with the pleasant and funny spontaneity of the prose in the rest of chapter 4, where we learn about the consequences on earth of the Parcae scene (4.2-3):

> And he did indeed gurgle his life out, and from then on ceased to have even the appearance of existence. However, he breathed his last while he was listening to some comic actors – so you know I have good reason to be afraid of them. This was the last utterance of his to be heard in this world, after he had let out a louder sound from that part by which he found it easier to communicate: ‘Oh, dear, I think I’ve shit myself’. I rather suspect he did. He certainly shat up everything else.

When Claudius arrives in heaven, the gods have a hard time understanding who he is, both because of his speech defect (6.2), and because of his abstruse recourse to an Homeric quotation to introduce himself (5.4). The latter is a further example of poetry being used as a means of obfuscation, if not plain falsity. Claudius presents himself by quoting *Od*. 9.39 ‘the

[335] Eden (1984), 75.

[336] Many seem to take this eulogy at face value as Seneca’s sincere praise of the adolescent Nero (e.g. Nussbaum (2009), 101-102, 109, 111). Others (like Eden (1975), 75) read it as an ironic text whose seriousness is compromised by its unbelievable exaggerations. I am focusing on the dynamics of the text itself, leaving aside the intentions of the external author; therefore, I do not feel that I have to take stance on this issue.

wind, bearing me from Ilium, brought me to the Cicones'. By a very convoluted association, he means that he is a Caesar (*Caesarem se esse significans*). Whether he is just beeing goofy in his use of Homer or he is intentionally trying to deceive Hercules through doublespeak, trying to make him believe that he is a Trojan, is not clear, at this point. But in the following line, the text explicitly frames Claudius' as an act of guile: 'and he would certainly have taken in (*imposuerat*) Hercules who was not exactly shrewd' (6.1). The same perspective is adopted by Fever who immediately chimes in: 'this guy is a liar!' (*iste ... mera mendacia narrat*). And Claudius' angry reaction to Fever's intervention confirms that he was, indeed, trying to represent himself as someone else through a tendentious and misleading use of a Homeric line. Thus, albeit in the form of only a brief quotation, once again the equation poetry = contrivance is confirmed.

The next poetic segment is in chapter 7. Annoyed by Claudius' behavior, Hercules declaims fourteen iambic trimeters in the elevated style of tragedy, ordering the deceased emperor to identify himself clearly (7.2). Like the poems I have analyzed so far, this one, too, exhibits a markedly rhetorical character, with several periphrases (e.g. 6-7 'the distant kingdom of the triform king', 7 'Hesperian sea', 8 'Inachian city') and poetic phrasing (e.g. 4 'what noises makest thou now with indistinct utterance of thy voice?', 14 *illa tellus spiritus altrix tui*, 'that land nourisher of thy spirit'). The poem is replete with terminology of violence and command, including imperatives (1 *exprome*, 6 *edissere*) and threats ('lest thou collapse to the ground felled by this tree-trunk'). There can be no misunderstanding that the adoption of a tragic persona by Hercules is a calculated move, by which he hopes to confer an aura of authority on himself, since at 7.1 we are told that 'he donned the mask of tragedy in order to make a more terrifying impact'. In Hercules' speech, thus, poetry emerges as the discourse not only of contrivance but also of

power. Once again, the tension created by the poetic insert is instantly deflated by the prose that follows (7.3):

> This he said with spirit and courage enough; all the same he was not in his right mind and feared a *coup de fou*. When Claudius looked at the mighty man he stopped quibbling and realized that though nobody was his equal at Rome, in that place he did not have the same prestige: a cock is undisputed master on his own dunghill.

A bit later, the gods vote in favor of Augustus' proposal that Claudius should not be deified and should leave the heavens (11.6). Mercury seizes him and takes him to the Underworld. On their way, they encounter a mass of people and find out that it is Claudius' funeral. The crowd is singing a dirge in anapests for the defunct, described as the most valiant man in the world, and as someone who was able to conquer the Partians, Persians, Medes, and Britons (12.3). The praises are obviously false, which reaffirms poetry's status as the discourse of insincerity. Only Claudius takes the praises seriously and would like to remain, but he is forcefully dragged away by Mercury (13.1; note how an action of physical domination is associated with poetry, since Mercury is here referred to, through an Homeric allusion, as 'the Talthybius of the gods').

Finally, the last poem of the work confirms the association of poetry with both idle repetition and authority that I have traced so far, since it describes, in eight monotone hexameters, Claudius' Sisyphean punishment, consisting in being forced to play dice with a dice-box with an hole in it (15.1).

Power (lost or regained) is the central theme of the work. The spectacle of a feared and once omnipotent emperor whom is repeatedly subjected to humilation is the pivot idea around which the various scenes revolve. Claudius is characterized as a puppet unable to assert himself and constantly moved around by other, more authoritative figures, such as Hercules, the divine council, Mercury, Aeacus, Caligula, and eventually the freedman Menander. The vicissitudes of poetry are, in this work, very much like Claudius'. Poetry is systematically characterized as a symbol of dynastic autocracy and its corollaries: norm, repetition, tradition, ideology, mystification, authority. And, systematically, it is ridiculed and (as it were) humiliated by the prose that surrounds it.

The death of Claudius creates a power vacuum that enables the narrator to put on this original show. He opens his work by stating his intention of saying whatever comes to his mind, now that nobody can control him (1.1-2). Again and again, the narrator enacts this condition of regained verbal freedom by staging its loss. When he adopts the poetic format, he is, for a little moment, putting himself back into the position of a subject who has to conform to the 'norm' (in the form of metrical 'rules' and rhetorical topoi). But this is just a pose, a brief, controlled moment of self-inflicted loss, which enables him to re-live the thrilling experience of liberation.

Consequently, and crucially, the narrator's behavior is paradoxical. In this work, he represents the liberation of his own speech, based on the commitment to 'say whatever trips off [his] tongue'.[337] But he deploys his regained freedom of speech to self-sabotaging effect. Like a person with bulimia who cannot stop eating after an episode of prolonged fasting, so our freedom-starved narrator is unable, now that Claudius is dead, to stop himself from re-staging his

[337] Cf. my earlier discussion of 1.1 *volo memoriae tradere*; *si noluero non respondebo*; *quis coacturus est?*; *me liberum factum*; *dicam quid in buccam venerit*.

own liberation over and over through the compulsive repetition of the sequence [poetry > prose > poetry > ...]. At a close inspection, the prosimetrum constitutes a new tyrant, which subjugates the narrator no less than Claudius had previously done. The work repeatedly comments on Claudius' tics, such as his halting gait, uncontrollably shaking head, and stammering speech;[338] the repetitious, stammering pattern of the prosimetrum[339] may be seen as a textual analogue of those defects, by which, therefore, the narrator is affected no less than the object of his satire.[340]

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The perspective from which I read both the *Apocolocyntosis* and the *Satyrica* originates from my conviction that prose and poetry, in them, are not simply two discrete *modes of textual production* that, by alternating, shape up the prosimetrical format, but rather two inherently conflicting *modes of being*. In particular, I argue that these two works exploit the standard notion according to which prose is a discourse that is *solutus* ('free/liberated') and poetry is a discourse that is *uinctus* ('constrained/controlled'):[341] in both works, in different yet similar ways, prose

[338] Cf. 1.2 *non passibus equis*; 3.2 *cum anima luctatur*; 5.2 *pedem dextrum trahere*; 5.2 *perturbato sono et voce confusa*; 6.2. Claudius stutters when uttering his last words: *con-ca-ca-vi me* (4.3), and his punishment consisting in playing dice with a faulty dice-box endlessly may be seen as replicating his stutter and limp (14.4-15.1). Freudenburg (2015), 94-5 suggests that the title of the work, *Apocolocyntosis*, too, satirizes the emperor's stutter.

[339] On which more in Appendix 6.

[340] The 'psychological' analysis that I have offered in this section brings to light one additional element characterizing this narrator as an unreliable and self-contradicting figure. Scholars have already studied the narrator's unreliability especially as a reporter of historical facts (Leach 1989) and as a 'deconstructor' of early imperial political discourse (Reitzenstein-Ronning 2017).

[341] Cf. OLD *solutus* 9 and, for instance, [Tib.] 3.7.36 *quique canent uincto pede quique soluto*; Stat. *Silv*. 5.3.101-103 *siue orsa libebat / Aoniis uincire modis seu uoce soluta / spargere*; Plin. *Ep*. 7.9.14 *metri necessitate deuincti soluta oratione laetamur*.

and poetry interact with each other, creating a dynamic of liberation and loss thereof.[342] In both prosimetrical works – and primarily *in the prosimetrical format* of these works – we can detect the symptoms of a typically Neronian linguistic neurosis that constantly undermines a human subject's ability fully to own what s/he says.[343]

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[342] An important finding that resulted from reading Neronian prosimetra from this perspective is presented in Appendices 6-7, in which I show that both works play with, and frustrate, the expectations of their readers through what I call the 'hybrid segments'. Hybrid segments constitute liminal areas where the boundaries between prose and poetry are blurred. The philological analysis contained in Appendices 6 and 7 supports the argument of Ch. 4 in that it helps to clarify how the relation between prose and poetry in the Neronian prosimetra is one of dynamic tension rather than merely formal juxtaposition.

[343] The authorship of both Neronian prosimetra is debated. The author of the *Apocolocyntosis* must have written this work in the first part of Nero's reign (cf. e.g. *Apoc*. 4.1 and Eden (1984), 4-5). The Senecan attribution is still the *communis opinio*. There has always been a consensus among scholars that the author of the *Satyrica* is to be identified with Nero's *arbiter elegantiarum*, described by Tacitus. The circumstantial evidence in favor of this thesis was collected by Rose (1971). For the most complete list of bibliography on this issue see Vannini (2007), 85-95. A more recent discussion, once again coming to the conclusion that the author of the *Satyrica* is Nero's minister, in Schmeling (2011), xiii-xvii.

2. ‘TALKING LIKE A HUMAN BEING’: PETRONIUS’ ALLUSIVE CHARACTERS IN AN INTERTEXTUAL WORLD

In the first extant episode of Petronius’ novel (1.1), Encolpius attacks the declamators of his age, whose stylistic absurdities make them seem ‘possessed by Furies’; his own oration, however, is full of the same clichés and bombast that he criticizes. Even *he* is possessed by the Furies of declamation.[344] Encolpius’ failure to produce a coherent and convincing discourse is by no means isolated in the novel; in fact, it can be shown that Petronius’ *Satyrica*, in many different ways, thematizes a dynamics of ‘linguistic failure’. By this concept I refer to a wide spectrum of situations in which linguistic acts that we may broadly view as ‘allusive’, i.e. intentionally aiming to convey a certain meaning or to achieve a certain effect, are externally obstructed, modified, influenced, governed, or even determined by stronger ‘intertextual’ forces comparable to the Furies evoked, but not exorcised, by Encolpius. To phrase the same idea in a different way: the *Satyrica* stages the impossibility to be a fully ‘allusive’ character in an ‘intertextual’ world.[345]

Linguistic failure manifests itself in many different forms in Petronius’ novel. I will briefly discuss the most important among them in this section in order to start asking questions that I will more fully answer in the final section of the chapter. The concept of linguistic failure seems to me particularly useful because it provides a key to a ‘unitary’ interpretation of the *Satyrica* as a work that thematizes problems of hindered, unsuccessful, imperfect, or inauthentic linguistic expression.

[344] See my discussion of this passage in Ch. 1.2.

[345] Recall my earlier discussion of the terminology of ‘allusivity’ and ‘intertextuality’ in Ch. 1.6.

At the most basic level, for the characters of the *Satyrica* it is difficult to control their discourse because they are so often interrupted, either by other characters, the narrator, or external events.[346] To limit myself to a selection of examples involving a character who interrupts another character not allowing him/her to finish: Agamemnon interrupts Encolpius (3.1 'Agamemnon did not allow me to declaim any longer'), Trimalchio Hermeros (39.1 'Trimalchio broke into this congenial gossip'), Seleucus Dama (42.1 'Seleucus chipped in'), Phileros Seleucus (43.1 'He was getting us down, and Phileros burst out'), Echion Ganymedes (45.1 'Echion interrupted'), Trimalchio his accountant (53.6-8), a slave Trimalchio (56.7), Scintilla Habinnas (69.1), Trimalchio Encolpius (70.1), Encolpius Eumolpus (93.3), Encolpius, Eumolpus, and Giton each other (102.1-103.1), Hesus Lichas (104.5), Lichas Eumolpus (107.7), Eumolpus Lichas (108.3), Encolpius Eumolpus (115.3-4), Oenothea Proselenos (134.6-7), Chrysis Encolpius (139.4).

Several scenes stage the linguistic powerlessness of characters who are unable to speak as they wish. I will comment below on the liberating effect determined on the discourse of the freedmen by Trimalchio's brief departure from the banquet, which demonstrates that Trimalchio's presence, during the rest of the dinner, inhibits the attendees' free speech. Another scene where a power dynamics affects the characters' ability to speak is the Quartilla episode; the three male characters are systematically depicted as unable to speak,[347] or prevented from

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[346] Cf. Jensson (2004), 48-49 for this observation and further examples. Jensson attributes this disruptive quality of the *Satyrica* to its presentational mode, namely the first-person narration by the internal character Encolpius: 'Encolpius the narrator has only one voice and can impersonate no more than one speaker at a time. But it is as if the many invoked identities of the *Satyrica* were competing to possess his faculty of speech'.

[347] Cf. 17.1-2 'We were still reduced to silence, saying neither yes nor no, when the lady herself entered [...]. Even then we did not offer a word, but waited in bewilderment'; 19.3 'When Quartilla said this, Ascyltus was momentarily struck dumb; I felt colder than a Gallic winter, and could not utter a word'.

speaking,[348] or interrupted while speaking,[349] by the quasi-divine figure of the priestess, who in the course of the orgy dominates them not only physically, but also psychologically.[350] During the ‘trial’ aboard Lichas’ ship, Encolpius (the ‘defendant’) is so frightened and dejected that he is utterly speechless.[351] During Proselenus’ performance of a magic spell, he has to endure a humiliating beating, silently (134.3 *nihil recusantem ... nihilque respondentem*).

Frequently, speech acts made by the characters fail to achieve the desired effect. When Eumolpus recites his poetry, his audiences react by begging him to stop (93.3), by threatening to kill him if he does not stop (90.3-4), by throwing stones at him (90.1), by violently kicking him out of the baths (92.6) or the theather (90.5), and by ridiculing him (92.8). Trimalchios’ terrible calembours are presented by Encolpius as irritatingly lame, and therefore as unsuccessful attempts to display his wits.[352] The narrator himself constantly calls attention to the counterproductive effects of what he says. On the rare occasions when he ventures to think out loud his own opinions about the events of the *Cena*, his comments are immediately proven to be wrong: he openly criticizes, as sloppy, an entrée that a few seconds later proves to be highly creative (49.7-10); he tries to solve a riddle, unsuccessfully (69.9-70.1); he solemnly states that he ‘will perish on the spot, if [he] only sees a bath’, only to be forced by the circumstances, a few minutes later, to beg the doorman to escort him to the bath-house (72.5-73.2). When an enraged

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[348] Cf. 21.1 ‘We would have cried out in our wretched state, but there was no one at hand to lend help, and on the one side Psyche was gouging my cheeks with a hairpin as I sought to raise a cry.’.

[349] Cf. 16.2 ‘While we were speaking, the bolt gave way of its own accord, and fell off; the door suddenly yawned open’.

[350] See the brilliant analysis of the linguistic and psychological aspects of this scene in Peri (2007), 53-71.

[351] 108.1 ‘In my confusion I had nothing to say ... My ugly appearance made it seem inapposite to make any gesture or to say anything’.

[352] E.g. 36.7 *carpe carpe*; 41.3 *liber esto*; etc. Similar considerations can be applied to the far-fetched puns accompanying the *apophoreta* at 56.7-10.

Encolpius orders Eumolpus to leave him for good, the latter does follow this command, but while doing so he locks Encolpius in his room and sets off in search of Giton, causing Encolpius a bout of suicidal thoughts (94.3-8). Later, while Giton is hiding under the bed, Encolpius has recourse to a melodramatic speech in order to persuade Eumolpus that the boy is not there, again meeting with a blatant insuccess since Giton's sneezes reveal his presence to the poet (98.3-6). Encolpius' pathetic and vehement appeal to his own penis fails to provoke any reaction in that part of his body, which remains unresponsive (132-9.11).

So far I have discussed instances in which the discourse of a character is hindered or frustrated by one or more other characters who are present. The most pervasive types of linguistic interference in the novel are those that are not exercised by a physically present interlocutor, but rather by entities whose influence is all the more powerful because they are less easily definable and detectable. In Ch. 1.2 I showed that the culinary imagery scattered through the seemingly serious and professional speeches by Encolpius and Agamemnon (1-5) reveals the existence of a powerful intertext that disturbs and orients these performances from 'within' their bodies, namely the two characters' hunger. The role of an interfering intertext may also be played by a fixed expression the implications of which are not understood by the character who employs it, as exemplified by Trimalchio's boast about the artistic quality of the figures in relief on his silver cups. He claims that children 'are lying there so vividly dead that you'd think they were alive' (52.1 *pueri mortui iacent sic ut vivere putes*). The meaning that Trimalchio attempts to convey is that the representation is realistic, but this 'allusive' meaning (= the children are realistically portrayed as 'dead') is disturbed by the 'intertextual' paradigm that Trimalchio rather absent-mindedly adopts in his drunken stupor, namely the cliché according to which a

successful artistic representation seems ‘alive’.[353] Similarly, the freedman Ganymede remarks that, for the rich, life is like a perennial celebration of the Saturnalia, as opposed to the hardships that the poor have to endure on a daily basis (44.3); but he fails to notice that his adoption of a proverbial metaphor (*Saturnalia agere* = ‘to enjoy life’) is inapposite in the context of his social critique, because the Saturnalia is the only period in the year in which social distinctions cease to be respected.[354]

Of course, the ‘intertext’ that most frequently disturbs the characters’ speech is Literature, which, in the world of the *Satyrica*, seems to operate as an intermittent frenzy. Eumolpus is consistently depicted as a ‘manic poetaster’ and ‘a deranged and all too facile versifier’,[355] an incontinent poet who never misses an occasion to express himself in verse, even in the most improbable situations, which (as I discussed in Ch. 1.1) include a shipwreck during which he is so absorbed by the composition of a poem that he does not even notice that his ship is sinking. Poetry functions as a desease (90.3 *morbo*) and a form of craziness (90.6 *bilem*; 92.8 *insanum*; 115.5 *phrenetico*; 118.6 *furentis animi*) that make him lose control of himself almost to the point of becoming a wild beast (115.1 *beluae*).[356] But Eumolpus is not isolated; in fact, a

[353] Cf. e.g. Ov. *Met*. 10.250 *vivere credas* (on Pygmalion’s statue); Pliny, *NH* 35.66 (on the famous anecdote about Zeuxis); Slater (1987); Slater (1990), 68; Elsner (1993). There can be little doubt, in my opinion, that here Trimalchio is not deliberately playing with language, but simply creating confusion, in part also because in the same sentence he claims that these children were killed by Cassandra, which is a clear misunderstanding of Medea’s myth, and in the next sentence he claims that he owns bowls ‘on which Daedalus places Niobe in the Trojan horse’, another blatant example of Trimalchio’s abysmal ignorance (and intoxication). Here as elsewhere (see below), the text clearly portrays Trimalchio as an epitome of a speaker unable to master the meanings of his discourse.

[354] Vannini (2011), 66-67.

[355] Walsh (1968), 209 and 212.

[356] Petronian scholars have long since recognized that Eumolpus behaves like the *poeta vesanus/recitator acerbus* satirized by Horace on several occasions: cf. e.g. La Penna (1980) and (1990); Sommariva (1984), 33 n. 25; Carmignani (2013).

great majority of the characters, and all of the most important ones, are poets who often express themselves in verse, thus creating a jarring effect between the prosaic circumstances of their lives and the lofty poetry used to comment upon it. For instance, at 127.9, in a flowery 7-line hexametrical poem, Encolpius describes the 'foreplay' between him and a squalid nymphomaniac as a reenactment of the Homeric ἱερὸς γάμος between Zeus and Hera (*Il.* 14.346-351); and at 108.14 a woman of dubious morality such as Triphaena (defined *mulier libidinosa* at 113.7) declaims a bombastic and moralistic poem in hexameters.

The influence exercised by Literature on the characters is not limited to their discourse, but affects their behavior and self-image, too. One of the most peculiar features of the novel is that, all through it, the characters react to concrete life situations by (grotesquely) trying to impersonate the heroes of epic or tragedy. They are ignoble and sleazy persons; and yet, completely blind to their real nature, they always adopt grandiose attitudes and gestures.[357] Scholars have long since recognized that this behavior constitutes a form of 'mythomania', a craziness that seems to affect practically all the characters of this novel.[358] To mention only one striking example among countless others, Ascyltus feels the need to cast himself and his victim as the characters of ancient history even when trying to perform an appalling crime such as rape (9.5 'If you are a Lucretia, you have met your Tarquin'). At 90.3 Encolpius scolds Eumolpus for his overly frequent poetic performances ('Tell me, what will you do about this desease (*morbo*) of yours? You've been in my company for less than two hours, and in that time you've spouted poetry more often than talked like a human being.'), but he himself is affected by a similar

[357] On gestures in the *Satyrica* as an attempt to imitate high poetry see Ricci (2002), 223-22; Calabrese (2019), 61-79.

[358] For the characters of the *Satyrica* as poetic mythomaniacs see especially Conte (1996); Courtney (2001), 50-51; Schmeling (2011), xxxvii and xlv-xlvi.

‘disease’; whereas Eumolpus’ poetic *morbus* manifests itself in his discourse, that of Encolpius manifests itself mostly in his ‘mythomaniacal’ behavior, for instance in his melodramatic, but in itself utterly absurd, decision to commit suicide after being locked in his room by Eumolpus (94.8) and in his ‘epic war’ against a flock of geese, which he compares to Phineus’ Harpies (136.4-6).

The *Satyrica*’s chameleon-like characters seem continuously to lose their ‘personality’ (so to speak) to become ‘someone else’ according to the various circumstances in which they find themselves.[359] When he chances into a school of rhethoric, Encolpius metamorphoses into an orator (1-5), when he finally manages to spend a night with his beloved, he describes his emotions in a Phalaecian poem of intense Catullan sentiment (79.8), and when he encounters a woman called Circe, he instantly adopts Homeric and Ovidian models of amatory conduct.[360] At different stages, Giton takes up, or is cast into, the roles of a Lucretia (9), an Ariadne (79), a Paris (80), a Ganymedes (92), an unspecified tragic character (94), and an Ulixes (96). Eumolpus, when on the brink of shipwreck, writes the *Bellum Ciuile* (119-124), in a sort of real-life manifestation of the hackneyed motif of the shipwreck of state,[361] but after the brawl he impersonates a lawyer by pleading in defence of his friends (107-8) and a political negotiator by writing the final ‘peace treaty’ (109); in the museum he acts, according to the nature of the place, as an ekphrastic poet (89); when Encolpius first encounters him, he introduces himself as a poor

[359] Cf. Rimell (2009), 66, with additional examples.

[360] A sexual encounter (127) is described in terms that are reminiscent of Zeus’ seduction scene with Hera in *Iliad* 14. The epistolary exchange between Encolpius and Circe evokes the Ovidian *Heroides* (which contain a fictional correspondence between Ulixes and Penelope), and the message carried by the servant (126-32) is a seductive device famously theorized upon by Ovid in his *Ars amandi*.

[361] Cf. Cucchiarelli (1998).

poet by reciting moralistic satire (83-4); he is also a raconteur of salacious stories, when the occasion calls for it (85-7 and 111-12).[362]

Crucially, these poetical impersonations and authorial postures are typically short-lived. As S. Ricci notes in her study of gestures in the *Satyrica*, the characters' various attempts to impersonate tragic or epic models systematically meet with failure because they are 'incapaci di portare a compimento i loro velleitari progetti di autoaffermazione'.[363] Encolpius' relation with Giton is frustrated by his lover's infidelities (for instance immediately after the bliss described in the Catullan poem at 79.8); Giton's repeated tragic postures typically end up in burlesque (e.g. at 96); brawls suddenly resolve into unexpected reconciliations (e.g. at 10.3, 80.5, 97.10); as we have seen above, Eumolpus' attempts to produce poetry invariably meet with frustration and humiliation, and his moral tirades are exposed as hypocritical by his behavior.[364] The *Satyrica* is not populated by strong personalities who impose their will on the world, but rather by 'situations' (so to speak) that stimulate or suggest specific reactions to incoherent characters; the characters not only seem to be passively manipulated by external imputs, but are not even able to adopt the externally-induced models successfully.

Not only are the characters the 'victims' of external intertexts that seem to take possession (although only momentarily) of their actions and discourse almost as incontrollable tics; on some occasions, these intertexts appear to 'trap' the characters as the latters try to reproduce those intertexts in their own lives. This happens when the character in question fails to

[362] On Eumolpus as a proteiform figure who continuously adopts, and quickly abandons, many different authorial personae (poet, narrator, orator, rhetorician, moralist, philosopher, jurist, lawyer, educator, dramatist), see Labate (1995), esp. 167-8 and 173-4.

[363] Ricci (2012), 223-231 (the quotation is from p. 226).

[364] For instance, compare his exaltation of moral purity at 84 and his hypocritical immorality at 85.

pay attention to some important detail of the model text, which remains operative in the imitative operation set up by the Petronian character, despite the latter's lack of awareness. Although it is not clear exactly why Encolpius chooses for himself the pseudonym 'Polyaenos' during the scheme he organizes in collaboration with Eumolpus in Croton, it is clear that he fails to take into consideration the dangerous connections of that Odyssean name with the Sirens episode (*Od*. 12.184), since a new Siren (i.e. Circe, compared by Encolpius to a Siren at 127.5) will indeed soon make her appearance in his life; thus, the impotence that besets Encolpius/Polyaenos during his interactions with the Crotonian woman may be seen as the result of an intertextual 'trap': in the *Odyssey*, both Hermes and Odysseus comment on Circe's ability to make men impotent (10.301 and 341 ἀνήνορα), but Encolpius clearly fails to pay attention to this detail.[365]

A second example is Encolpius' reaction at being abandoned by Giton, which is clearly modeled on the Iliadic Achilles (81), but with various important differences.[366] At first, he retires to the shore to mourn the loss of his beloved, as Achilles does in *Iliad* 1 after Briseis' delivery to Agamemnon; later, Encolpius seizes a sword and rushes to the city, determined to take revenge on his rival, repeating Achilles' return to battle to avenge the loss of Patroclus (as narrated in *Iliad* 19-20). Encolpius' impersonation is short-lived, since a soldier will soon deprive him of his sword in humiliating circumstances; the impersonation, however, starts to diverge from the 'model' even before Encolpius leaves his hut brandishing a sword: after Patroclus' funeral, Achilles' refusal to eat before returning to battle is mentioned repeatedly all through *Iliad* 19 (205-210, 303-308, 320, 346), whereas Encolpius himself tells us that he sets out to perform his

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[365] On Polyaenos and Circe, see Barchiesi (1984) ('trap' translates the Italian 'trabocchetto' at p. 172), elaborating on ideas already formulated by Maass (1925), 449.

[366] Cf. e.g. Walsh (1970), 36 and Conte (1996), 1-12 for the 'impersonation' attempted by Encolpius. The idea that Encolpius' lunch is a direct consequence of his ignorance of *Il*. 19 is my own.

homicidal revenge only after 'eating a lavish meal to build up [his] body's strength' (82.1-2). Encolpius fails to be a new Achilles in part also because he does not know the *Iliad*'s text well enough (or fails to innovate successfully).

Trimalchio's *cena* (26-78) can be seen as one of the most elaborate cases of unsuccessful manipulation of external intertexts in the *Satyrica*. Since this is a well known episode, I will not belabor the obvious, and I will limit my observations to the bare minimum; however, so many pages could be devoted to the many ways in which, on the one hand, the 'text', i.e. the screenplay, so to speak, of the *cena*, as minutely if grotesquely crafted by Trimalchio himself, and, on the other, its intended 'intertexts' collide with each other to humorous, surprising, and even spectacular effect. Trimalchio is an extreme example of the Petronian (and, indeed, Neronian: cf. Ch. 5) practitioner of allusivity, whose extreme will to control his own text crumbles on itself. The *cena* can truly be described as a caleidoscopic linguistic and literary labyrinth.[367] Scene after scene, ever changing representations of Trimalchio's own devising alternate and merge into each other, in a proliferation of narrations: not only stories from myth, drama, and poetry, but also the story of Trimalchio's own grandiose life and figure. Almost all literary genres are featured on Trimalchio's menu, which encompasses shows made of words just as much as it features shows made of food: farce, tragedy, epic, elegy, history, horror tales, and even newspaper-style reports similar to *acta urbis*. In the final analysis, however, Trimalchio fails to retain his position as a 'narrator' and becomes the *involuntary* 'narrated' of his own enterprise.

[367] For the theme of the 'labyrinth' in the *cena* see Fedeli (1981).

Chapter 59 encapsulates this reversal of roles vividly. A company of actors enter the dining room and start reciting Homer in Greek. As they perform, Trimalchio assumes the status of exegete for his fellow diners, explaining that (59.3-5):

> Diomedes and Ganymede were two brothers. Their sister was Helen. Agamemnon bore her off and substituted a hind as an offering to Diana. So now Homer is describing how the Trojans and Tarentines are at war with each other. Of course Agamemnon was victorious, and gave his daughter in marriage to Achilles. This causes Ajax to go mad.

In one seeming blunder after another, Trimalchio guts traditional myth in a way, and almost with a violence, that is not different from that of the actor impersonating Ajax, who a few seconds later, sword in hand, chops a huge calf into pieces (59.6-7). The director/interpreter of the show completely steals the scene from the Homeric performance, so that instead of paying attention to the Greek recitation, we, as well as the internal audience, cannot turn our eyes and ears from Trimalchio's jaw-dropping rambling in Latin, a little masterpiece of literary ignorance and confusion.

One especially interesting case of intertextual interference inside the *cena* is not provided by Trimalchio, but, in fact, originates from his absence. Halfway through the banquet Trimalchio needs to use the restroom, and Encolpius describes his departure, explicitly, as the liberation from an oppressive tyrant: *nos libertatem sine tyranno nancti*, 'in the absence of the tyrant, we gained freedom' (41.9). What ensues is one of the most famous scenes in the entire novel (42-46). Now that they are finally able to speak without fear of making any misstep that might potentially compromise their relation with the tyrannical Trimalchio, the freedmen, who are habitual guests of his parties, start conversing with each other – they start 'being themselves', we may say. The topics are random and casual, and the very language they use, which is full of

solecisms, colloquialisms, and idioms, reflects their lowly social status and petty value system. Sidestepping the standard rules of literary decorum adopted by all ancient writers with practically no exceptions, in what is usually seen as one of the most 'realistic' pieces in the entire ancient Greek and Roman literatures, Petronius offers us as close a rendition of an ancient real life conversation between normal people as we can get. Trimalchio's departure does indeed 'liberate' the freedmen to speak in a more relaxed and spontaneous way; and also in terms of our reading experience, there is a perceptible change of atmosphere between Trimalchio's pretentious, monopolistic sophistication and the practical, laid-back, and in a sense more democratic exchanges between his friends. However, it would be a serious mistake if – as all too often happens – we stopped at this initial level of reading. There is, in fact, an obvious reason why the freedmen's speeches remain in-authentic even after Trimalchio leaves; in my opinion, if one fails to see this, one would miss one important element connecting the apparent simplicity and 'realism' of this scene to the dense, almost cloying, literary sophistication of the other parts of the *Satyrica*.

Let us have a closer look at this conversation among old friends. The first to speak is Dama, who complains: 'Day is just non-existent. Turn around, and it's nightfall'; the weather is too cold, 'but a hot drink's as good as a topcoat' (41). Next (42), Seleucus chips in: he does not take a bath every day because 'taking a bath is as bad as being sent to the cleaner's. The water's got teeth. Our heart gets thinner every day. But once I get a jug of mead inside me, I can tell the cold to bugger off'. Today he attended the funeral of his friend Chrysanthus, who recently 'boiled out his soul': 'dammit, we are nothing but walking bags of wind. Flies rank higher; they do have a bit of spark, whereas we are no more than bubbles'. Probably his friend was killed by the charlatanery typical of doctors ('a doctor is merely a consolation for the spirit'). His funeral,

however, was decent, aside from his wife not showing enough grief – 'but women as women are nothing but a bunch of kites. None of us should treat them decently; it's like dropping all you've got down a well. But a love-liaison of long standing is a festering sore'.

Then, at 43 Phileros picks up: after all, Chrysanthus had a good life, 'he started out with only a penny in his pocket; at that time he'd have picked up a dime with his teeth out of the shit. The he grew and grew – just like a honeycomb'. And since Phileros himself is 'a Cynic who has eaten a dog's tongue', he moves on to criticize certain defects of the deceased: 'he had a rough tongue, and opened his mouth too often; he was a living argument, not a man'. 'Chrysanthus caught a cold when he first set up in business (*inter initia malam parram pilavit*), but his first vintage set his chest bones straight up again'. 'What really brought him up in the world (lit. 'raised his chin') was the estate he inherited'. 'And now, just because he fell out with his brother, the loony has left his property to some nobody. The man who runs from his family runs from many a mile'. 'He was a real child of Fortune; put lead in his hand, and it turned to gold. It's easy to make your way when everything goes hunky-dory (*ubi omnia quadrata currunt*)'. 'He was a horny old bird, carried his age well, hair black as a crow. I knew him years and years ago, and even then he was one for the girls. Heavens, I don't think he left the dog in his house unmolested. He was fond of boys as well, a real all-rounder (*omnis Minervae homo*)'.

Next, Ganymede (44) complains about inflation: 'You are all nattering about things of no concern in heaven or on earth (*narratis quod nec ad caelum nec ad terram pertinet*), and all the time no one gives a damn about the bite of corn price (*quod annona mordet*)'. 'To hell with the aediles, for they are in league with the bakers. It's a case of "You look after me, and I'll look after you". So those at the bottom of the heap suffer, because for these big jaws (i.e. the rich and powerful) it's always New Year's Eve'. When he was a kid things were better. He remembers of

a certain Safinius: ‘he was a firebrand, not a man; wherever he put his feet, he scorched the ground. But he was straight as a die’. ‘You could happily play morra in the dark with him! And he used to dress ‘em down one by one in he council chamber!’ ‘When he pleaded in court, his voice would swell like a trumpet’.

And so on. I could continue my paraphrase for several more paragraphs.[368] Essentially, this would prolong this already rather monotonous collection of proverbs, fixed phrases, idioms, popular slogans, standard gossip, universal clichés on money and drinking, ancestral complaints about women, politics, the weather, doctors, and old age – but nothing more substantial or ‘personal’ than this would emerge.[369] In a recent study of proverbs in the *Satyrica*, G. Vannini remarks that these characters ‘seem to express themselves *per proverbia*; their speeches seem to be entirely made up by a collage of fragments of popular wisdom’.[370] The freedmen are ‘average’ to such a degree as to question how much it might be appropriate to define them as ‘individuals’. Although the scene, as we saw above, is introduced as a moment of freedom, it fails fully to live up to this expectation, because what we have in front of us are mere marionettes who think and speak according to the pre-determined models of the cultural discourses in which

[368] Some further highlights from the beginning of Echion’s speech: 45.2 *‘modo sic, modo sic’ inquit rusticus; varium porcum perdiderat. Quod hodie non est, cras erit: sic vita truditur*; 3 *non debemus delicati esse, ubique medius caelus est*; 4 *tu si aliubi fueris, dices hic porcos coctos ambulare*; 5 *aut hoc aut illud, erit quid utique*; 6 *non est mixcix*; 8 *sed qui asinum non potest, stratum caedit*; 9 *quid autem Glyco putabat Hermogenis filiam umquam bonum exitum facturam? ille milvo volanti poterat ungues resecare, colubra restem non parit*; etc. Apart from the speeches from the freedmen scene proper (42-46), cf. also Hermeros’ description of Fortunata at 37 while talking to Encolpius: e.g. 4 *nunc nec quid nec quare in caelum abiit et Trimalchionis topanta est*; 6 *haec lupatria providet omnia, est ubi non putes*; 8 *quem amat amat, quem non amat non amat*; 9 *familia vero babae babae*; 10 *quemvis ex istis babaecalis in rutae folium coniciet*; etc.

[369] The freedmen speeches have been exploited as a mine of information about ancient proverbs: see the numerous sociolinguistic and paremiological studies listed by Schmeling and Stuckey (1977) s.v. ‘Folklore’ and by Vannini (2007), 333-335. According to Vannini (2011), 63, in the freedmen speeches in the *Cena* there are about 200 proverbs.

[370] Vannini (2011), 62 (the translation from Italian is my own; the Latin phrase is in the original).

they are immersed. Clearly, they cannot get out of these automatic mental patterns because, deep inside, the very core of their personality is made up by those patterns.[371]

Paradoxically, therefore, the piece of ancient literature that is – rightly – considered as one of the most 'realistic' and 'mimetic' in terms of linguistic expression seems to expose the lack of an 'individual' identity of the persons involved. After all, there is not that great a difference between an Eumolpus or an Encolpius, who continuously adopt and impersonate poetic models in, respectively, their work and life, and these freedmen who are unable to speak without the crutches of trite and stereotypical ideas: both the formers and the latters can ultimately be viewed as human subjects that are acted upon by the linguistic tools that they presume to utilize. (More on this later in this chapter).

To recapitulate, in this section I have argued that the *Satyrica* thematizes linguistic failure, undermined speech, and intertextual interference (three closely related phenomena) in disparate, yet comparable ways, namely through interruptions, linguistic coertion, frustrated speech acts, a character's awkward employment of fixed expressions, poetic frenzy, poetic mythomania, intertextual traps, failed allusivity, and an overwhelming recourse to proverbs and universal clichés. In the world of the *Satyrica*, making a truly 'free' use of one's faculty of self-expression appears to be remarkably difficult.

[371] Of course, this is not to say that they are identical to one another or that Petronius does not attribute them individual features. Important works by Dell'Era (1970), Petersmann (1977), and Boyce (1991) (and cf. e.g. the recent brief discussion in Rimell 2009, 66) have convincingly shown that each of the freedmen is characterized, to some degree, by idiosyncratic linguistic usages; and of course they express diverging, and sometimes opposite, opinions about the world. My point still holds: they all display a weak personality defined by external paradigms, each of them in his own way.

3. DESIRE, IDENTITY, AND ‘AUTHORS’ IN THE *SATYRICA*

Like in the *Apocolocyntosis*, in Petronius’ prosimetrical novel, too, the relation between prose and poetry is dynamic, responsive, and conflictual, but there are important differences as to the nature of this relation. In section 1, I suggested that in the *Apocolocyntosis* the dialectics between prose and poetry symbolizes the polarity of freedom vs. oppression on the political level; in this final section I will argue that in the *Satyrica* the prose-verse dialectics reproduces something quite different and philosophically more far-reaching, namely the complexities of human desire and identity. The reading of the *Satyrica* that I am about to offer is inspired by postmodernism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. I argue that what Petronius left us may be read as an unapologetically derivative and incongruous novel that calls attention to the lack of a ‘core identity’ in its characters.[372]

It is a fact of life that human beings strive for authenticity and self-determination: they desire to ‘be themselves’, ‘be free’, ‘assert their will’, etc. – such aspirations imply that everything that is external to the self, namely the Other, is or may potentially become a threat. On the other hand, human beings can exist only as part of larger inter-subjective and inter-textual systems, on which their existence and the nature of their desires depend – in short, they need the Other. Inevitably, therefore, the relation between one’s Self and Otherness is marked by major ambiguities and ambivalence. In what follows I will argue that, far from being the result of mere verbal playfulness or virtuosity, the conflictual polarity of prose vs. poetry that appears to

[372] Zeitlin (1971), who reads the *Satyrica* as a novel that portrays ‘the world as irrational, confused, and illusory’, has been an inspiring reading. I will argue that the *Satyrica* seems to fit the pattern of postmodern work as theorized in the contemporary philosophical and literary debate. For the concept of postmodernism applied to literature cf. e.g. Pfister (1991) with plenty of bibliography.

characterize Neronian prosimetra reflects the collisions and negotiations between Selfhood and Otherness that are inherent in the human condition – and that reach excruciating levels of intensity at Nero's court.

In the *Satyrica*, like in the *Apocolocyntosis*, poetry may be seen as the discourse of the Other, influence, dependence, imitation, and contrivance, whereas prose functions as the dimension of authenticity, spontaneiety, and freedom (cf. section 1). The two sides, however, are neither clearly demarcated nor mutually exclusive. They exists only in a state of reciprocal contamination.[373] Whereas in the carnivalesque and utopian *Apocolocyntosis* it is the freer dimension of prose that seems to prevail, in the hyper-realistic universe of the *Satyrica* the oppressive and inescapable force of poetry dominates every aspect of life, reducing the human self to a mere marionette, created, defined, and moved by external and overpowering paradigms (cf. section 2). In order to illustrate the psychological mechanisms that bring this about, a useful first step is to examine the characters' behavior through the concept of 'triangular desire' theorized by René Girard and applied by him to the study of the 'masterpieces' (in his terminology) written by Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Proust.[374] Girard argues that the greatness of these five authors resides in the lucidity with which they attack one of the most fundamental tenets of 'Romanticism'.[375] Their novels show that the Romantic emphasis on desire as the expression of a supposedly 'free', 'original', 'authentic' Self is a grave delusion, and every desire, far from being original, is in fact a superstructure. All desires, including those

[373] Cf. Appendices 6-7.

[374] Girard (1966 [1961]).

[375] Note that in Girard's terminology 'Romanticism' is an anthropological category, not a chronological one. This explains his interpretation of both pre-Romantic and Romantic works (such as, respectively, 'Don Quixote' and 'Le Rouge et le Noir') as anti-Romantic.

depicted in Romantic literature, are in fact mediated by a model, the 'mediator' in Girard's formulation, which is external to the self. The desired object is ultimately just a screen for a third party, the mediator. No desire is the expression of an 'individual' identity, but rather an intersubjective negotiation between a human being and the social and cultural environment in which s/he lives. For Girard, the 'masterpieces' of the western modern canon are such because they demonstrate one of the most important facts about human existence, namely that what makes an object desirable to us is precisely the fact that it is desired by someone else.

Girard, as far as I know, never commented on Petronius in his publications, but I am convinced that his interpretive model of the dynamics of desire in modern literature might fruitfully be brought to bear on the *Satyrica*, because the latter shares an understanding of the human condition that is very much in line with that of the novels studied by the French thinker. To prove this point, I will briefly examine three cases in which Girard's analysis of a character or situation of modern literature may be smoothly applied to one scene of Petronius' novel.

Let us start with Don Quixote, the Spanish hidalgo who sets out to revive ancient chivalry at an age when it had been dead for centuries. The inspiration comes to him from the chivalric novels of which he is so fond. He is so imbued with this literature that he loses touch with reality and starts interpreting the most normal and real-life situations as endowed with an epic significance that, of course, they do not have. To Don Quixote's imagination, a barber's basin becomes the mythic Mambrino's helmet and mere windmills appear as hulking giants. Many of Petronius' characters can be conceptualized as Don Quixotes 'avant la lettre', whose behaviors and desires are adapted from those of their literary models. For instance, a trivial disappointment causes Encolpius to start performing a suicide in the style of the lofty tragic heroes (94.8), and a

casual sexual encounter becomes, to the same character's perception, the reenactment of a famous Iliadic scene between gods (127.9-10).

Madame Bovary, like Don Quixote, constitutes a modern example of a subject whose desires are mediated by a literary model. Tired by her monotonous bourgeois life, Madame Bovary finds in extramarital affairs an outlet for her need for adventure, in imitation of the female protagonists of the 'novels from Paris' that she reads and loves. The 'real' object of her desire are not her lovers, who, as Flaubert makes abundantly clear, happen to be very average and insignificant men; the latters are mere 'screens' through which she can realize a more fundamental desire to identify with the idealized fictional characters. Her most apparent and immediate desires are just an epiphenomenon of a deeper, less conscious need for identification. Significantly similar is, in Petronius, the story of the matron of Ephesus, the widow who decides to break her vow of fidelity to her husband after initially burying herself in his tomb out of grief (111-112). This story is usually presented, in modern scholarship, as the ultimate example of the *Satyrica*'s exaltation of sexual instincts over social conventions.[376] But this is an overly simplistic view. One often neglected or underplayed aspect is that the widow accepts the soldier's advances only after her servant reminds her that Dido, too, had broken a vow to her deceased husband when she had an affair with Aeneas (111.12 and 112.2). Like Madame Bovary, the widow of Ephesus yields to passion because she can frame it as the reenactment of a literary situation. This makes her an heroine of triangular desire just as much as she is of sexual impulses.

[376] See esp. Bakhtin (1981), 14-40 and McGlathery (1998) with further bibliography. A recent monograph on this episode and its reception is Ragno (2009).

My third example is Stendhal's Julien Sorel, whose love for the aristocratic Mathilde is mediated by his desire to emulate Napoleon and by his fascination for the nobility. Analogously, in Petronius, Encolpius takes on the role of Ulixes (Polyaenos) at the beginning of his relationship with a woman who happens to be nicknamed Circe (126-8). Neither Julien's desire to conquer Mathilde nor Encolpius' love for Circe can be said to be 'original', since they appear to be mediated by a 'more original' desire: that of identifying with the models, Napoleon and Odysseus respectively.

If applied to Petronius' novel, the theory of triangular desire suggests that it is simplistic to interpret this work, as critics so often do, just as a parody, whether of literature itself or of men who read too much literature. The issue has more to do with the intrinsically imitative nature of human beings tout court. What is at stake is the very concept of 'individuality': how can there be such a thing as an individual/subject if each and every desire we have is not spontaneous but derivative? From this perspective, the *Satyrica* can be read as a deeply philosophical and experimental work on human identity, reflecting on the paradox that each of us is at once the author and the character of one's own life, in a world where no author or characters (including Petronius and his characters) can be original, and therefore, in a sense, even exist as fully autonomous entities. To clarify why this is the case, we have first to reflect on the deeply paradoxical status of the *Satyrica* as a work that is, at the same time, imitative and original, artificial and spontaneous, sophisticated and vulgar: how can such extremes coexists in the same work?

In many important respects, the *Satyrica* lacks a center:[377] it describes a voyage across the Mediterranean, which means that there is no local unity; it seems impossible to ascribe it to a single literary genre (even the label of 'novel' being inappropriately restrictive);[378] it is characterized by a strongly episodic structure.[379] Only in part this impression of fragmentation is due to the fragmentary state of the transmitted text; rather, it originates from the 'systematic incoherence' (so to speak) in the behavior and thought processes of the first-person narrator. Far from functioning as a unifying element, the narrator's ever-changing, incongruous interests and pursuits are the factor that mainly contributes to the general lack of cohesion between the different parts of the novel.[380] And yet, paradoxically, precisely because this 'incoherence' is so pervasive, it determines, in the final analysis, an impression of 'coherence': like his characters, the *Satyrica* is incoherently coherent, systematically unsystematic, multiple and one at the same time. How can we explain this paradox?

The concept of triangular desire helps us to appreciate that the clearest unifying element of the novel is imitation – or, more precisely, existence-through-imitation. The narrator's and the other characters' incoherences are due to their constant tendency to react to the various events of their life by imitating some 'models'. Whether literary or mundane, whether consciously sought or operating beyond the understanding of the naive characters, the 'models' are always there, invariably reminding us of the 2nd.- (or 3rd.-) degree nature of the human self. Imitation

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[377] Cf. e.g. M. Heseltine's observation that 'Petronius' novel shares with life the quality of moving ceaselessly without knowing why' (1913, xii) .

[378] Christesen and Torlone (2002); Callebat (2003); Rimell (2009), 66 'a hyperactive jigsawing of almost every literary genre you could think of'.

[379] E.g. Schmeling (2011), xxii.

[380] Recall my analysis of Encolpius' and the other characters' chameleon-like qualities in section 2.

pervades the novel at all levels. I have illustrated in the previous section of this chapter how the 'prosaic' characters constantly imitate literary models in their daily life. They do so in their literary activities, too. All the poems incorporated in the novel are highly imitative.[381] But it is also true that the 'literary' components of the novel constantly imitate 'life': innumerable scenes are characterized by a crude realism, with extremes hardly to be found elsewhere in extant ancient literature; the conversation among freedmen halfway through Trimalchio's dinner, as we have seen in section 2, constitutes one of the most famous examples of linguistic realism in ancient literature; the poetic insertions respond to, and are influenced by, the life situations in which they are declaimed in ways that are much subtler than is generally recognized.[382] An important component of the novel's obsession for imitation is the fact that 'life' itself, even when not intermingled with 'literature', tends to be characterized as a reproduction of other aspects of reality. This is particularly evident in the numerous scenes of disguise and hiding (for example, the ones on board Lichas' ship and in Croton), in the 'theatrical' qualities of many scenes,[383] and especially in Trimalchio's dinner, a dazzling sequence of illusions and performances, in which even the entrées are never what they seem to be, but imitate something else, whether in appearance or taste. In sum, literally everything, in this novel, is imitation of something else. Everything is interpretable in terms of something from which it is derived. Everything 'exists' only in so far as it 'imitates'.

So far, I have argued that triangular desire and pervasive imitation are two important features of the *Satyrica*. What does this tell us about the conception of human nature

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[381] Cf. e.g. Stubbe (1933), Connors (1998), Rimell (2002), Setaioli (2011).

[382] Cucchiarelli (1998), Rimell (2002).

[383] See esp. Panayotakis (1995).

presupposed by this novel? If you both desire and define yourself through imitation of something else, then your status as an 'identity' or 'self' is problematic. The *Satyrica* presents the human self, throughout, as a point of mediation between different textual paradigms, never as an entity with a structural core. This explains what, in section 2, I described as the 'chameleon-like' nature of most characters, who seem to change their models, and therefore their ideas and aspirations, with appalling facility. When read carefully, the *Satyrica* shows that the human Self itself is just a temporary construction, and that it can be changed and manipulated, both from within and from without, at any moment. This novel does not present us with 'one' Encolpius, 'one' Eumolpus, 'one' Trimalchio, but with many, and sometimes incompatible, versions thereof. What creates this multiplicity is the conflict between the different cultural paradigms that (so to speak) 'govern' the various characters at different points in time.

In a technical and highly conventional study of how Petronius' realism relates to the ancient rhetorical theorization on the concepts of 'verisimilitude', 'enargeia', and '*decorum*' (not therefore a study that might be suspected of being informed by a postmodern perspective), F. Jones came to the conclusion that Petronius' '*dramatis personae* are so infected with self-dramatization and pretence that *it is hard to believe there is a centre beneath the masks*, and beyond this level, in the narrative itself there is no accessible reality, *only layers of imitation*, and only relative criteria to judge between different genres'.[384] The concepts of 'lack of a center' and 'layers of imitation' evoked by Jones well describe the disconcerting fickleness of Petronius' characters, and allow us to draw a useful comparison between what we may call the 'Petronian

[384] Jones (1991), 119 (the non-Latin Italics are mine).

Self' and our contemporary understanding of the human self as a derivative, polyvocal, and center-less Lack.[385]

Jacques Lacan famously compared the human ego to an onion: 'the ego is constructed like an onion, one could peel it, and discover the successive identifications which have constituted it'.[386] Intimately connected to this is the Lacanian notion that a person's 'desire is the desire of the Other', which implies, among other things, that the human self invariably desires something precisely because it knows that that object is desired by someone else.[387] Like the ego described by Lacan, the *Satyrica*'s characters seem to be constructed like onions: if one tries to peel off layer after layer of literary or social identification in search of the substantial kernel of their personality, one ends up with a void. There is no center in the novel, and there is no center in the characters' self either. Everything that exists, in the outside word as well as in the interiority of the characters, are layers of interpretations or identifications, covering a disquieting Lack.

The *Satyrica*'s constant interest in imitative processes and in the derivative nature of desire creates a literary environment in which the present discourse, namely the text we are reading, is all-through inhabited, fragmented, and more generally 'composed' by 'other' discourses. It is a kaleidoscopic text continuously opening up new perspectives, new possibilities, new readings, while questioning the existence of a bedrock of reality below the

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[385] Cf. my methodological considerations in Ch. 1.6.

[386] Lacan (1988 [1975]), 171. Cf. Nobus (1998), 175.

[387] Lacan (1988 [1975]), 146; Lacan (1993 [1981]), 112.

surface(s). I find it irresistible to speculate that Petronius might have agreed with Derrida that everything is an ‘infinite textuality’. Michael Lewis wrote:[388]

> The system of textuality extends infinitely and thus any belief in a moment of presence that would remain outside, precedent to, and governing this text is illusory. [...] Deconstruction demonstrates this reference of any one signifier or text to an infinity of others. [...] The only act which a deconstructive author performs is to show that any finite text depends for its meaning upon an infinite textuality which exceeds it, and at the same time upon its own excision from this infinite context.

In the light of this definition of deconstruction, for few works in the entire history of Western literature would it seem to me more appropriate to talk of deconstructive writing than it is for Petronius’ *Satyrica*, a novel that constantly calls attention to its characters’ condition as textual subjectivities immersed in multiple inter-textual systems. The ‘world’, in this novel, is a multi-dimension of innumerable textual paradigms constantly responding to and competing against each other; crucially, these textual paradigms operate ‘through’ characters that seem unable successfully to employ, not to mention create, those paradigms. These characters are constantly presented as the recipients, and almost the victims, of external textual influence. This infinite textuality exceeds and obliterates the confines not only of the human self, but of the novel itself, and traditional notions such as ‘text’, ‘author’, ‘character’, and ‘plot’ lose much, if not all, of their meaning. The ‘plot’ of the *Satyrica* is neither a coherent unity nor an autonomous entity, but rather can be conceptualized as the struggle between the plots of innumerable ‘other’ texts (such as the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, tragedy, myth, historiography, rhetoric, proverbs, and many more cultural discourses) that surface inside, and ‘compose’, the text in front of us ‘through’ a

[388] Lewis (2008), 1-2.

number of weak entities, the ‘characters’, who, ironically, continuously posture as ‘authors’ while at the same time demonstrating their inability to control their existential ‘texts’.

So far I have focused on the text-internal dynamics of the *Satyrica*, essentially trying to answer the question: Who, or what, are the strange characters that populate the *Satyrica*’s pages? The considerations of the last paragraphs invite us to look beyond canonical boundaries, which the text itself questions. Therefore, as a way of an epilogue to the present chapter, I now turn to an even more difficult question: Who wrote these pages and created these characters? Answering this second question is complicated by the very answer I have provided to the first one. As we have seen throughout this last section, the *Satyrica* problematizes the notion of ‘individual’ and dismantles the confines between literature and life, self and world, author and text. How can there be an author if there cannot even be a self? And yet, a novel so crowded with ‘authors’ obviously calls attention to its being a ‘product’: an artifact that, necessarily (and I am using this term provocatively), must have been composed by someone, the ‘author’.

One way of approaching this issue is historical. From Tacitus’ report at *Ann*. 16.18-19, we know that Petronius acted as a personal counsellor to Nero in matters relating to luxury and pleasure, that he conducted an eccentric life, and that it was ‘by indulging – *or pretending to indulge* – his vices’ that he ingratiated the emperor.[389] Tacitus’ formulation suggests that Petronius may have thrived at Nero’s court by impersonating the role of, rather than really being, a debauchee. This hypothesis dovetails with the extreme levels of hypocrisy and dissimulation that we know to be characteristic of courts, both ancient and modern.[390] For instance, in his treatise ‘Della ragione de gli Stati’ (Venice, 1626), Gabriele Zinano argues that the courtier

[389] *Ann*. 16.18 *dein revolutus ad vitia, seu vitiorum imitatione, inter paucos familiarium Neroni adsumptus est*.

[390] Cf. Ch. 1.4.

should be like ‘another Achelous’ (the ancient river that, famously, was able to change its own appearance at will, like Proteus), ‘for he must transform himself at different moments into a bull, into a river and into other figures; he must decide which one would give him more of an advantage [...]. *He must perpetually represent himself with a new face*’.[391] Summarizing Louis Machon’s 1643 treatise titled ‘Apologie pour Machiavelle’, J. Snyder writes (Italics are mine):

> [*Courtiers*] *must select daily for themselves a whole set of masks*, insofar as without the proper mask at the proper moment they would cease to exist for that world, which is the only one that matters for them. These masks may be individually imposed by social conventions of various sorts; taken one by one, they may be stifling in their conformity to the norm. [...] It is up to the individual to invent the sequence in which they will be deployed, and this relation that one has to oneself – in the ordering of a series of masks, from the polite to the moral to the political – constitutes *a fundamentally creative activity, an aesthetics of existence in the age of absolutism*.[392]

For both Zinano and Machon, thus, courtiers find themselves in a delicate position: on the one hand, they live under the perennial danger of falling into disgrace, and this requires them to rigidly adopt the self-effacing habit of hiding who they really are and their intentions; on the other hand, a courtier’s mask-wearing can develop into a powerful skill, almost with a ‘creative’ side to it.

For our purpose of clarifying what kind of ‘author’ might have written the *Satyrica*, these considerations are promising and frustrating at the same time. Promising, because it is immediate to realize how a novel whose characters obsessively react to external circumstances by adopting external models may reflect the anxieties and preoccupations of a courtier who, on a daily basis, has to renounce his humanity and individual desires in order to conform to externally imposed

[391] Quoted and translated as in Snyder (2009), 244 n. 148. Italics are mine.

[392] Snyder (2009), 147.

expectations; from this perspective, it is fascinating to speculate that the *Satyrica* may be seen as a sort of artistic transfiguration of the traumatic experience of court life.[393] Unfortunately, however, this cannot be anything more than a speculation. We will never be able to clarify with a reasonable degree of certainty the *Satyrica* through any specific circumtances of the life and career of the Tacitean Petronius because the latter is, quite simply, an enigma that we will never be able to pin down.

Since the historical approach does not allow us to go too far, the only place where we can hope to find a way of deciphering, to some extent, the author of the *Satyrica* is the text itself that he left to us. The novel presents itself as the first-person account of an internal narrator, which poses the question of the relation between this fictional authorial voice and the 'real' author. In Conte's famous formulation, the author of the *Satyrica* is a 'hidden author' whose irony can only be appreciated by readers in an indirect way, namely by reading between the lines of Encolpius' words. While we smile at *Encolpius*' self-deceptions and naivety as a narrator, we recognize *Petronius*' superior irony as the real entity that created the novel. All through, however, the only voice we hear is Encolpius', whereas Petronius remains 'hidden' behind it – invisible in his own creation like the *deus absconditus* of theology.[394]

This interpretation is undoubtedly correct on one level, since Petronius clearly created Encolpius as an unreliable narrator, but it may be inaccurate on another, because it underplays

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[393] I am not suggesting that specific episodes or figures of the *Satyrica* were meant by Petronius to be read as veiled references to real episodes or figures of Nero's court (an old thesis that is sometimes defended even nowadays, e.g. most recently by Garbugino (2010); but against it see the cautionary remarks e.g. in Nicolini and Vannini (2011), 145-6). My suggestion is rather that the characters' constant inability to exercise their faculty of speech in an unrestrained and successful fashion (cf. section 2) and the apparent lack of a 'core identity' behind their imitative transformism (section 3) might be read as an imaginative projection of the tragic inability to own one's own discourse and public persona that characterized the life of Nero's courtiers like Petronius.

[394] Conte (1996).

the possibility that Petronius may reveal something of how he conceptualized human nature, and therefore himself, precisely as he created characters whom he could not identify with. In fact, there is a sense in which the author of the novel is not hidden behind his characters but, indeed, can be *identified*, at least to some extent, with his characters. For, as we have seen, the plot of the novel develops throughout as a sequence of literary operations consisting in either the production of new literature or in the interpretation of life events through literary parameters. Practically all of the characters, even the most improbable ones, engage in literary activities, both as readers and authors.[395] The *Satyrica* is the collage, as it were, of these various literary activities, which may therefore be read as a pervasive metaliterary commentary on the novel's own compositive process.[396] This situation can suggestively be summarized by noting that the (physical) impotence that besets the narrator, which is a recurrent and central motif of the novel,[397] seems to be a metaphorical analogue of the text's inability to abandon its 'prosaic' status and raise up to the lofty dimension of high 'Literature'. Encolpius' inability to become a new Odysseus by having intercourse with Circe[398] can be read as a metaliterary symbol of the *Satyrica*'s continuously re-enacted failure to live up to the standards of the great epic and tragic models that it evokes. As the prosimetrical format of the *Apocolocyntosis* can be read as a textual replica of

[395] Even the nymphomaniac priest Quartilla (18.6) and the cynaedus Embasicoetas (23.3) engage in poetical composition or recitation.

[396] For many Latin texts, text-internal 'authorial' figures are often seen as partial projections of the author or authorial persona (think only, for instance, of figures such as Aracne, Byblis, or Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). The possibility of applying a similarly metalitarary reading to the characters of the *Satyrica* does not seem to have been taken seriously by scholars. An important exception is Labate (1995), who interprets Eumolpus' generic versatility as emblematizing the *Satyrica*'s generic variety.

[397] For an analysis of Petronius' portrayal of impotence in relation to ancient perceptions of this dysfunction, cf. McMahon (1998), 80-86, 192-215. On impotence in Petronius' novel cf. also Rankin (1971), 54-55 n. 7; Faraone (1990). For a Jungian interpretation of Encolpius' impotence: Kardaun (1994) and (1995).

[398] Discussed in Ch. 4.2.

Claudius' stuttering, just so the prosimetrical format of the *Satyrica* can be read as embodying this novel's impotent desire to be a different type of work.

In this perspective, the sum of the novel's 'authorial' characters and their failed poetic impersonations may be read as a vast, sustained metaphor ultimately describing the external author's own awareness of his status as an author (i) who is unable to write 'great Literature' despite his desire to do so, (ii) who can be an author only by redeploying other authors' words, while at the same time staging his own inability to perform this impersonation successfully, and (iii) an author who, paradoxically, can only be *original* by showing that he is *unable to imitate* his models. What is the real 'identity' of such an 'author'? In a sense, the 'author' himself tells us throughout the novel, implicitly, that it is non-existent, because no 'Author' can ultimately exist in a work that systematically exposes the fragmentary and derivative nature of human identity. His 'identity' coincides with the 'author''s awareness that the text, as well as his very personality, has all along been constructed by all kinds of external models, paradigms, and sources. He seems to suggest that his identity, if any, resides in his letting go of any pretence to be a powerful 'allusor', in his allowing the 'intertexts' to freely operate on him, and in his ability to deconstruct himself.

Chapter 5

An Anxiety of Influence?

SUMMARY

This chapter offers a philological analysis and a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Neronian court authors' frequent recourse to 'negative' allusivity, namely a mode of poetic quotation that appears to emphasize the *difference* between the new text and its model. Although it is often noted, this Neronian tendency has never been the object of a comprehensive treatment by modern scholars. Apart from providing a philological 'grammar' of this phenomenon, in this chapter I set out to explore its ambiguous nature by applying psychoanalytic concepts such as 'displacement', 'reaction formation', and 'Freudian negation'. At first glance, the Neronians' allusive techniques seem to constitute a particularly strong manifestation of the Bloomian 'anxiety of influence': that is, they seem to be the result of a poet's anxious attempt to differentiate himself from his precursors, so as to establish himself as an original and unique voice in the literary tradition. I problematize this approach by showing that these techniques, while constituting a crafty manipulation of the literary tradition, *also* admit of a diametrically opposed interpretation: through them, the Neronian court authors reveal a profoundly ambivalent and obsessive need to imitate their literary ancestors, a need that they seem at the same time – paradoxically – to defend against and to realize. By continuously quoting previous texts as negated, the Neronians stage their own *inability* to truly get rid of the discourse of the (literary) Other, because their 'negations' are ultimately weak gestures that do *not* prevent the

predecessors' voices from entering and, to some extent, even dominating the new text. My aim in this chapter is not to replace the former interpretation (allusivity = original mastery) with the latter (allusivity = inability to silence the literary past); rather, I argue that the two interpretations are both true. Neronian allusivity is characterized by an unresolved tension: it springs from an urgent need to control language; but linguistic control is sought after and exercised so obsessively that it results in a loss of linguistic control.

1. INTRODUCTION: A GRAMMAR OF NERONIAN ANXIETY

By combining two wildly different disciplines, psychoanalysis and Quellenforschung, this chapter aims to provide a part of the concrete documentation on which my general claims in Ch. 1 concerning Neronian allusivity are based.

My psychoanalytic approach does not imply that I read Neronian allusions as subconscious; on the contrary, one of the goals of this chapter is to emphasize the supreme artistry of the Neronians' allusive skills. Rather, my thesis is that, at least in some respects, allusive artistry is deployed by them to self-sabotaging effect. In order to prove this point, I will use psychoanalysis, not as a clinical tool, but as a hermeneutic metaphor, arguing that Neronian allusivity functions in a way that is suggestively *comparable* (not identical) to certain aspects of the human Unconscious.

Before laying out the structure of this chapter, I will illustrate my approach through a couple of examples, one from Lucan and one from Seneca. The scene of Cato's wedding with Marcia in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* constitutes a bizarre display of non-merriment and non-celebration (2.354-80):[399] no crowns, no garlands, no torches, no couch, no veil for the bride, no jokes, no attendance apart from Brutus, no 'ties of marriage' (i.e. sex) after the ceremony. Cato even avoids having a haircut for the occasion and removes every sign of joy from his face (372-3):

> ille *nec* horrificam sancto dimouit ab ore
> caesariem duroque *admisit* gaudia uoltu.

[399] On this much debated example of 'negative enumeration' see, for instance, Heitland (1877), cviii; Bramble (1982), 544-5; Fantham (1992), *ad loc*.

From his sacred face the husband did not remove the bristling hair, *nor did he admit* rejoicing to his hard expression.

This remarkable reversal of the traditional Roman wedding can be seen, at the same time, as a reversal of what is arguably the single most famous wedding in Latin literature, namely that of Peleus and Thetis, which Catullus described as a glorious party attended by humans and gods alike (Catull. 64.30-49). Various formal and factual elements connect the two passages,[400] the most conspicuous of which is the reuse of the Catullan clausula *gaudia uultu*,[401] which in Lucan refers to Cato's avoidance of joy, in Catullus to the general merriment (64.31-4):[402]

quis simul optatae finito tempore luces
aduenere, domum conuentu tota frequentat
Thessalia, oppletur laetanti regia coetu:
dona ferunt prae se, *declarant* gaudia uultu.

As soon as the yearned-for day had come, the waiting over, all Thessaly gathers to crowd Peleus' household. His palace fills with the rejoicing throng. They hold high their presents, *they show* their joy on their faces.

[400] The long series of negations in Lucan (354 *non*, 360 *non*, 368 *non*, 370 *nulla ... nulli*, 372 *nec*, 378 *nec*), the most peculiar structural feature of this passage, is paralleled by the list of negations by which Catullus describes how all the inhabitants of the region left their fields to attend the ceremony: 38 *nemo*, 39 *non*, 40 *non*, 41 *non*. Various elements of Catullus' lush description seem to have been designedly inverted by Lucan. For instance, *nobody* is present at Cato's marriage (370 *pignora nulla domus, nulli coiere propinqui*), whereas in Catullus *everybody* attends (64.31-2 *domum conventu tota frequentat / Thessalia, oppletur laetanti regia coetu*). Compare also the detailed account of the missing adornment of the house and of the clothing at Lucan 2.354-67 and the opulence at Catull. 64.43-9.

[401] Note also that Lucan's *nec ... admisit* picks up, and inverts, Catullus' *declarant*: cf. Section 3 below on 'Negation' allusivity. The positional and structural correspondence between the two verbs (both being spondaic trisyllables immediately preceding the bucolic caesura) confirms that Catullus' text is the source.

[402] This parallel is not noted, to my knowledge, in previous scholarship. The only other previous text that contains the same clausula is *Culex* 120, which, too, is a quotation from Catullus (cf. Catull. 64.33 *laetanti* ~ *Culex* 120 *laetae*).

Why Lucan's narrator got interested in this Catullan passage becomes apparent if we read the next sentence of the latter (64.35-7):

> Deseritur Cieros, linquunt Pthiotica Tempe
> Crannonisque domos ac moenia Larisaea,
> **Pharsalum** coeunt, **Pharsalia** tecta frequentant.
>
> Emptied is Cieros. Phthiotis they leave, the valley of Tempe, the homes of Crannon, Larisa's wall. At **Pharsalus** they meet. They crowd the **Pharsalian** hall.

We can be sure that reading the detested name of Pharsalus twice in the same line must have been a shocking experience for Lucan's narrator,[403] who so often in the course of his poem, entitled 'Pharsalia' (cf. 9.985), expresses his hate for this cursed locality (e.g. at 7.847-869). Apart from the references to Pharsalus, also 64.32-33 *tota Thessalia* and 37 *coeunt* contribute to rendering the Catullan passage (to the neurotic eyes of the Lucanian narrator) an evocation of the battle of Pharsalus: both on the occasion of Peleus' marriage and in 48 BCE, the entire world 'got together' at Pharsalus, Thessaly.[404]

One obvious way of reading this allusion is that Lucan plays up the Pharsalia connection of the Catullan passage, demonstrating a high degree of ironical manipulation of the literary tradition. But if considered from a different perspective, the same allusion also invites a different interpretation, one that stresses, not control over the previous text, but rather a failure to eliminate its influence. In Ch. 3 I showed that the Lucanian narrator keeps evoking 'Pharsalus' and 'civil war' even when he seems to turn his focus away from the narration of civil war, for

[403] For my interpretation of Lucan's narrator as a neurotic reader continuously 'triggered' by what he reads in other texts, see Ch. 3.5.

[404] In Book 7 the notion that the battle of Pharsalus was a universal event attended by 'all peoples' or 'the entire world' is a recurrent motif: cf. 7.221-234, 360-364, 387-391.

instance in his geographic or mythological excursuses. We may thus view the episode of Cato's wedding as one such 'failed escape' from civil war: the allusion *seems* to take us away from 'Pharsalia' into Catullus' text, but it is not so, because the latter, despite the narrator's effort to *avoid* talking about civil war, takes us back to 'Pharsalia'. The 'anti-wedding' passage, with its interminable series of absences, gives the impression that the primary goal of the Lucanian narrator was not the production of a new text, but the deletion of as many elements of Catullus' joyous ceremony as he could. This textual attack displays the distinctive features of a displacement of anger: the one element that (we may well surmise) had primarily aroused the narrator's destructive feelings, namely the repeated name of *Pharsalia*, has been repressed and substituted, as the target of those aggressive feelings, by the wedding ceremony.

If read according to the second interpretation that I proposed in the previous paragraph, this instance of 'literary memory' seems to presuppose a mechanism that is analogous to the psychological phenomenon known, in Freud's formulation, as 'screen memory'. In a 1899 paper entitled 'Screen Memories', Freud examines a set of reminiscences, experienced by his patients or by himself, that present the following feature: although they occur repeatedly, and in some cases obsessively, they are memories of relatively irrelevant events. Why should one's psyche become fixated with apparently insignificant events? One possible reason, Freud argues, is that these recollections, symbolically or associatively, represent impressions, emotions, or thoughts connected to a different, and much more important, event – an event that caused strong feelings of (say) fear, anger, or desire, the unbearable intensity of which made it necessary, for the individual, to suppress the event in question from consciousness. But although the psyche forces itself to forget this troubling memory, it is unable to do so with total success; the suppressed memory, from below the surface, seeks to be released from repression, at least in a disguised

form, with the result that it remains operative, although unconsciously, through a 'screen memory'. In one example provided by Freud, a young man's desire to have intercourse with a girl who used to wear a yellow dress is suppressed and replaced by an apparently meaningless childhood memory. The young man cannot understand how this memory 'has become fixed in [his] mind'. In this screen memory, he is a little child and is playing with a girl cousin; the game consists in picking yellow flowers. Thus the obsessive, but unacceptable, thought of the wished 'defloration' ('un-flowering') is masked by the obsessive recollection of a real event, an innocent game between children involving flowers.

As this example makes clear, a screen memory 'owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relation existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed'.[405] Screen memories are but one instance of the defence mechanism of 'displacement', which, according to psychoanalysis, is ubiquitous in mental life. For instance, it plays an important part in the so-called 'dream-work', the process that transforms the latent (unacceptable) thoughts of a dream into its manifest (acceptable) content. As Freud writes, 'the elements which stand out as the principal components of the manifest content of the dream are far from playing the same part in the dream-thoughts. And, as a corollary, the converse of this assertion can be affirmed: what is clearly the essence of the dream-thoughts need not be represented in the dream at all'.[406]

As the two Freudian quotations of the previous paragraph help to illustrate, Lucan's description of Cato's marriage presents us with a mechanism that is similar to 'displacement', in that it tries to obliterate that which, in the model text, is most important (Pharsalia), while putting

[405] Freud (1899), excerpted in Gay (1989), 117-126. The quotation is from p. 126.

[406] Freud (2010) [1900], 322.

a strong emphasis on (that is, quoting) irrelevant elements. What does this structural similarity mean for the general study of Neronian allusivity that I will conduct in this chapter? It invites us to look at Neronian allusivity as a form of Freudian repression – *a disguise whose distorting effect is less important than the content it attempts to hide*. As I will show in the rest of this chapter, Neronian allusivity obsessively negates, inverts, contradicts, and distorts its models. There can be little doubt that this adversarial attitude entails a need to control the previous texts. But which party ultimately wins this battle? Where is the emphasis put: on the manifest content (to use Freud's dream terminology) or on the latent thought? On the new text or on the model?

To clarify the nature of this question, let us consider another paradigmatic example of the Neronians' allusive practices. At lines 378-9 of Seneca's *Troades*, the Chorus asks:

> *an toti morimur nullaque pars manet / nostri?*
>
> Do we wholly die and afterward no part of us persists?

In doing so, they are quoting, and modifying, Horace's famous boast at *Od*. 3.30.6-7:[407]

> *non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei / uitabit Libitinam!*
>
> I shall not wholly die, and a large part of me will elude Death!

The similarities between the two passages are obvious, as are their differences. Horace's confident proclamation of eternity has been deflated and problematized into a despondent existential question that remains unanswered. The meaning of the first clause (*non omnis moriar*)

[407] The allusion is noted by the commentators, e.g. Boyle (1994), *ad loc.* For a nice analysis of how this allusion relates to the problematization of the concept of death that characterizes the play, see Trinacty (2014), 150-4.

has been changed into its opposite (*toti morimur*), both through omission of the initial *non*, and because Horace's first person singular, which identifies the poet as an exception, has become in Seneca a first person plural, potentially referring not only to the Trojan women as a group but also to the totality of humankind (*moriar ... mei* > *morimur ... nostri*). Moreover, the pronoun *omnis* has been replaced by a synonym (*toti*); *nulla* has been substituted for an antonym (*multa*); and 'to remain (alive)' (*manet*) paraphrases, through a synonymic reversal, the Horatian 'to avoid death' (*uitabit Libitinam*).

This combination of close imitation and profound transformation is impressive: everything is different – and yet, what can truly be said to be new in Seneca's text? As we saw in Ch. 1.3, according to the currently dominant interpretation of Neronian allusivity, Neronian authors are master manipulators of the Augustan tradition, which they are able to appropriate and re-write so as to establish their own place in the literary tradition. But another interpretation is also possible – an interpretation that is not really incompatible, but rather more profound than the former: namely that the Neronian text is unable to get rid of its model/source despite its best efforts. Who is truly speaking in the just discussed Senecan passage? We may focus on Seneca's voice trying to replace that of Horace; but we may also hear Horace's voice speaking *through* that of Seneca, almost as if Seneca were not able to silence Horace *despite* all the grammatical and semantic alterations to which he subjects his predecessor's text.

In this chapter, I argue that an obsession for extreme, repeated, and often even redundant alteration of the literary models is one of the defining features of Neronian literature – defining to such a degree as to suggest the suspicion that the attack conducted by the Neronians against the literary tradition is not a by-product, as it were, of their literary activity, but one of its primary goals, almost as if they wrote in order to negate other texts, by which they were

obsessed, rather than to create new ones. Crucially, the operation boomerangs, because the predecessors' voice is so massively evoked that it obliterates that of the new text. In short, I read Neronian allusivity as a form of unsuccessful repression, which tries to silence the 'discourse of the Other' (cf. Ch. 1), but spectacularly fails to achieve its goal.

As I discussed in Ch. 1.3, the 'antiphrastic', 'anti-classicistic', and 'revisionist' nature of Neronian allusivity is frequently commented upon by scholars,[408] but only in general terms or with reference to isolated allusions. A comprehensive study of the Neronians' negative ways of evoking their literary past is still a desideratum in current scholarship. In this chapter, I will explore various allusive 'techniques' that were frequently adopted by Neronian authors, but have remained understudied. What these techniques have in common is an emphasis on the 'difference' of the new text from the original text. These techniques evoke a previous text, but also deviate from it ostentatiously, even paranoidly. Of course, these techniques are not unique to the Neronians. In fact, there are examples in previous and later Greek and Latin literatures.[409]

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[408] Cf. e.g. Narducci (2002), Castagna (2002), Trinacty (2014), Littlewood (2017).

[409] I am thinking in particular of the concept of *oppositio-in-imitando*, coined and extensively explored by Giuseppe Giangrande for Hellenistic literature (e.g. Giangrande 1967). Applications to Augustan literature include e.g. Thomas (1986) (on Vergil) and Murgatroyd (2005), 105-6 (on Ovid). My impression is that the Flavians make frequent recourse to these techniques, in a way that clearly reveals their formal indebtedness to the Neronians: see now Bessone (2018) and (2020), some of whose cases are similar to the Neronian ones I present here, even though her focus on inverted allusivity is more at the level of thematic inversion than according to my formal categories. For the moment, I leave to the specialists of Flavian literature to assess the role of these techniques in the authors of this later period, and more particularly whether the Neronian allusive techniques that I identify in this chapter took root among the Flavians as a purely formal fad or rather as a psycho-cultural phenomenon with political ramifications. At this stage of my research I feel unable to unswer this question. But I would like to emphasize that, even if it could be demonstrated that the Flavians' allusivity is significantly similar to that of the Neronians (which in principle seems to me likely), in no way this would constitute a refutation of my thesis that the Neronians practiced allusivity in a new, neurotic way compared to their predecessors; it would simply mean that the Neronians' own successors picked up this new type of allusivity from them. Trauma and neurosis normally behave as diseases that, once established, extend across later generations. If my hypothesis that Neronian literature marks a decisive point in the development of Latin literature because of the new pathological aspects that it introduces in the literary processes (Ch. 1) is correct, the fact that later generations can be shown to be still imprisoned (so to speak) by the Neronian neurosis simply demonstrates the strength and persistence of the trauma that it entails. The real test of my theory is to demonstrate that the Neronians practiced literature in a way that is inherently different from, and more

However, it can be safely said that in Neronian literature they take up a central role.[410] If previously, for the most part, they were occasional niceties, they now become, as it were, the building blocks on which the Neronian masterpieces are built. My argument, therefore, is cumulative and quantitative: what matters most is not the specific 'meaning' or 'function' that each act of allusion may or may not have in its context, but rather the repetitive quality of the operation.

I will divide the materials in the following categories, with the understanding that these are partially overlapping:

- **Screen**. The author is, as it were, reluctant to quote from a certain model the words that are relevant to the new context. The words that he ends up alluding to are a mere screen for the real allusion.
- **Negation**. The positive statement of a previous author is negated, or the negative statement of a previous author is turned into a positive one.
- **Antonym**. An antonym is substituted for the term used by the previous author.
- **Synonym**. An isoprosodic synonym is substituted for the term used by the previous author.[411]

'pathological' than, that of the Augustans, and this seems to me a notion that it is considerably easier to agree with.

[410] I am not able to provide a statistical measurement of the relative presence of 'negative' allusivity in Augustan vs. Neronian literatures. But the claim that I have just made about its centrality and anomalous abundance in Neronian literature is supported by the observations of many other scholars: see the bibliography that I quoted in Ch. 1.3 about (a) the fact that Neronian literature is obviously more densely allusive than that of other previous periods and (b) the fact that scholars perceive inverted or negative allusivity to be a *defining* feature of Neronian allusivity.

[411] I will limit my analysis to isoprosodic synonyms to avoid the objection that a synonym may have been used *metri gratia*.

- **Phonic**. A term that ‘sounds’ like, but is etymologically unrelated to, a term used by the previous author is chosen by the later author.
- **Dialogue**. The allusion engages with the statement of a previous author, responding to it, or correcting it, as though in a dialogue.

Although I will illustrate my application of psychoanalytic concepts more fully in Section 8, it bears mentioning, already at this point, an interesting correspondence that facilitates the juxtaposition of psychoanalysis and traditional philology that I am attempting in this chapter. All the textual techniques that will be discussed in this chapter have some sort of equivalent in the (often perplexing) workings of the Unconscious as theorized by Freud. We have just seen that ‘screen allusivity’ (Section 2) reproduces the mechanism of ‘displacement’. We will soon examine ‘negation allusivity’ (Section 3) and ‘antonym allusivity’ (Section 4), both of which establish a direct relation between texts that, in effect, have opposite meanings. According to psychoanalysis, one of the most puzzling aspects of both dream- and symptom-formation is the fact that, in these processes, a person or object may symbolize its exact opposite.[412] For instance, if one dreams of a *little* mouse and feels *indifferent* about it, this may signify that that person is *deeply scared* by some *huge* life problem. In parapraxes, too, an individual may end up saying the exact opposite of what one intended to say: the standard example used by Freud is that of the President of the House of Deputies, who *started* a session, which he expected to be particularly boring, by saying: ‘I declare the session *closed*!’ In dreams, parapraxes, and even in neurotic

[412] A phenomenon that Freud calls ‘representation through the opposite’; cf. e.g. Freud (2010), 334 ‘The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictories is highly remarkable. It is simply disregarded. ‘No’ seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned’; 342-4 ‘Reversal, or turning a thing into its opposite, is one of the means of representation most favored by the dream-work’; and *passim*.

symptoms, the Unconscious plays with 'signifiers', disregarding the literal meanings of words and concentrating, instead, on their mere sounds. For instance, a person may feel intensely *hungry* as a way of displacing an intense feeling of being *angry*. This phenomenon presents obvious analogies with 'phonic allusivity', which I will discuss below in section 6. In the final section (8), I will comment on the common features of all these techniques, arguing that Bloom's notion of the 'anxiety of influence' is inappropriate and misleading when applied, as it often happens, to the study of Neronian literature, primarily because it entails the notion of a 'strong poet'. Instead, I will suggest that Neronian poetry is a form of 'weak poetry', which obsessively stages its victimized inability to get rid of its past. On this approach, Neronian allusivity is best understood as a form of 'Freudian negation': a negation that, paradoxically, affirms.

A few last remarks on how to read this chapter are necessary. (1) A study like the one I am attempting in this chapter requires, by definition, abundant documentation. This might render the reading a bit repetitive. Sections 2 to 7 mostly consist of lists of close readings; a reader may avoid reading these sections in full and skip to the next one as soon as one is confident of having understood my point. The kernel of my argument is articulated in section 8, which elaborates on this introductory section and can be read before or along all the others for a better understanding of my thesis. (2) In this chapter, I include Petronian examples only in Section 2 (on 'screen allusivity'). In the sections devoted to the remaining techniques, I focus on Seneca and Lucan exclusively, because I plan to discuss the Petronian examples somewhere else. (3) I see this chapter both as a part of my study of Neronian literature and as a self-standing reference work – a 'grammar' – of Neronian allusivity. I hope that even those scholars who might not accept my psychoanalytic conclusions (section 8) will find the philological classification (sections 2-7) useful and worthy of further investigation. As I point out in the footnotes, the validity of this

philological method is confirmed by the fact that it makes it easier for scholars to identify allusions (esp. screen, antonym, synonym, and phonic) that cannot be discovered through computerized searches and therefore can easily go unnoticed, with detriment to our understanding of Neronian texts.

2. SCREEN

At *Apoc*. 5.4, asked by Hercules to identify himself, Claudius replies with a Homeric quotation: ’Ιλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσεν, ‘the wind, bearing me from Ilium, brought me to the Cicones’ (*Od*. 9.39). The narrator, always ready to have a laugh at the deceased emperor, remarks that, in fact, the following line would have been more appropriate: *erat autem sequens versus verior, aeque Homericus:* ’Ισμάρῳ· ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ' αὐτούς, ‘but the next verse, likewise from Homer, was truer: There I sacked the city and destroyed the people’ (*Od*. 9.40). Like other Neronian practitioners of allusion, Claudius is unable to control the implications of what he says: his attempt to disguise his identity through a quotation[413] ends up reminding us of the fact that he was a bad ruler who caused much harm to his own people. The narrator’s phrase, ‘the next verse was truer’, represents an excellent description for the allusive phenomenon that I am about to discuss. On a remarkable number of occasions, if we have a look at the immediate context from which a Neronian poet quotes a certain line or phrase, we may discover that that context (i.e. the same or a contiguous sentence) contains a line or phrase that would have been a much more appropriate fit for the new text that that poet is creating.[414]

The idea that a reader might remember the original context of an allusion so well as to be able to understand promptly that the real object of the poet’s interest was not the portion of text he repeated, but a neighboring line or phrase is probably far removed from reading practices that

[413] Cf. my reading of this passage in Ch. 4.1.

[414] This mechanism should not be confused with a currently widespread mode of intertextual interpretation, which consists in analysing the larger original context of an alluded passage, in search for elements that might (say) enrich, undermine, or add undertones to the ‘meaning’ of the allusion (cf. e.g. Ch. 3 of Lyne 1987). As the examples discussed below will show, ‘screen allusivity’ refers, rather, to the process by which an author quotes a certain phrase *instead of* another phrase, deliberately *omitting* the real target of the allusion.

would be considered normal nowadays. But this hypothesis is in line with what we know about ancient reading practices. It is well known that memorization was a central and ubiquitous component of ancient education.[415] It was normal for most literate people, in antiquity, to know by heart large portions of the canonical authors, a circumstance that facilitates and explains the existence of screen allusivity.[416]

Ancient anecdotes help to clarify the concept of screen allusivity. Arrian narrates that when Alexander mocked Diogenes by quoting a line from Homer, as if it applied to the sleeping philosopher, the latter ingeniously capped it with the immediately following line, which in that situation became a humorous comment on Alexander's meddling: 'On another occasion, in reply to Alexander, who stood by him when he was sleeping, and quoted Homer's line *A man a councillor should not sleep all night* (= *Il.* 2.24), he [= Diogenes] answered, when he was half asleep: *The people's guardian and so full of cares* (= *Il.* 2.25).[417] This example shows that ancient readers were able quickly to conjure up in their mind the larger original context of a quotation and to notice and exploit the potential relevance of the non-quoted section with respect to the new context. The one narrated by Arrian may be defined as an 'involuntary' screen allusion, because Alexander (like Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*) is not aware of the potential frictions between the segment he quotes and the immediate context of the source that he decides to omit. A nice example of an 'intentional' screen allusion is described by Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander* (51.8-9). Plutarch reports that the fight between Alexander and his officer Cleitus

[415] E.g. Marrou (1956), 229-283.

[416] On the immediate 'canonicity' of the Augustan authors cf. e.g. Zetzel (1983).

[417] Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus* 3.22.92. The Homeric text runs as follows: Il. 2.23-5 εὕδεις ’Ατρέος υἱὲ δαΐφρονος ἱπποδάμοιο· / οὐ χρὴ παννύχιον εὕδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα / ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε.

reached a climactic point when Cleitus attacked Alexander by quoting an Euripidean line: 'Things have come to a pretty pass in Greece' (*Andr*. 693). Clearly, he expected his listeners to know that the passage continued: 'When the general takes the credit due to his army'.

The high frequency of screen allusivity in Neronian literature deserves close scrutiny. About halfway through Seneca's *Oedipus*, Creon returns onto the stage after attending the necromancy performed by Tiresias. In the course of the elaborate rite, the spirit of Laius had been summoned from the Underworld. Creon quotes Laius' speech, consisting of a series of laments and curses on the crimes of his son. At 656-7 he says:

> reptet incertus uiae,
> baculo senili triste praetemptans iter.

The underlined section is modeled on Ovid, *Ibis* 259-62:[418]

> **Id quod Amyntorides uideas**, trepidumque ministro
> praetemptes baculo **luminis orbus** iter,
> **nec plus aspicias quam quem sua filia rexit,**
> **expertus scelus est cuius uterque parens**.

This is a case of screen allusivity in two different ways. At 259-60, the narrator is talking about Phoenix (*Amyntorides*), who was blinded by his father, and in this respect the allusion is quite appropriate, since one of the most characteristic elements of Oedipus' myth is that he will eventually blind himself. However, blindness is not explicitly mentioned in Laius' curse. We can read his words at *Oed*. 656-7 as meaning that he wishes Oedipus to become blind only because we know the story, but what he actually says could be construed in a different way, for instance

[418] This allusion is discussed by Cleasby (1904); Herrmann (1965); Jakobi (1988), *ad loc.*; Hinds (2011), 54; Boyle (2011), *ad loc.*; Trinacty (2014), 227-8.

as meaning that he wishes Oedipus an unpleasant old age (cf. *baculo senili*), exile (cf. *triste iter*), and lameness (cf. *reptet* and *praetemptans iter*). All the words that, at lines 259-60 of the *Ibis*, unambiguously refer to blindness (*id quod Amyntorides uideas*; *luminis orbus*) have been omitted.[419]

This was the first way in which *Oed*. 657 constitutes a screen allusion. The other is even more obvious. Lines 259-60 of the *Ibis* (about Phoenix) come immediately before a couplet that summarizes Oedipus' story (261-2), not a single word of which is evoked in Seneca's text (about Oedipus). In conclusion, out of four whole lines thematizing blindness and evoking Oedipus' myth (*Ibis* 259-62), Seneca's text reproduces the three words *least* evocative of Oedipus. My use of the **bold** vs. underlined font in the just quoted Latin text renders visually the almost chirurgical precision of the allusive/evasive operation presupposed by Seneca's text.

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At 132.9-10 of Petronius' *Satyricon*, Encolpius addresses a harsh speech to his own penis, guilty of repeated defaillances. At 11 the culprit's reaction is described by Encolpius himself through this surprising Vergilian cento:

> illa solo fixos oculos auersa tenebat,
> nec magis incepto uultum sermone mouetur
> quam lentae salices lassoue papauera collo.

She stayed there turned away with eyes fixed on the ground and at this unfinished speech

[419] Interestingly, later in the same tragedy we read: 995-7 *ipse suum / duce non ullo molitur iter / luminis orbus*, where the portion of *Ibis* 260 that had been omitted at *Oed*. 657 is quoted. This represents a neat example of 'divided allusion' (for which concept see Wills 1998) and also an intertextual manifestation of the Freudian 'return of the repressed'.

her looks were no more stirred than pliant willows are or poppies on their tired stalky necks.

The first two lines are borrowed from *Aen*. 6.469-70, while the third line conflates two Vergilian segments on soft plants, *Ecl*. 3.83 = 5.16 *lenta salix* and *Aen*. 9.436 *lassoue papauera collo*. The subtle intertextual mechanism presupposed by this pastiche is well explained by G. Schmeling as follows: 'instead of quoting three continuous lines from Vergil *Aen*. 469-71, Encolpius quotes only two and then drags in one line (a composite from two places) from elsewhere about soft plants. [...] Had Encolpius continued with *Aen*. 471, instead of a comparison with soft plants, he would have got *quam si* ***dura silex*** *aut stet Marpesia cautes* ['than if she were set in **hard flint** or Marpesian rock']. Encolpius is impotent and the words *dura silex*, instead of *lentae salices*, would have been ashes in his mouth.'[420]

This funny cento, which clearly fits my definition of screen allusivity, is frequently discussed by scholars.[421] The same Petronian context offers us two further instances of this technique, which so far have not received the attention that they deserve. Before scolding his *membrum* with the cento, Encolpius, in an outburst of rage, had attempted to cut it off. Fortunately enough, he had not been able to carry out this plan, because the designed victim had timely 'disappeared in the pelvic region'. This failed self-castration is narrated, at 132.8, in a poem that starts as follows:

<u>Ter</u> ***corripui*** terribilem <u>manu</u> ***bipennem***,
<u>ter</u> languidior coliculi repente thyrso
ferrum timui, quod trepido male dabat usum.

[420] Schmeling (2011), 508-9 (the emphasis in bold is mine).

[421] In addition to the quotation from Schmeling in the previous paragraph, cf. e.g. the discussions in Fedeli (1989), 394-6; Connors (1998), 32-3; Rimell (2002), 156-7; Panayotakis (2009), 56-58.

> Thrice ***I took up the*** fearsome ***battle-ax*** with my hand. Thrice, with less strength than a cabbage-stalk, I suddenly feared the weapon, which became unserviceable since my hand was trembling.

The first thing that comes to mind is the repetition of the adverb 'thrice' at the beginning of two consecutive lines, which is obviously modelled on two famous Vergilian scenes that share the same text – the loss of Creusa and the encounter with Anchises (*Aen*. 2.791-92 and 6.700-1):

> Ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum.
> Ter **frustra** comprensa manus **effugit** imago.
>
> Thrice I/he tried to throw my/his arms about her/his neck. Thrice, having been clasped **in vain**, her/his shape **fled** my/his hands.

The assertive and virile act of 'seizing the fearsome battle-ax with the hand' is intertextually belied by the impotence conveyed, in the model, by 'in vain' (*frustra*) and 'fled my/his hands' (*manus effugit*), two phrases that would apply well to Encolpius' unsuccessful attempt to graps his penis with his left hand. There is more. *Corripui bipennem* is a rare expression in extant Latin literature. Before Petronius, it occurs only at *Aen*. 2.479 *ipse* [= *Pyrrhus*] *inter primos correpta* ***dura*** *bipenni, / limina perrumpit*, 'Pyrrhus himself among the front ranks, *clutching a battle-axe*, / breaks through the **hard** gate'.[422] Exactly as he expunges 'hard flint' (*dura silex*) from his cento in the next paragraph, so here in the poem on the attempted castration Encolpius deletes the 'hard gate' (*dura limina*) that had been attacked by Pyrrhus. As in the previous Senecan example, the position of the omitted term (i.e. the real target of the allusion) with respect to its 'screen' strikes

[422] After Petronius, the phrase *corripere bipennem* occurs only once at Sil. 5.498, which is another direct reworking of Vergil's line (cf. Sil. 5.498 *aeratam* ~ *Aen*. 2.481 *aeratos*).

one for its studied exactness: the target has been replaced by the two terms that immediately precede and follow it (*Aen*. 2.479 <u>*correpta*</u> ***dura*** <u>*bipenni*</u>).

*

Let us return to Lucan. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Cato's marriage represents a paradigmatic example of screen allusivity. Another case that to my eyes is remarkable, because the narrator's need to repress the real object of his allusion renders the text literally absurd, is the following one. After having a disturbing nightmare in which his ex-wife Julia appears to him in the form of a Fury, Pompey does not let himself be distracted by this occurrence (3.36-40):

> ille, dei quamuis cladem manesque minentur,
> maior <u>in arma ruit</u> certa cum mente malorum,
> et 'quid' ait 'uani terremur imagine uisus?
> aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum
> aut mors ipsa nihil'.
>
> He, though gods and shades threaten calamity, more resolutely <u>races to war</u>, his mind certain of disaster, and says: 'Why am I alarmed by the apparition of an empty vision? Either no feeling is left to the mind by death or death itself is nothing'.

A lot of ink has been shed concerning the meaning of Pompey's sententious alternative on the nature of death (39-40). For my purposes, it is not important to clarify this issue. What matters is that death is the dominant theme of this passage: Pompey has just seen the phantom of a deceased woman, and reacts to this experience by thinking about death. At line 37, *in arma ruit* is taken from *Aen*. 2.353 ***moriamur*** *et* <u>*in*</u> *media* <u>*arma ruamus*</u>. The concept 'racing to war' is singularly inapposite in Lucan's context. In Vergil, Aeneas exhorts his comrades to throw themselves into the battle, whereas Pompey and his army have just *fled* at the arrival of Caesar,

as has been described at the end of Book 2 and as is repeated in the immediately following lines (3.40-5). In other words, far from 'racing to war', Pompey is avoiding it! The same Vergilian sentence, however, offers a jussive subjunctive that matches the focus on death of the Lucanian passage, and Pompey's defiant considerations about it, to perfection: *moriamur!* It seems to me inevitable to conclude that this is the real target, so to speak, of the allusion, with the (otherwise inexplainable) *in ... arma ruamus* acting as a mere screen.

*

Caesar wins the Spanish campaign when the Pompeians are forced to resign as a consequence of their thirst. Lucan describes in detail the consequences of lack of water on the soldiers, who in their desperate search for it have recourse to the most disgusting practices, such as sucking the blood of cattle. At 4.316-18, we read:

> tunc herbas frondesque terunt, et rore madentis
> destringunt ramos et siquos palmite crudo
> arboris aut tenera sucos pressere medulla.
>
> Then they crush grasses and leaves and strip off branches wet with dew and squeezed any juices they could from a tree's green shoot or tender pith.

The underlined phrase is modelled on *Aen*. 5.854 *ramum* ***Lethaeo*** *rore madentem*,[423] which refers to the stick by which Mercury causes Palinurus' death. In Lucan, the Pompeians are desperate because they are about to die, and this is surely the point of the allusion: they are on the brink of death like Palinurus. The fact that the branches they strip off remind us, allusively,

[423] Thompson and Bruère (1970), 159-60.

of Lethes, the river of the Underworld, is therefore crucial, even though *Lethaeo* was omitted by Lucan's narrator.

*

Book 4 closes with line 824: *emere omnes, hic uendidit urbem*, 'they all bought, but he sold Rome'. The subject of this sentence is the Caesarian leader Curio, the protagonist of the last third of the book. As the underlined words show, this sententia reworks *Aen*. 6.621-22 *uendidit hic auro patriam* ***dominumque potentem / imposuit***, 'this man sold his fatherland for gold and imposed a powerful tyrant on it', which describes the punishment of an unnamed venal politician in the pit of Tartarus.[424] As the part in bold shows, the omitted part would have been even more appropriate to the context of the *Bellum Ciuile*, a poem in which Caesar becomes Rome's *dominus potens* and the narrator repeatedly complains about the traumatic loss of freedom suffered by the Roman people with the advent of the principate.

*

7.574 *ipse manu subicit gladios ac tela ministrat*, 'in person he supplies fresh swords and hands them weapons', describes Caesar's restless activity during the battle of Pharsalus. The underlined clausula is based on the Vergilian clausula *arma ministrat* at *Aen*. 1.150.[425] The notion of

[424] As alredy noted for instance by Thompson and Bruère (1970) and Farrell (1991), 11-12.

[425] The imitation is certain, as I will further clarify when I discuss it in more detail below in this chapter in section 5 (on 'Synonym allusivity').

'handing weapons', in itself, has no particular connection with *civil* war. In the previous two lines of the model, which Lucan's narrator excludes, but to which he could hardly be indifferent, Vergil describes the incipient phases of a civil war among an unspecified 'great people' (1.148-50):

> ac ueluti **magno in populo** cum saepe coorta est
> **seditio** saeuitque animis ignobile uulgus
> iamque faces et saxa uolant, furor arma ministrat.[426]

*

In the same book, readers encounter a similar case only about 150 lines before. At 7.722 the expression *caedis* ... *cumulo* is possibly an allusion to Lucr. 3.71 *caedem caede accumulantes*.[427] The notion of a 'heap of corpses' is not necessarily evocative of civil war. But let us read the original context (Lucr. 3.70-3):

> **With civic blood** (*sanguine ciuili*) a fortune they amass, they double their riches, greedy, heapers-up of corpse on corpse, **they have a cruel laugh for the sad burial of a brother-born, and hatred and fear of tables of their kin**.

Lucan's narrator seems to have picked some of the few words of this passage that are *not* an explicit reference to civil war or its corollary, intrafamilial conflict.[428]

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[426] The Lucanian narrator may have recognized the *magnus populus* mentioned by Vergil as the Romans. He defines the latters as a *populus potens* at 1.2.

[427] Petrone (1996), 143.

[428] For the obsessive thematization, in Lucan, of members of the same family fighting against and killing each other during civil war, see Appendix 4.

*

In Lucan's notorious list of serpents, we read (9.724-6):

> sibilaque effundens cunctas terrentia pestes,
> ante uenena nocens, late sibi summouet omne
> *uolgus* et in uacua regnat basiliscus harena.
>
> The Basilisk, which pours forth hisses terrifying all the beasts, which harms before its poison, orders the entire crowd far out of its way and on the empty sand is king.

Since Caesar is consistently presented in the poem as a kingly figure and the initiator of the future imperial house, the mere name 'Basilisk' (a derivative of the Gr. for 'king'), together with the humanizing *regnat* and *uolgus*, conjures the 48 BCE events. But this is also achieved through a screen allusion. The underlined segment is modeled on Verg. *Geo*. 4.88-90:

> Verum ubi **ductores acie** reuocaueris **ambo**,
> deterior qui uisus, eum, ne prodigus obsit,
> **dede neci**; melior uacua sine regnet in aula.
>
> When you've recalled **both generals from the fight**, **give death** to the one that appears weaker, to avoid waste: and let the stronger one hold power alone in the palace.

As the parts in bold (which have been omitted by Lucan's narrator) show, the Vergilian sentence is not simply about a king, but about a civil war (among bees), two leaders in fight against each other, and the inevitable death of one of them, precisely like Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*.[429]

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[429] Cf. also, only few lines above, *Geo*. 4.67-8 *sin autem ad pugnam exierint – nam saepe* ***duobus / regibus*** *incessit magno* ***discordia*** *motu*. It is worth noting that, in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, *Geo*. 4.90 is jestingly applied to the Julio-Claudian *aula* of imperial power (*Apoc*. 3.2), which confirms that Lucan's narrator, too, may have been reminded of Roman history when reading the same line.

*

This is how Lucan's narrator introduces the notorious Caesarean centurion Scaeva, the soldier who, possibly more than anyone else, embodies the inversion of good and evil which was brought about by civil conflict (6.144-8):

> Scaeua uiro nomen: castrorum in plebe merebat
> ante feras Rhodani gentes; ibi sanguine multo
> promotus Latiam longo gerit ordine uitem,
> pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret in armis
> quam magnum uirtus crimen ciuilibus esset.
>
> Scaeva was the hero's name: we was serving in the rank an file before the war with Rhône's fierce races; there promoted from the lengthy ranks by shedding copious blood, he bears the Latian vine-staff; eager for every wrong, he did not know how great a crime is valour in a civil war.

Scaeva is about to provide a grandiose demonstration of this paradoxical transformation of *uirtus* into *crimen* by challenging, in a fenomenal aristeia, the whole army of Pompey. This passage evokes a passage about civil war from Vergil's *Eclogues* (1.71-3):

> en quo discordia ciuis
> produxit miseros: his nos conseuimus agros!
> insere nunc, Meliboee, piros, pone ordine uitis.
>
> See to what discord has led our unlucky citizens: for such men we sowed our lands! Now graft your pears, Meliboeus, plant your rows of vines.

Both passages present us with the peculiar clausula *ordine uitis~uitem* (with a playful variation of the sense of 'vine': a literal tree in Vergil, a military decoration in Lucan) and with a reference

to civil war (*discordia ciuis ~ armis ciuilibus*).[430] The combination of the two elements guarantees that the similarity is not accidental.[431] But why Lucan's narrator felt it necessary to quote this passage precisely at this point, namely in his portrait of the criminal soldier Scaeva, can be fully appreciated only if one takes into consideration the previous line in Vergil, which mentions an 'impious soldier' (therefore, a precursor of Scaeva, who may have reminded Lucan's narrator of his own 'impious soldier' when he read Vergil)[432] as the ultimate beneficiary of civil war (1.70-1):

> **impius** haec tam culta noualia **miles** habebit,
> barbarus has segetes. En quo discordia ciuis, *etc*.
>
> **An impious soldier** will own these well-tilled fields, a barbarian these crops. See to what discord has led our citizens, *etc*.

*

At 7.777-80 we read:

> Haud alios nondum Scythica purgatus in ara
> Eumenidum uidit uoltus Pelopeus Orestes,
> nec magis attonitos animi sensere tumultus,
> cum fureret, Pentheus aut, cum desisset, Agaue.

[430] The translation 'through a long career' is not in question (e.g. Conte 1988, 67), but some scholars, including Bourgery (1930, *ad loc.*) and Vallette (*ad loc.*), have found the expression *longo ordine* of line 146 clumsy. This perception of clumsiness might be in part due to the fact that Lucan's narrator 'had' to quote the Virgilian clausola, and was not able to fit it into the context seamlessly. For the compulsive quality of the narrator's allusivity in Lucan, see Ch. 3.5.

[431] The allusion has remained so far unnoticed.

[432] Once again, for my interpretation of the Lucanian narrator as a reader who constantly 'misreads' previous literature due to his neurotic obsession with civil war, see Ch. 3.5.

> Not different were the faces of the Eumenides which Pelopean Orestes saw when not yet purified upon the Scythian altar; and he felt a mental turmoil no more thunderstruck than that of Pentheus in his frenzy or Agave when she had ceased to rave.

This comparison refers to Caesar, beset by regret, in the form of ghosts, during the night after Pharsalus. The model is *Aen*. 4.469-71:

> Eumenidum ueluti demens uidet agmina Pentheus
> et solem **geminum** et **duplices** se ostendere Thebas,
> aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes.

Lucan's narrator establishes Caesar as a new Dido, which is surprising. In part through the addition of Agave (780), he also conjures the theme of intrafamilial conflict, which is central in the *Bellum Ciuile*. But I am interested here in something else. While retaining many elements of the model, Lucan's narrator has completely omitted line 470, which contains a double reduplication: two suns and two Thebes (*geminum*, *duplices*). It is possible to surmise that one important reason of his fascination for this passage is this evocation of doubleness, for, as every reader of the poem knows, imagery of duplicity and couples of items constitute one of the most obsessively repeated leitmotifs of the poem.[433] Thus, Lucan's readers find doubleness wherever they look, not only in the poem, but also in the previous literature that sparked the narrator's interest.

*

A case of Senecan screen allusivity is based on the same Vergilian passage (*Ag*. 728-9):

[433] I discussed this issue in more detail in Ch. 3.

sed ecce gemino sole praefulget dies
geminumque duplices Argos attollit domus.

But look! the daylight flashes out with sun that's twinned and Argos, twinned, lofts up doubled palaces.

Scholars agree[434] that the combination of *gemino sole*, *geminum Argos*, and the adjective *duplices* imitates the previously quoted Vergilian passage (in which cf. *solem geminum* and *duplices Thebas*).[435] The next line in the model, which Seneca omits, explicitly mentions 'Orestes, son of Agamemnon' (*Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes*), certainly not a coincidence since, in Seneca, Cassandra is prophesying about the future events of this saga.

*

My next Senecan example is *Thy*. 83-6:[436]

ante perturba domum
inferque tecum proelia et ferri malum
regibus amorem, concute insano ferum
pectus tumultu,

which reworks *Aen*. 7.335-40:

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[434] E.g. Trinacty (2014), 204-5.

[435] For this type of word repetions in the same context and its relation to allusive processes in Latin literature, see Wills (1996).

[436] Discussed e.g. by Schiesaro (2003), 32-36; Boyle (2017), *ad loc*.

tu potes unanimos armare in proelia **fratres**
atque odiis uersare domos, tu uerbera tectis
funereasque inferre faces, tibi nomina mille,
mille nocendi artes. fecundum concute pectus,
dissice compositam pacem, sere crimina belli.

There can be little doubt that the Furia's speech was influenced by Juno's speech to Allecto in *Aeneid* 7. Among other correspondences (*domum*, *infer*, *proelia*), the text reuses the Aeneadic expression *concute pectus*. That here Seneca has Vergil in mind is also guaranteed by the fact that in another tragedy he attibutes the phrase *concutite pectus* back to the 'copyright owner' Juno, as she speaks to the Furies (*HF* 105). In the *Aeneid*, Juno orders Allecto to stir hostility and war between the Trojans and the Latins. Her line of reasoning goes as follows: 'since you, Allecto, are able to move even *brothers* to wage war against each other, all the easier it will be for you to break the peace between two different *peoples'*. Her reference to brothers is therefore quite marginal with respect to the main plot. But in the *Thyestes* the Fury urges Tantalus to come back to earth in order to provoke a brutal clash between *two brothers*. If it could be transferred into the Fury's speech (something that, however, Seneca, as author, refuses to do), Vergil's line 7.335 would be in an even more appropriate context.

*

The same tragedy provides two further cases of screen allusivity. In the second chorus, we read (391-403):

Stet quicumque uolet potens
aulae culmine lubrico:
me dulcis saturet quies;

obscuro positus loco
leni perfruar otio,
nullis nota Quiritibus
aetas per tacitum fluat.
sic cum transierint mei
nullo cum strepitu dies,
plebeius moriar senex.
illi mors grauis incubat
qui, notus nimis omnibus,
ignotus moritur sibi.

Let the ruler who wants take his stance on the slippery rooftop of rule: *I'd like to loll in sweet calm*. Obscurity grants me safe footing. Let me relish my easy repose, and, known to none of my peers, let my life slow by silently. And when my days have all passed without any hullabaloo, let me die both old and a commoner. Death only *weighs heavy* on him whom everyone knows far too well but who dies unknown to himself.

First of all, it is important to stress the ambiguity of a couple of expressions. At line 393, *me dulcis saturet quies* signifies the chorus' desire for a quiet life; unbeknownst to them, however, their wording conjures what is going to happen later in the play (the cannibalistic banquet), since both the adjective *dulcis* and the verb *saturo*, here used metaphorically, originate from the semantic area of food and eating.[437] Similar considerations can be made for the expression *illi mors grauis incubat* (400). In this tragedy, *grauis* is a thematic word. It is insistently associated with food, especially in the final scene, figuring, as Tarrant observes, 'the abnormal heaviness within Thyestes'.[438] The verb *incubare*, too, conjures eating since it means 'to recline' (the typical position in which ancient Romans enjoyed their banquets) and also because it is a cognate of *accubare*, the standard Latin for 'to lie at table' (cf. OLD s.v. *accubo* 1a).

[437] For the ambiguity of the employment of *saturo* all through the play, see below my discussion of the next Senecan example.

[438] Cf. 781 *grauisque uino*, 910 *uino grauatum caput*, and several other occurrences, for which see the note *ad* 781 by Tarrant (1985). For *grauis* applied to food in general cf. OLD s.v. 2d and 5b.

Let us now turn to the allusion. 397 *per tacitum ... fluat* alludes to *Aen*. 9.30-2:[439]

> ceu septem surgens sedatis amnibus altus
>
> per tacitum Ganges aut **pingui** flumine Nilus
>
> cum refluit campis et iam se condidit **alueo**.

The words in bold, *pingui* and *alueo*, are idiomatically used by Vergil in a metaphorical sense, 'fertile' and 'riverbed', but the original meaning of the former is 'fat' and the latter is a close derivative of *aluus*, whose primary meaning is 'belly as the part of the body containing the organs of the alimentary system' (cf. OLD s.v. *aluus* 1 and 2).

*

Another case in the *Thyestes* is 826 *non Luna grauis digerit umbras*, 'the Moon cannot rout the heavy shades'. An unnatural darkness has suddenly fallen over the world. The sun has fled, but the normal signs of night are absent, one of them being the fact that there is no moon in the sky. As we have seen in the previous example, *grauis* in this tragedy often conjures ideas of eating, even when employed metaphorically. This line is no exception, especially because of the combination with the verb *digero*, which in Latin, like its derivative noun *digestio*, can be used to refer to the digestive process (cf. OLD s.v. *digero* 2a).

There is more. The phrase *grauis umbras* is eye-catching because it is a bold metaphor: how can a shade, the epithome of something immaterial and incorporeal, be heavy? I suggest that

[439] Noted by Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*., but strangely not Boyle (2017), *ad loc*.

this is a direct allusion to a very famous passage, the closure of the *First Eclogue*, where it is repeated twice (*Ecl*. 75-7):

> surgamus: solet esse grauis cantantibus umbra,
>
> iuniperi grauis umbra; nocent et frugibus umbrae.
>
> Ite domum **saturae**, **uenit Hesperus**, ite capellae.[440]

This allusion constitutes an example of screen allusivity in two different ways. First, in Vergil the goats return to the shelter being *saturae*, 'full to satisfaction with food', which has an obvious relevance in the *Thyestes*. Significantly, later in the play, after Thyestes has eaten the food offered to him, Atreus exclaims: *satur est!* (913). And at 955-6 *libet e tyrio saturas ostro / rumpere vestes*, 'I want to reap at these clothes replete with Tyrian dye', Thyestes expresses his sense of uneasiness and disquiet after the banquet (but before knowing what he has eaten) in terms that prefigure the hard truth that he is about to learn.

A second omission that is relevant for the new text is *uenit Hesperus*, 'the Evening-Star is on its way'. As I mentioned above, the chorus laments that, although the night unexpectedly came, no celestial bodies are visible in the sky. A reader who knew his Vergil would remember that in the alluded passage the shepherds, like the Senecan chorus, are looking at the sky for signs of the approaching night.

*

[440] Before Seneca, the phrase *grauis umbra* occurs only in this passage and at Lucr. 6.783, which is surely Vergil's model (in both *grauis* = 'harmful', and both passages are about trees: cf. Cucchiarelli (2012), *ad loc.*). In Seneca, also at *HF* 710, *Oed*. 542, *NQ* 3.9.1.

The following two cases can be discussed together:

Med. 66	donetur tenera mitior hostia
Hor. *Od*. 1.19.16	mactata veniet lenior hostia.
Phae. 797	lucebit Pario marmore clarius
Hor. *Od*. 1.19.6	splendentis Pario marmore purius.

These two cases are similar for a number of reasons. Both are found in choruses, both are in Asclepiad meter, both present a quasi-synonymic or phonic alteration that does not undermine the recognizability of the allusion (*mitior~lenior*; *purius~clarius*). Most importantly, both come from *Ode* 1.19.

At *Med*. 66, the chorus recommends that, on the occasion of the wedding between Jason and the daughter of Creon, appropriate sacrifices be made to honor various divinities. At 62-66, they recommend a sacrifice for a female deity who remains unnamed, but is obviously to be identified with either Venus or an amalgamation of Venus and Pax.[441] At *Ode* 1.19.6, Horace, too, is directing the operations in preparation for a sacrifice in honor of Venus. He hopes that she will exert her influence on him 'with a softer impact if [he] offer[s her] a victim'. – At *Phae*. 797, instead, the Chorus evokes the Horatian *Ode* to Venus in the context of a lenghty praise of Hippolytus's beauty.

It is obvious that, in both cases, the Chorus is unable fully to control the implications of what they say. Although they do not understand it, their reference to the slaughter of a 'tender' victim (*Med*. 66) is ominously appropriate in a play that will culminate in the slaughter of two

[441] Costa (1973), *ad loc*.; Hine (2000), *ad loc*.; Boyle (2014), *ad loc.*

children. The substitution, at *Phae*. 797, of ‘more clearly’ (*clarius*) for the original ‘more purely’ (*purius*) might be significant, because all through the play ‘purity’ is thematized, and problematized, as a defining characteristic of Hippolytus. Hippolytus’ self-imposed retirement in wild, uncontaminated nature has many ambiguous aspects to it ,[442] and his refusal of women and sex is an unnatural act of repression that will ultimately collapse and cause his ruin.[443] The fact itself of quoting from an ode to the goddess of Love in order to describe Hippolytus’ beauty creates a tension.

But there is more. First and foremost, these two allusions emphatically call our attention to, quite simply, *this Horatian poem*, and more precisely to the phrase that uniquely identifies it, namely its title. It is well known that it was a normal practice among the ancients to refer to literary works by the first few words of the text, so that for instance the *Aeneid* could be normally referred to as ‘Arma uirumque’ and Propertius’ *First Book* as ‘Cynthia’.[444] If a modern reader recognizes either of these allusions and asks herself: ‘Where have I read this?’, she will answer: ‘In Horace, *Ode* 1.9’. But an ancient reader would have answered the same question in a different way: ‘In Horace’s *Mater Saeua*’, a disturbing realization since a ‘cruel mother’ is the protagonist of both tragedies (both Medea and Phaedra cause the death of, respectively, her children and her stepson).[445]

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[442] Littlewood (2004), 292; Bartsch (2017), 88-90.

[443] Segal (1986).

[444] Cf. Cicero’s *O Tite si quid*, Menalcas’ *Formosum Corydon ardebat Alexin*, Ovid’s *Tempora*. See Kenney (1970); Barchiesi (1991), 6-7; Borgo (2007) with further bibliography and references. For the *Aeneid*, cf. e.g. Mart. 14.185.1-2 *accipe facundi ‘Culicem’, studiose, Maronis, / ne nucibus positis ‘Arma uirumque’ legas*, 8.55.17-20; Pers. 1.96; Servius *ad Aen. prol.*; *Anth. Lat*. 507; 518..

[445] *Od*. 1.19.16 is the last line of the poem. Might the case be made that alluding to the *last* line of a poem may represent an indirect invitation to have a look at its *first* line? This hypothesis appears to be in line with the poetics of inversion that characterize the Neronians’ recourse to allusivity, as I argue all through this chapter (cf. esp. section 3).

At *Med*. 66, *mitior* refers to Venus, like *lenior* in Horace; thus it is an exact antonym of *saeua* of *Od*. 1.19.1, also referring to Venus; the Chorus appears to offer a tendentious reading of the *Ode* by omitting the model's explicit mention of Venus' cruel qualities. The rest of the play will expose this as mere wishful thinking. The strong Augustan text (*saeua*) will ultimately prevail over the weak Neronian rewriting (*mitior*).[446]

[446] More on this line of interpretation in section 8 of this chapter.

3. NEGATION

Negation allusivity consists in the negation, through *non* or an equivalent, of a statement made by a previous poet. The specular situation is also possible, in which a negative statement by a previous poet is turned into a positive statement in the new text. The following passage from Seneca's *Medea* exemplifies both typologies (369-79):

> Terminus omnis motus et urbes
> muros terra posuere noua,
> nil qua fuerat sede reliquit
> peruius orbis:
> Indus gelidum potat Araxen,
> Albin Persae Rhenumque bibunt.
> Venient annis saecula seris,
> quibus Oceanus uincula rerum
> laxet et ingens pateat tellus
> Tethysque nouos detegat orbes
> **nec** sit terris ultima Thule.
>
> Every boundary's gone, and cities have put down their walls on new land. The world marked by access has nothing that stays in its previous place; the Indian drinks the Araxes' cold water, the Persians the Elbe and Rhine. An era will come in late years in which Ocean will loosen the chains of the world, huge Earth will lie all exposed, Tethys will show us new realms, and Thule wo**n't** be the far edge of land.

In this choral ode, the Corinthians complain about the 'criminal ship' (340) that sailed over the seas for the first time, thus opening the way for a series of cataclysmic upheavals. I have just quoted the last part of the song, in which the Chorus reflects on the disruptive repercussions that this historical watershed is going to have for the geography, as it were, of the entire globe. Importantly, this passage combines negative allusions to Vergilian contexts that inextricably connect a praise or endorsement of Augustus to geographic references. The last line predicts the

advent of an era in which Thule will not be the last boundary of the known world (379 ***nec*** ... *ultima Thule*), thus negating *Geo*. 1.30 *tibi seruiat ultima Thule*, in the celebrative apotheosis of Augustus at the beginning of the *Georgics*. This represents a ‘regular’ case of ‘negation allusivity’.

An example of the ‘reversed’ type (which suppresses a previous negation) is at lines 373-4, which describe the confusion of the present world, in which the Indians and the Persians drink the water of Western rivers. These two lines are modelled on *Ecl*. 1.61-3:

> **ante** pererratis amborum finibus exsul
> aut Ararim Parthus bibet aut Germania Tigrim,
> **quam** nostro illius labatur pectore uultus.

Here, famously, Tityrus is talking about his unnamed benefactor, the ‘god’ mentioned at line 41, whose intervention saved his estate from confiscation. Tityrus introduces the notion of a Parthian drinking the water of the Arar river as an adynaton, i.e. an event that he believes to be totally impossible. His words can effectively be paraphrased: ‘I will *never* forget about him, like the Parthians will *never* drink the Arar’. The implicit negation contained by the Vergilian text is overturned by the Senecan chorus, whose Eastern people *do*, in fact, drink the waters of rivers far removed from their respective homelands (cf. the presents *potat* and *bibunt* vs. Vergil’s future *bibet*).[447]

[447] It should be noted that Seneca’s *Araxes* (a river in Turkey) is a phonic response to Vergil’s *Arar* (a river in France); for this type of allusion see section 6

Negation allusivity is particularly important in Lucan. Notoriously, he deploys extended lists to let his readers know what does *not* happen or what is *not* present in a certain situation.[448] Sometimes, these elaborate lists have an allusive nature, serving the purpose of 'negating' an entire scene of the model text. Above in this chapter, I have argued that the enumeration of what Cato's wedding does *not* look like, at 2.350-80, is a response to the description of Peleus and Thetis' wedding in Catullus 64. A second example is the flight of the Romans from the capital at the news of Caesar's arrival (1.503-9):

> sic urbe relicta
> in bellum fugitur. **Nullum** iam languidus aeuo
> eualuit reuocare parens coniunx**ue** maritum
> fletibus, **aut** patrii, dubiae dum uota salutis
> conciperent, tenuere lares; **nec** limine quisquam
> haesit et extremo tunc forsitan urbis amatae
> plenus abit uisu: ruit inreuocabile uolgus.
>
> Just so, they abandon Rome and flee towards war. Now **none** could be detained by his father weak with age, **nor** a husband by his wife's laments, **nor** by ancestral Gods for long enough to utter prayers for preservation so uncertain; **none** lingered on the threshold and then left, after looking his fill maybe for the last time on beloved Rome: the multitude raced on, unstoppable.

As many scholars have observed,[449] this passage looks like a point-by-point reversal of the famous Vergilian scene in which Aeneas and the last Trojans leave their destroyed city at the end of Book 2 (705-804). Aeneas' acute concern for his father, son, wife, and family gods is portrayed by Vergil in vivid and moving terms, whereas Lucan's Romans, in their headlong

[448] I discussed this phenomenon in Ch. 1.3 and Ch. 5.1.

[449] E.g. Bramble (1982); Roche (2009), *ad* 504-7.

abandonment of the city, are not detained by any consideration for family relations or religious duties.

Cato's wedding and the flight from Rome are extensive examples of negation allusivity, which consist of prolonged lists and the turning upside-down, as it were, of an entire scene of the model. Normally, Lucan's and Seneca's allusive negations are directed to shorter units, most often single phrases, as the following lists demonstrate. I will not comment on individual cases because, apart from considerations of space, I am not interested in the details of each of them, but rather in the Neronians' massive recourse to these techniques as a comprehensive phenomenon. My approach inevitably subordinates quality of analysis to quantity of exemplification.

LUCAN

Verg. *Aen*. 6.776	(of Italian cities) haec tum nomina erunt, nunc sunt sine nomine terrae.
BC 9.973	(of the ruins of Troy) ... **nullum** est sine nomine saxum.
*	
Verg. *Aen*. 7.745	Vfens, insignem fama et felicibus armis
BC 3.337-9	**non** pondera rerum **nec** momenta sumus, **numquam** felicibus armis usa manus
BC 4.359	**nec** enim felicibus armis misceri damnata decet
*	
Verg. *Aen*. 3x[450]	... pietatis imago /
BC 7.320	sed dum tela micant, **non** uos pietatis imago ulla nec aduersa conspecti fronte parentes commoueant
*	
Verg. *Aen*. 12.652	(on Turnus' death; the *Aeneid*'s last line) uitaque **cum** gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras

BC 8.614-15 and 618-19 (on Pompey's death)

[450] *Aen*. 6.405, 9.294, 10.824.

indignatus apertum
Fortunae praebere caput
...
sed postquam mucrone latus funestus Achillas
perfodit, **nullo** gemitu consensit ad ictum.[451]

*

Ov. *Ars* 2.537 ardua molimur, sed *nulla*, *nisi* ardua, uirtus[452]
Ov. *Pont*. 2.2.111 difficile est, fateor, sed tendit in ardua uirtus[453]
BC 4.576 percipient gentes quam sit **non** ardua uirtus
seruitium fugisse manu

*

Sen. *Med*. 426-8

sola est quies
mecum ruina cuncta si uideo obruta:
mecum omnia abeant. Trahere, cum pereas, libet.

BC 7.654

nec, sicut mos est miseris, trahere omnia secum
mersa iuuat gentesque suae miscere ruinae.[454]

SENECA

Verg. *Ecl*. 1.83 maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.
Verg. *Geo*. 1.342 tum somni dulces densaeque in montibus umbrae
Oed. 154-5 **non** silua sua decorata coma
fundit opacis montibus umbras

*

Ov. *Met*. 8.158 multiplicique domo caecisque includere tectis
Phae. 523-4 **non** ... seque multiplici timens / domo recondit.[455]

*

Ov. *Am*. 1.13.14 et miles saeuas aptat ad arma manus
Phae. 533 **non** arma saeua miles aptabat manu.[456]

*

Ov. *Met*. 9.547 tu seruare potes, tu *perdere* solus amantem

[451] Hardie (1993), 38 n. 45.

[452] At *Ars* 2.537, the two negatives, *nulla* and *nisi*, elide themselves: Ovid is saying that *uirtus* is, indeed, *ardua*.

[453] At *Pont*. 2.2.111, *ardua* and *uirtus* do not agree with each other, but the meaning is in any case positive.

[454] Narducci (2002), 313.

[455] Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

[456] Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

HF 1303-4	natum potes seruare tu solus mihi, / *eripere* **nec** tu.[457]
*	
Ov. *Her*. 4.72	[on Hippolytus] flaua uerecundus tinxerat ora rubor
Phae. 376	[on Phaedra] **non** ora tinguens nitida purpureus rubor.[458]
*	
Hor. *Od*. 1.9.1-2	uides ut alta stet niue candidum
Thy. 115-19	iam Lerna retro cessit et Phoronides **latuere** uenae **nec** suas profert sacer Alpheos undas et Cithaeronis iuga stant parte **nulla** cana deposita niue timenteque veterem nobiles Argi sitim.[459]

*

Suppressed Negation

The opposite phenomenon is attested as well, namely the transformation of a negative statement of the model into a positive affirmation. Here are a couple of cases in Lucan:

Hor. *Epist*. 1.4.14	inter spem curamque, timores inter et iras omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum: grata *superueniet* quae **non** sperabitur *hora*.
BC 4.482	omnibus incerto uenturae tempore uitae par animi laus est et quos speraueris *annos* *perdere* et extremae momentum abrumpere lucis, accersas dum fata manu: non cogitur ullus uelle mori.
Verg. *Aen*. 4.232-4	Si **nulla** accendit tantarum gloria rerum nec super ipse sua molitur laude laborem, Ascanione pater Romanas inuidet arces?
Verg. *Aen*. 4.271-4	Quid struis? aut qua spe Libycis *teris otia* terris?

457 Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

458 According to *ThlL* 9.2.1084.65-6, quoted by Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*., the verb *tingere* is connected to *rubor* only in these two passages in extant Latin literature.

459 Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

	si te **nulla** mouet tantarum gloria rerum Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli respice.
BC 10.108-10	Excepere *epulae* tantarum gaudia rerum, explicuitque suos magno Cleopatra tumultu nondum translatos Romana in saecula *luxus*.

These two cases are interesting both formally and for their meaning. Formally, they combine the 'suppressed negation' technique with other techniques that I will discuss below: at *BC* 4.482, *annos* corresponds to *hora* of the model, which fits the pattern of 'antonym allusion' (Section 4); at *BC* 10.108, *gaudia* is aurally remindful of the word it has replaced, *gloria*, in an instance, minor but noticeable, of 'phonic allusivity' (see section 6). In Book 4, Vulteius disfigures, as it were, the Horatian context almost to (but definitely not beyond) the point of unrecognizability.[460] The Horatian wisdom of enjoying gratefully every single *hour* of one's life, an optimistic and heartwarming perspective that finds joy in the small things of life, is converted into an exaltation of suicide, phrased as an invitation to 'throw away one's *years*'. In Book 10, the narrator describes the despicable luxury of the banquet to which queen Cleopatra has invited Caesar; in *Aen*. 4, Iuppiter (232-4) and Mercury (271-4) exhort Aeneas to abandon another African queen, Dido, and the luxurious lifestyle that she provides (*Aen*. 4.271 *Libycis teris otia terris* ~ BC 10.108-10 *epulae ... luxus*).

Some examples of suppressed negation in Seneca:

Ov. *Met*. 6.611	**non** est lacrimis hoc ... agendum
Thy. 517	lacrimis agendum est.[461]
*	
Ov. *Met*. 2.762	[domus inuidiae] **non ulli** peruia uento
Phae. 474	solis et aer peruius uentis erit

[460] As far as I know, this allusion has so far remained unnoticed in previous scholarship.

[461] Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

*

Ov. *Met*. 12.158 [**non** illos ...] longaue multifori delectat tibia buxi
Ag. 358 multifora tibia buxo.[462]

*

Ov. *Met*. 13.471-2 (in Polyxena’s last speech)
genetrici corpus **in**emptum / reddite
Agam. 447 [Hectoris] empto[463] redditum corpus rogo.[464]

---

[462] Delrius (cited by Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*); Bömer (1982), *ad loc*.; Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

[463] Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.: ‘In der gedrängten Formulierung verschiebt sich das logisch ‘korrekte’ *(in)emptum corpus* zu *empto ... rogo*. Unabhängig von der Chronologie bleibt zumeist ersichtlich, wer wen imitiert’.

[464] A case in which Seneca combines a case of negative allusivity and one of repressed-negation allusivity (which may be called ‘displaced’ negation) is provided by *Ep*. 28.1 *animum debes mutare,* ***non*** *caelum*; cf. Hor. *Epist*. 1.11.27 *caelum,* ***non*** *animum, mutant qui trans mare currunt*. The alteration is not just formal, but reflects Seneca’s different understanding of travelling with respect to Horace’s pronouncement. See Schöpsdau (2015), 465-469; Stöckinger, Winter, Zanker (2017), 5-7.

4. ANTONYM

This technique substitutes, for a word of the model, a word meaning the opposite. The negative element, which in 'negation allusivity' is simply added to the reused segment, is here incorporated into it.

Ovid is Seneca's favorite target when it comes to antonym allusivity. I will start with two examples that are closely related. In a monologue to herself, at Ov. *Met*. 6.634, Procne reflects: *cui sis* ***nupta****, uide, Pandione nata, marito!* This observation is evoked, with an important alteration, in the exchange between Medea and the *nutrix* at *Med*. 171 (Nut.) ***Mater*** *es.* – (Med.) *Cui sim uide!*[465] – The very next line in Procne's monologue, *Met*. 6.635 *scelus est pietas* ***in coniuge*** *Tereo*, is reworked, with a comparable distortion of family relations, at *Thy*. 220 *fas est in illo quidquid* ***in fratre*** *est nefas*.[466] – Ovid's maxim at *Ars* 3.674 *prona uenit cupidis* ***in sua uota*** *fides* becomes, at *HF* 316, *prona est timoris semper* ***in peius*** *fides*. – Ovid describes Medea's preparations for a magical rite at *Met*. 7.232: *carpsit ...* ***uiuax*** *gramen*. At *Med*. 731, Seneca's Medea ***mortifera*** *carpit gramina*.[467]

The following sentence on Daedalus from Seneca's *Oedipus* contains two antonymic allusions, both of them evoking previous texts dealing with Deadalus (*Oed*. 892-8):

> Gnosium regem timens,
> astra dum demens petit,
> artibus fisus nouis,
> **certat** ueras aues
> uincere ac falsis nimis

[465] Already seen by Heinsius, cited by Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

[466] Pierrot, cited by Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

[467] Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*. shows that the iunctura *gramen carpere*, apart from these two passages, always refers to beasts feeding on grass, not to humans 'plucking herbs'.

imperat pinnis puer,
nomen eripuit freto.

The first model, for lines 895-7, is Ov. *Met*. 8.193-6:

tum lino medias et ceris alligat imas
atque ita conpositas paruo curuamine flectit,
ut ueras **imitetur** aues. Puer Icarus una
stabat.

On line 895 of the *Oedipus*, the most recent commentator notes that 'Seneca seems indebted to the *ueras aues* of Ovid's account (*Met*. 8.195)'.[468] However, the term *certat* also has to be taken into consideration, since it constitutes a case of 'antonym allusivity'. The antonymic nature of this allusion resides in the fact that, as is well know, the ancients saw allusive processes alternatively as forms of *imitatio* or *aemulatio*.[469] In the very act of 'imitating' a text, Seneca corrects the model's *imitetur* into *certat*, thus perhaps clarifying (both through what he does and through what he says) which of the two types of allusivity he prefers.

The model of line 898 is Hor. *Od*. 4.2.1-4, also about Icarus:[470]

Pindarum quisquis studet *aemulari*,
Iulle, ceratis ope Daedalea
nititur pinnis, vitreo daturus
nomina ponto.

[468] Boyle (2011), 315 *ad loc*.

[469] See e.g. Reiff (1959). That the terms *certare* and *imitari* could function as antonyms in certain contexts is demonstrated by passages such as Lucr. 3.5-6 *non ita* ***certandi*** *cupidus quam propter amorem / quod te* ***imitari*** *aveo*.

[470] Jakobi (1988) *ad loc*.

Daturus nomina ponto of line 4 is transformed by Seneca into *nomen eripuit freto*, which substitutes *do* for *eripio*, two antonyms.[471] Before, I said that the two models have in common two elements: they are about Daedalus' myth and they are altered by Seneca through antonyms. In fact, a third important element of similarity exists. Seneca selected these two models also because they deal with (cf. *aemulari* in Horace's passage) or evoke (cf. *imitetur* in Ovid's passage) problems of literary indebtedness.

I group in this paragraph other minor cases of antonym allusivity in Seneca. At *Agam.* 605 (*contemptor leuium deorum*) and *Tro*. 1017 (*leues metuit deos*), Seneca employs an 'impious' iunctura that, as far as I could verify, is not attested in other authors. Normally, gods are *magni*.[472] – Horace's famous parenthesis, ***scire*** *nefas* (*Od*. 1.11.1) becomes, at *HF* 1099, ***nescire*** *nefas*. – R. Tarrant suggests that *Thy*. 808 *renouat ueteres saucius iras?* may be an inversion of Catull. 96.3 *ueteres renouamus amores*.[473]

I would like to close this survey of Senecan cases of antonym allusivity with two passages in which this technique is applied twice simultaneously, so that the original text's contrast between two opposites is turned upside down. The return of the world to its normal state after the deluge is described by Ovid through the combination of the verb *cresco* and its opposite (*Met*. 1.345):

> **crescunt** *loca* **decrescentibus** *undis*.

---

[471] On the synonimic substitution of *freto* for *ponto*, see section 5.

[472] E.g. Varro *DLL* 5.58, Hor. *Serm*. 1.7.33, Prop. 2.34.46, Ov. *Pont*. 1.5.70, Apul. *Met*. 5.28, etc.

[473] Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

Seneca inverts the parallelism at *Tro*. 1047-8:[474]

quis status mentis miseris, ubi omnis
terra **decrescet** *pelagus*que **crescet**,
celsa ubi longe latitabit Ide?

Seneca retains the order of the synonymic nouns (*loca...undis~terra...pelagus*),[475] but inverts the order of the antonymic verbs (*crescunt...decrescentibus~decrescet...crescet*), thus effectively inverting the meaning.

Similarly, Manil. 3.13

male **conceptos** partus peiusque **necatos**

is turned into its opposite at *Thy*. 41-2:

liberi **pereant** male
peius tamen **nascantur**,

where the sequence *male...peius* is preserved, but the order of the verbs is inverted (*conceptos...necatos~pereant...nascantur*).[476]

*

LUCAN

Hor. *Od*. 3.16.26 quidquid arat **impiger** Apulus

[474] Kapnukajas (1936), 120.

[475] On 'synonym allusivity' see section 5.

[476] Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

BC 5.403-4	quae **piger** Apulus arua / deseruit.[477]
Hor. *Od*. 3.5.1	**credimus** Iouem regnare
BC 1.35	**mentimur** regnare Iouem.[478]
Verg. *Aen*. 5.455	tum pudor incendit uiris et **conscia** uirtus
Verg. *Aen*. 12.668	et furiis agitatus amor et **conscia** uirtus
BC 1.143-5	sed non in Caesare tantum
	nomen erat nec fama ducis, sed **nescia** uirtus
	stare loco.[479]
Verg. *Aen*. 8.342	lucum **ingentem**, ... asylum.
BC 1.96-7	**exiguum** ... asylum.[480]
Hor. *Od*. 4.7.1	diffugere niues, **redeunt** iam gramina campis /
BC 4.412-3	**spoliabat** gramine campum / miles.[481]
Verg. *Aen*. 2.368-9	crudelis ubique
	luctus, ubique pauor et **plurima** mortis imago
BC 3.652-3	tunc **unica** diri / conspecta est leti facies.[482]
Hor. *Od*. 1.11.	scire **nefas** quem mihi quem tibi
BC 7.289	quid fueris nunc scire **licet**
Verg. *Aen*. 2.729	**comitique onerique** timentem (= altruism)
BC 8.7	**laterique** timentem (= egoism).[483]
Verg. *Geo*. 1.24-8	tuque adeo, quem **mox** quae sint habitura deorum

[477] Barratt (1979), 130 notes the parallel; Groß (2013), 96-98 provides a fuller discussion.

[478] Discussed in section 7 (on 'Dialogue allusivity').

[479] Narducci (2002), 188, who correctly notes that this allusion combines the Vergilian clausula *conscia uirtus* with *Geo*. 3.84 *stare loco nescit*.

[480] Roux (2008), 41.

[481] The parallel seems to me obvious, but neither the commentaries (including the recent Esposito 2009 and Asso 2010) nor Groß (2013) mention it. The clausula *gramina/e camp-* is found in other previous authors (Lucr. 2.660; Ov. *Ars* 3.249; *Fast*. 6.237), but none of these places is nearly as memorable as the first line of one of Horace's most famous Odes, and the semantic reversal also suggests a direct allusion (in Horace the grass 'returns' to the fields, in Lucan the soldiers 'take away' the grass from the field). Lucan alludes to the same Horatian line also at 1.180 (where *referens* ~ Hor. *redeunt*), as I argue in section 6.

[482] *mortis imago* > *leti facies* is a double case of 'synonymic allusivity', for which see section 5 and Ch. 3.5.

[483] Mayer (1981), 81; Narducci (2002), 327.

	concilia incertum est, urbisne inuisere, Caesar,
	terrarumque uelis curam, et te maximus orbis
	auctorem frugum tempestatumque potentem
	accipiat cingens materna tempora myrto;
BC 1.45-6	te cum statione peracta
	astra petes **serus**, praelati regia caeli
	excipiet gaudente polo, etc.[484]
(Idiom)[485]	**minister** scelerum
BC 2.249	**ducibus** scelerum
Prop. 1.1.1	Cynthia **prima** suis miserum me cepit ocellis,
Prop. 1.12.20	Cynthia **prima** fuit, Cynthia finis erit.
BC 1.218	**tertia** iam grauido pluuialis Cynthia cornu
Verg. *Aen*. 4.355	quem regno Hesperiae fraudo et **fatalibus** aruis
BC 1.224	attigit Hesperiae **uetitis** et constitit aruis.[486]
Hor. *Ars* 343	omne tulit punctum qui **miscuit** utile **dulci**.
BC 8.487-8	sidera terra / ut **distant** et flamma mari, sic utile **recto**.[487]
Cic. *fr. inc. sed.*	**cedant** arma togae, concedat laurea laudi
BC 9.199	**praetulit** arma togae, sed pacem armatus amauit.[488]
Verg. *Aen*. 8.478-9	**saxo** incolitur fundata uetusto / urbis Agyllinae sedes
BC 4.12-13	super hunc fundata uetusta / surgit Ilerda **manu**.[489]

[484] The correspondences between the two passages are numerous and all scholars agree that Vergil's apotheosis of Augustus was the model for Lucan's apotheosis of Nero: see Thompson and Bruère (1968), 4-5.

[485] Some examples: Cic. *Pro Domo* 6, Liv. 1.41.7, Tac. *Ann*. 4.71. One case in Lucan himself, at 6.573.

[486] Narducci (2002), 199-200.

[487] A double case of 'antonym allusivity' (*miscuit~distant*; *dulci~recto*).

[488] Narducci (2002), 353.

[489] *Saxo* = nature; *manu* = human work.

5. SYNONYM

One way in which an author can modify a previous text is, simply, by using a synonym. This is especially interesting when the original term and its substitute are isoprosodic, for in this case the objection cannot be made that the later poet had recourse to a synonym *metri gratia*. Lucan presents us with some instances that, for various reasons, deserve careful consideration. The first two come from Book 7 and are based on the substitution of *arma* for *tela* or viceversa. The first instance is the clausula *perque arma per hostem* of line 7.497

praecipiti cursu uaesanum Caesaris agmen
in densos agitur cuneos, **perque arma, per hostem**
quaerit **iter**,

which is not attested in other authors and is modelled on a clausula repeated twice by Vergil in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*:

Aen. 2.355-60
inde, lupi ceu
raptores atra in nebula, quos improba uentris
exegit caecos rabies catulique relicti
faucibus exspectant siccis, **per tela, per hostis**
uadimus haud dubiam in mortem mediaeque tenemus
urbis **iter**;

Aen. 2.526-8
ecce autem elapsus Pyrrhi de caede Polites,
unus natorum Priami, **per tela, per hostis**
porticibus longis fugit et uacua atria lustrat

In the same book of Lucan, only about eighty lines later, we encounter the opposite substitution (*tela* < *arma*):

BC 7.574
ipse manu subicit gladios ac **tela** **ministrat**

Aen. 1.150
iamque faces et saxa volant, furor **arma** **ministrat**.[490]

It is relevant, at this point, to note that the very first word of Lucan's poem, *bella*, has been interpreted by many readers as a pointed variation of Vergil's *arma*.[491] In both cases from Book 7, Lucan could have preserved the Vergilian clausula verbatim.[492]

A similar case is the iunctura *rura colon(i)*, which has three occurrences in Lucan (1.170, 2.635, 6.277), but in Vergil and Ovid is attested four times, always in the form *arua colon(i)*.[493]

Here is a list of other isoprosodic cases in Lucan:

Verg. *Aen*. 1.103	fluctusque ad sidera tollit /
BC 1.416	fluctusque ad sidera ducat /
Catull. 101.9	... manantia fletu /
BC 7.163	... rorantia fletu /
Verg. *Aen*. 6.214-5	et **robore** secto / ingentem **struxere** **pyram**
BC 6.824-5	tunc **robore** multo / **extruit** illa **rogum**.[494]

[490] Ovid, like Vergil, has *arma* at *Met*. 15.471 *horriferum contra Borean ouis arma ministret*.

[491] Cf. e.g. Martindale (1993), 48 'his radical revisionism is prefigured in the very first word of the poem. *Bella* caps Virgil's synecdochic *arma*'.

[492] In fact, at 7.497 he has to add *-que* precisely to fit *arma* in the hexameter. At 7.574 he could have used *atque* instead of *ac* so as to retain the original *arma* (the elision *atque a-* in Lucan is frequent; in the same metrical position, cf. 5.632 ... *atque arduus axis/*; 9.852; 9.1057).

[493] Verg. *Geo*. 1.125, 1.507; Ov. *Met*. 11.33, *Pont*. 2.9.29.

[494] Lucan's Book 6 presents us with numerous other reminiscences of Vergil's Book 6, especially in the section on Erichtho (cf. the next example in this list).

Verg. *Aen*. 6.136-7 latet **arbore** opaca / aureus et foliis et lento uimine ramus
BC 6.645 ... Phoebo non peruia **taxus** opacat /.[495]

Verg. *Ecl*. 1.61 ante pererratis amborum **finibus** exsul
BC 3.339 usa manus, patriae primis a **sedibus** exul.[496]

Hor. *Od*. 3.30.6 **non omnis** moriar
BC 8.266-7 **non omnis** in arvis / Emathiis cecidi

I would like to close this section on Lucan with two cases that are similar to each other for two reasons: the involved terms refer to political offices, and the mention of a personal name strategically occurring only few lines after the allusion offers, so to speak, the key to its recognition. The first one is 2.538:

coeperit inde nefas, iam iam me **praeside** Roma.

This line is based on the notorious Ciceronian fragment

o fortunatam natam me **consule** Romam

(from Cicero's *De consulatu*, in which he exalted himself as the savior of the state for having repressed Catiline's plot). In Lucan, Pompey is talking about himself as the leader of the

[495] Admittedly, this case is weaker than the others in this list because, although *arbore* (with elided final *e*) and *taxus* are isoprosodic and occupy the same metrical position, they cannot replace each other in the respective lines.

[496] Synonymic, but not metrically equivalent is *BC* 7.703 *quidquid in ignotis solus* ***regionibus*** *exul*.

republican party in the current civil war, and he has no apparent need to evoke Catiline's conspiracy only three lines later.[497] Something similar happens at *BC* 8.716:

quaestor ab Icario Cinyreae litore Cypri,

a slight, but noticeable hint, in my opinion, to the first (and therefore memorable) line of Propertius 2.16:

Praetor ab Illyricis uenit modo, **Cynthia**, terris.

Even though the allusion might seem tenuous, that Lucan had Propertius in mind while composing this line appears to be confirmed by the fact that he mentions Cynthia (= the Moon) five lines later.[498]

Let us now move to discussing some Senecan examples of synonym allusivity. Particularly interesting is, in my opinion, the following one: [499]

Hor. *Od*. 2.10.11-12 feriuntque summos / fulgura montis
Ag. 96 feriunt celsos fulmina colles,

[497] 2.538-43 'Now, now, with me as leader, let Rome (*iam iam me praeside Roma*) seek punishment and penalty. And in fact those battles ahead are not called rightly real battles, but the wrath of your avenging country; this is war no more than when Catiline made ready to attack our homes'.

[498] 8.716-22 'As quaestor he had been an ill-starred companion of Magnus from the Idalian shore of Cinyrean Cyprus [...]. A mournful Cynthia offered too little light through the thick clouds'.

[499] Trinacty (2014), 145.

where *celsos*, *fulmina*, and *colles* are synonymic and isoprosodic substitutes for the original *summos*, *fulgura*, and *montis* respectively. Seneca has ingeniously derived two anapestic dimeters out of the original Sapphic meter by the simple omission of *que*.

Other Senecan cases:

Verg. *Aen*. 9.189 — **lumina** rara micant, somno uinoque soluti
HF 125 — iam rara micant **sidera** prono / languida mundo.[500]

Hor. *Od*. 1.19.16 — mactata veniet **lenior** hostia
Med. 66 — donetur tenera **mitior** hostia

Hor. *Od*. 1.19.6 — *splendentis* Pario marmore **purius**
Phae. 797 — *lucebit* Pario marmore **clarius**.[501]

[500] Fitch (1987), 163.

[501] Trinacty (2014), 146.

6. PHONIC

A playful form of allusive correction consists in replacing a term of the model with a term that 'sounds' similar, even though it is etymologically unrelated. Lucan uses this technique frequently. One simple example is the expression ***Acherontis adu****sti / portitor* (3.16-17). The clausula is surely based on the clausula ***Acherontis ad u****ndas/*, employed by the Augustan poets.[502] That this similarity is not a coincidence is guaranteed by the fact that we find a similar play on the segment *adu* at another point in Lucan's poem, namely at 2.183 ***spiramina naris adun****cae/*, which is modelled on the Ennian line *sulpureas posuit* ***spiramina Naris ad un****das/* (*Ann*. 222 Sk.). Lucan's text recasts the 'waves of the river Nar' as a 'curved nose' by playing on three elements: the identity in the genitive singular between the noun for 'nose' (*naris*, *is*) and the homonymous river (*Nar*, *is*); the potential of the term *spiramen* for both a literal (i.e. bodily) and a metaphorical (i.e. geological) usage; and the aural similarity between the phrase *ad undas* and the adjective *aduncus*. This allusion needs to be read in its context (2.181-5):

> auolsae cecidere manus exsectaque lingua
> palpitat et muto uacuum ferit aera motu.
> Hic aures, alius spiramina naris **adun**cae
> amputat, ille cauis euoluit sedibus o**rbes**
> ultimaque effodit spectatis lumina membris.
>
> Down fell the hands, torn off; the cut-out tongue quivers and beats empty air with noiseless movement. One cut off his ears, another the hooked nose's nostrils; a third tears out the eyeballs from their hollow sockets and, compelling him to view his body, finally gouges out his eyes.

[502] Prop. 3.5.13; Verg. *Aen*. 6.295.

During the Sullan purges of 82 BCE, Gratidianus was killed in a ghastly manner, which is narrated by the unnamed old man by singling out the various parts of Gratidianus' body as they are chopped. As is shown by the underlined segments, several elements in this list are quotations. A text about mutilation, thus, is made up by mutilated texts.[503]

Interestingly, only one out of four of the reused texts, in its original context, referred to a literal bodily injury. *Spiramina naris aduncae* (183), as I have just explained, is a phonic reworking of an Ennian passage about the river Nar, not about a nose. The phrase *cecidere manus* (181) is applied by Vergil, in the same metrical position, to Daedalus' inability to represent his son's death on an artistic work (*Aen*. 6.33). Gratidianus' severed tongue (181-2 *lingua / palpitat et*), I submit, is a slight, but direct, hint at Philomela's severed tongue in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[504] In a context like this, it is highly probable that *euoluit sedibus orbes*, too, is a phonic reworking of a passage that had nothing to do with physical mutilation, but could easily be tweaked so as to convey this idea, namely *Aen*. 2.610-12:[505]

> Neptunus muros magnoque emota tridenti
> fundamenta quatit totamque a sedibus urbem
> eruit.

[503] An extremely literal manifestation of Neronian literature's 'sadistic enactment of dismemberment upon fictional bodies and the bodies of literature' (Most 1992, 409). See my discussion of Neronian 'sadism' in Ch. 1.5.

[504] In the Ovidian text, *lingua* and the phrase *palpitat et* occur in the same metrical position, but with two lines in between (*Met*. 557-60). Is such a small detail strong enough to be considered a direct allusion? I believe so. First, the sequence *palpitat et* occurs, in extant Latin literature up to Lucan, only in these two passages. Second, it occurs again only in Statius, at *Theb*. 9.757 and 12.71, the former of which passages is a certain allusion to Philomela (Met. *palpitat et moriens* ~ Theb. *palpitat et mortem*, in the same metrical position). I admit that this allusion (i.e. Lucan alluding to Ovid's Philomela) is not strong, but whether this proposal is correct or not will not affect my argument in any relevant way.

[505] This allusion is not noted in previous scholarship.

Apart from the proximity of another case of phonic allusivity (*Naris aduncae* in the previous line; *orbes~urbem* in this line), a second compelling reason guarantees that the similarity between the two clausulae is due to direct influence of the Vergilian passage, namely the fact that the same Vergilian line, this time with no phonic alteration, is alluded to later in the same book: *BC* 2.574 *expulit armatam patriis e sedibus urbem*, 'has driven Rome in weapons from her ancestral abodes'.

The double phonic and bodily allusion of lines 2.183-4 is not the first we encounter while reading the poem. Book 1 already provides a comparable case (1.603-4):

> et Salius laeto portans a**ncilia** collo
> et tollens apicem generoso uertice **flamen**.
>
> And the Salian rejoicing to bear the sacred shields on their neck and the Flamen who raises aloft the pointed cap on noble head.

Lucan was certainly familiar with the clausula *monilia coll(um)/*, attested 4x in Ovid,[506] which is a phonic model for the clausula *ancilia collo* of line 603. Line 604 is surely modelled on Verg. *Aen*. 10.270-1 *ardet apex capiti cristisque a uertice* ***flamma*** */ funditur*.[507] In Lucan, *flamen* reworks, aurally, *flamma* of the model, and *uertice* means 'head', whereas in Vergil it referred to the 'top' of the helmet. Thus, as in the case discussed in the previous paragraph, we have here two cases of phonic allusivity on two consecutive lines, both of which involve a part of the body. In both cases, the operation is significant because dismemberment is an obsessive leitmotif of the poem.

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[506] Ov. *Her*. 9.57, *Met*. 5.52, 10.113, 10.264. Cf. also *Ciris* 170. In later authors: Iuv. 2.85, Sil. 12.309.

[507] This allusion is not noted in previous scholarship.

Here are two further examples of phonic allusivity in Lucan that are best discussed together:

BC 6.615-17

sed, si praenoscere **casus**
contentus, facilesque aditus multique patebunt
ad uerum.

But if you are content to learn events in advance, paths to truth both many and easy will open up.

and

BC 9.550-3

‘sors obtulit’ inquit
‘et fortuna uiae tam magni numinis ora
consiliumque dei: tanto duce possumus uti
per Syrtes, bellisque datos cognoscere **casus**.’

‘Chance’, he said, ‘and the fortune of our path have brought to us the mouth of a deity so might and the god’s advice: we can profit from so great a leader through the Syrtes and learn the outcome given to war.

In the first passage, Erichtho responds to Sextus’ request for a prophecy by stating that she will be able to ‘predict future events’. In the second passage, Labienus exhorts Cato to consult an Egyptian oracle ‘to know the outcome of the war’. Both clausulae are modeled on a famous Vergilian line, *Geo*. 2.490:

felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere **causas**

Happy he who could learn the causes of things.

Since this line influenced Lucan on another occasion (4.591 *nominis antiqui cupientem noscere*

causas), we may rest assured that the same line is the model also of 6.615 and 9.553, despite the alteration. The substitution of *casus* (‘event’, ‘outcome’, but also ‘chance’, ‘accident’, ‘disaster’, ‘death’) for the original *causas*, ‘causes, reasons’ (which evokes notions of intellectual control) epitomizes the immense distance between the (at least seemingly) positivistic and rational Weltanschauung of the *Aeneid* and the existentialist despair of the *Bellum Ciuile*.

Other cases of phonic allusivity in Lucan:

Verg. *Aen*. 2.337	in flammas et in arma feror, quo tristis **Erinys**
BC 1.686-88	dubiam super aequora Syrtim arentemque feror Libyen, quo tristis **Enyo** transtulit Emathias acies.[508]
Verg. *Aen*. 2.528	porticibus longis fugit et **uacu**a atria lustrat
BC 10.460	incerto lustrat **uagu**s atria cursu.
Verg. *Geo*. 2.383	... atque inter pocula **laeti** /
Verg. *Geo*. 3.379	... et pocula **laeti** /
BC 9.819	... corrumpunt pocula **leto** /
Verg. *Geo*. 3.284	f**ugit inre**par**abile** temp**us**
BC 1.509	r**uit inre**uoc**abile** uulg**us**.[509]
Verg. *Aen*. 2.488	ululant; ferit **aurea** sidera clamor
BC 2.34	feriunt ululatibus **aures**.[510]
Verg. *Ecl*. 9.7	certe equidem audieram, qua se subducere **colles** / ...
BC 4.580	mors, utinam pauidos uitae subducere **nolles** / ...
Hor. *Od*. 4.7.1	diffugere niues, **re**deunt iam gr**amina campis**

[508] Casali (2011), 99 n. 64.

[509] The Vergilian model is one of the most famous passages of the *Georgics*. That it must have been so also in antiquity is guaranteed by Sen. *Ep*. 108.24 *illud egregium ‘fugit inreparabile tempus’*.

[510] Narducci (2002), 116-117.

BC 1.180	*annua* uenali **re**ferens cert**amina Campo**.[511]
Ov. *Met*. 7.53	nempe pater saeuus, nempe est mea barbara **tellus**, /
BC 8.392-3	tibi barbara **tellus** / incumbat
but	
BC 2.309-10	me geminae figant acies, me barbara **telis** / Rheni turba petat.
Iliad, 30x times	... πόδας ὠκὺς **’Αχιλλεύς** /
BC 10.398	... non lentus **Achillas** /[512]
Aen. 2x[513]	... immitis **Achilli** /
Various authors[514]	saeuus **Achilles**
BC 10.523	terribilem iusto transegit **Achillea** ferro.[515]

A refrain in Ovid's exile poetry:[516] Caesaris **ira**

BC 5x[517]	... Caesaris **ira** /
but	
BC 4.143-4	postquam omnia fatis / Caesaris **ire** uidet
BC 10.409	iugulumque in Caesaris **ire** /
Idiom	magis magisque

---

[511] In Lucan, *annua* picks up the concept of the cyclical return of the seasons of the Horatian context. Lucan alludes to the same Horatian line also at 4.412-3 *spoliabat gramine campum / miles* (as I argued in Ch. 3.5) and at 9.182-3 *gramina campis / et renouare parans*.

[512] Achillas = Ptolemy's general. This example is supported, in the same book, by 10.523 *terribilem Achillem*, the next example in this list.

[513] *Aen*. 1.30, 3.87.

[514] For instance, *Aen*. 1.458, 2.29, Ov. *Met*. 12.582, etc.

[515] As in the previous case, here Achillas = Ptolemy's general. Nothing in Lucan's characterization of this figure (basically, a weak puppet maneuvered by the contemptible eunuch Pothinus) justifies the strong adjective *terribilis*, which therefore can be seen as a case of combined phonic (*Achillas~Achilles*) and synonymic (*immitis/saeuus~terribilis*) allusivity, based on the misappliance of the canonical representation of Achilles the hero to Achillas the degenerate Egyptian general.

[516] Outside Ovid and Lucan, I was not able to find the iunctura *Caesaris ira* in other previous or coeval authors. In Ovid, it occurs 21 times, exclusively in exilic poetry. It occurs 13 times at the end of an hexameter (cf. *BC* 10.409): Ov. *Tr*. 1.2.3 *neue, precor, magni subscribite Caesaris irae!*; 1.2.61, 1.3.85, 3.8.39, 3.11.17, 3.13.11, 5.1.41, *Pont*. 2.2.19, 2.5.11, 2.7.55, 3.3.83 , 3.6.7, 3.9.27. The iunctura *Caesaris ira* occurs in Ovid once at the beginning of an hexameter (cf. *BC* 4.144): *Pont*. 1.4.29 *Caesaris ira mihi nocuit, quem solis ab ortu*. It occurs 7 times in other metrical positions: 1.5.62 *detulit in Geticos Caesaris ira sinus*; 2.1.124, 3.11.18, 3.11.72; *Pont*. 1.9.28, 1.10.20, 3.7.39.

[517] In Lucan's *BC*, the iunctura *Caesaris ira* is found 5 times, always at the end of an hexameter: 3.136 *dignum te Caesaris ira / nullus honor faciet*; 3.439, 8.134, 8.643, 8.765.

BC 6.577 magis magicisque

*

An impressive Senecan case of phonic allusivity is the following:

Ov. *Met*. 13.479-80 (on Polyxena while dying)
tunc quoque cura fuit partes uelare tegendas,
cum caderet, **castique** decus seruare pudoris.
Tro. 88-91 (Hecuba's word)
ueste remissa substringe sinus
uteroque tenus pateant artus.
Cui coniugio pectora uelas,
captiue pudor?[518]

In Ovid, Polyxena retains her virginal sense of shame (*castus pudor*) till death. In patent violation both of social norms and of her daughter's behavior in Ovid, Seneca's Hecuba invites the chorus of Trojan women to bare the upper part of their bodies. With bitter sarcasm, she observes that any consideration of moral propriety is irrelevant in their current circumstances: now that they are slaves, it would make no sense to worry about the prospect of marriage, which to free girls would recommend against showing one's naked body. Her sarcasm is concentrated into the oxymoronic final phrase, *captiuus pudor*, which to her eyes represents an absurdity. Captives who still care about shame? Ridiculous. This powerful phrase reworks the phonic material offered by the model in an ingenious way: a second-declension genitive plus -*que* has become a second-declension vocative (*casti-que* > *captiue*) through the alteration of only two letters.

[518] Kapnukajas (1936), 20; Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*. 'Den berühmten Gestus der Polyxen kontrastierend (*Met*. 13.479-80)'.

Other Senecan cases:

Ov. *Met*. 3.374	admotas rapiunt uiuacia **sulphura** flammas
Med. 826	et uiuacis **fulgura** flammae
	de cognato Phaethonte tuli.[519]
Verg. *Ecl*. 1.27-9	Libertas, quae sera **tămen** respexit inertem
	candidior postquam tondenti barba cadebat
	respexit tamen et longo post tempore uenit.
Oed. 37-8	sed sera **tāndem** respicit fessos malis
	post fata demum sortis incertae fides.[520]
Many authors	uectus **equis**[521]
Verg. *Geo*. 3.358	Sol ... cum *in*uectus equis altum petit aethera.
HF 132-3	Iam caeruleis *e*uectus **aquis**
	Titan summa prospicit Oeta.
Ov. *Met*. 15.697	inpulerat **lĕuis** aura ratem: deus eminet alte
Ag. 431-3	hinc aura primo **lēnis** impellit rates
	adlapsa uelis; unda vix actu ***lĕui***
	tranquilla Zephyri mollis afflatu tremit.[522]
Prop. 1.2.1 = 4.5.55	quid iuuat ornato procedere, **uita**, capillo
Med. 802-3	tibi funereo de more iacens
	passos cingit **uitta** capillos.[523]
Hor. *Od*. 3.27.43-4	**recentis** / carpere flores?
Ov. *Fast*. 4.346	sparguntur iunctae flore **recente** boues.
Verg. *Aen*. 1.417	ture calent arae sertisque **recentibus** halant
Thy. 945-6	quis me prohibet flore **decenti** / uincire comam?

[519] This may well be an example of 'window reference'. Seneca 'corrects' Ovid by reintroducing the Lucretian phrase *fulgura flammae* (*DRN* 1.725, 6.182), Ovid's likely model.

[520] Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

[521] Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6.587 *quattuor hic inuectus equis*; Ov. *Ars* 2.138 *reuectus equis*; *Fast*. 6.724 *uectus es in niveis ... equis*, Livy 5.23.5 *curru equis albis iuncto urbem inuectus*, 11.2.12 *duo iuuenes equis aduecti*, 22.15.8 *concitatis equis inuectus*, Curt. *Hist. Alex*. 7.8.8 *per castra equis uecti*.

[522] Cf. Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*., who comments that the phrase *impellere ratem* is not attested before Seneca apart from this Ovidian passage.

[523] The Propertian line must have been famous both for its position at the beginning of the second poem of the *Monobiblos* and because Propertius himself self-quotes it in his last book. The iuncturae *uita capill-* and *uitta capill-* are attested only in these three passages in the entire Latin literature, as far as I was able to establish.

Ov. *Met*. 11.108-9 — alta **fronde** uirentem / ilice *detraxit* virgam
Sen. *Phae*. 1036-7 — caerulea taurus colla sublimis gerens
erexit altam **fronte** uiridanti iubam.[524]

Many authors[525] — aeterna **fāma**
Thy. 149 — hos aeterna **fămes** persequitur cibos.[526]

Ov. *Met*. 13.445-8 — (Achilles' speech requesting Polyxena' sacrifice)
'inmemores' que 'mei disceditis', inquit 'Achiui,
obrutaque est mecum uirtutis gratia nostrae!
ne facite! utque meum non sit sine honore sepulcrum,
placet Achilleos mactata Polyxena **mānes**!'
Tr. 191-2 — (also Achilles' speech requesting Polyxena' sacrifice)
'ite, ite, inertes, debitos **mănibus** meis
auferte honores'.[527]

Ov. *Her*. 4.72 — (on Hippolytus)
flaua uerecundus tinxerat ora **rubor**
Phae. 652 — (on Hippolytus' father)
et ora flauus tenera tinguebat **pudor**.[528]

Hor. *Od*. 1.11 — *Tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi*
finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Babylonios
temptaris numeros. ut melius, quidquid erit, pati.

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[524] For the phrase *fronde uirere* cf. also: Catull. 64.293 *uestibulum ut molli uelatum fronde uireret*; Verg. *Aen*. 6.205-6 *quale solet siluis brumali frigore uiscum / fronde uirere noua*; Ov. *Met*. 11.27-8 *fronde uirentes / coniciunt thyrsos*; Stat. *Silv*. 1.2.231 *fronde uirent postes*.

[525] Virg. *Aen*. 7.2 *aeternam moriens famam Caieta dedisti*; *Laus Pisonis* 249 *possumus aeternae nomen committere famae*; Phaedr. 3. prol. 53 *aeternam famam condere ingenio suo*; Lucan 8.617 *uellet et aeternam fletu corrumpere famam*.

[526] There is an obvious thematic reason why *fama* becomes *fames* in a tragedy where puns and double entendres about food and eating proliferate. Cf. my discussion of the cases of 'screen allusivity' from the *Thyestes* in section 2 of this chapter.

[527] Boyle (1994), *ad loc*.: 'Achilles' whole speech is constructed out of and rewrites the brief outburst of Ovid's Achilles at *Met*. 13.445-8, which much of its language echoes and translates. [...] *manibus* (with short *a*), 'hands', picks up the final word of Achilles' speech, *manes* (with long *a*), 'shades', *Met*. 13.448, while at the same time translating *uirtutis nostrae*, 'my valour', of *Met*. 13.446' .

[528] Heinsius *ad Her*. 4.72, Jakobi 1988 *ad loc*. In this tragedy, Seneca quotes the same Ovidian line also at line 376 *non ora tinguens nitida purpureus rubor*, for which see above section 3 on 'negation allusivity'. The link between *Phae*. 652 and *Her*. 4.72 is strengthened by the similarity of the following line, *Phae*. 653 *inerant lacertis mollibus fortes tori*, to *Her*. 4.81 *seu lentum valido torques hastile lacerto*, with analogous juxtaposition of antonymic adjectives (*mollibus fortes* ~ *lentum valido*), one of them being in agreement with the noun *lacertus*.

seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,
quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare
Tyrrhenum: sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
spem longam reseces. dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: carpe diem quam minimum credula **postero**.

Thy. 62

Mittit luctus signa futuri
mens ante sui praesaga mali:
instat nautis fera tempestas,
cum sine uento tranquilla tument.
Quos tibi luctus quosue tumultus
fingis, demens?
credula **praesta** pectora fratri:
iam, quidquid id est, uel sine causa
uel sero times.

7. DIALOGUE

In this section I group a series of allusions that seem to stage and dramatize, quite literally, what one may call an 'intertextual dialogue'.

One characteristically Neronian type of dialogic allusivity is that involving either the introduction or suppression of a question. At *Met*. 12.592-4, Neptunus exclaims:

cum tamen ille ferox belloque cruentior ipso
uiuit adhuc, operis nostri populator, **Achilles!**

In the *Troades*, almost as if directly responding to Neptunus, Andromaca turns this positive statement into a question (*Tro*. 955):

adhuc Achilles uiuit in poenas Phrygum**?**[529]

Similarly, in the same tragedy, Horace' triumphant boast *non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei / uitabit Libitinam* (*Od*. 3.30.6), as I discussed in Ch. 5.1, is questioned by the Chorus at 378: ***an*** *toti morimur nullaque pars manet / nostri****?***

The opposite had happened in the first chorus. At Ov. *Met*. 13.519-20, with bitter sarcasm, Hecuba asks: ***quis*** *posse putaret /* ***felicem Priamum*** *post diruta Pergama* **dici?** */ Felix morte sua est!* In response, as it were, the chorus of Trojan women in Seneca assert: 145-6 ***felix***

[529] Hinds (2011), 45.

Priamus dicite *cunctae!*; and again later: 157-8 ***felix Priamus dicimus*** *omnes!* They look eager to reassure Ovid's Hecuba that she is not alone to think that way.

Famously, in his *Fourth Eclogue*, Vergil had announced the renovation of the universe (*Ecl*. 4.4-5): ***ultima*** *Cumaei* ***uenit*** *iam carminis* ***aetas!*** In Seneca's *Thyestes*, the chorus, more hesitatingly, asks (877): *in nos* ***aetas ultima venit?***[530]

We encounter the opposite inversion, in the same play, when Aeneas' question to his father at *Aen*. 6.721 *quae lucis* ***miseris*** *tam* ***dira cupido?*** is changed by Thyestes into an affirmation: *Thy*. 953 *flendi* ***miseris dira cupido*** *est*.[531] Aeneas' question provides Anchises with the occasion for an explanation of metempsychosis, a positivist lecture that puts the existential miseries that the poor mortals have to endure into perspective; but Thyestes' is a nude, unanswered statement in a monologue, modifying the Vergilian question in a pointed way: what the unhappy ones desire is not light, but simply to cry.

After Aeneas asks her to lead him into the Underworld (*Aen*. 6.103-23), the Sibylla is skeptical. She doubts that Aeneas fully understands the dangers of such an expedition (124-32). But eventually she shows herself willing to help, if Aeneas is as serious as he says to be (133-5):

> quod si tantus amor menti, si tanta cupido est
> bis **Stygios** innare **lacus**, bis nigra **uidere**
> **Tartara**, et insano **iuuat** indulgere labori
> accipe quae peragenda prius.

[530] Trinacty (2014), 57-59.

[531] Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*.

The Sibyl's hypothetical reasoning can be framed as an implicit question: 'Aeneas, do you truly want to do this? If so, this is what you have to do'. When Cassandra appropriates these words,[532] her eagerness seems to be a response to the Sibyl's doubts: 'yes, I *do* want to go there!' Cf. *Ag*. 750-2:

> **iuuat** per ipsos ingredi **Stygios lacus**,
> **iuuat uidere Tartari** saevum canem
> avidique regna ditis!

Lucan presents us with similar permutations of this technique. A particularly interesting example, in which the same model originates more than one response, is based on *Aen*. 1.241, where Venus famously asks Jupiter: ***quem das finem*** *rex magne* ***laborum?*** In Lucan, Figulus seems to be addressing this very question, when he says (1.670-1) ***superos quid*** *prodest* ***poscere finem?*** *cum domino pax ista uenit*: since the end of civil war will coincide with the end of freedom, why should one even bother consulting the gods about it (as Venus had consulted the king of the gods)? Cato, too, seems later to offer his own point of view on the issue, suggesting, at 2.317: <u>*hic*</u> ***dabit*** <u>*hic*</u> *pacem iugulus* ***finem****que* ***laborum***, with the emphatic repetition of *hic* highlighting the different solution prospected by Cato. It will be Cato, not Jupiter, to bring the conflict to an end.[533] Venus, Figulus, and Cato seem engaged in a conversation, in which, however, they fail to find a common ground.[534]

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[532] Cf. Tarrant (1976), 312; Littlewood (2004), 216-7.

[533] On Cato's and other Lucanian characters' clearly pathological sense of their own supposed grandiosity, see Ch. 3.1.

[534] For the allusion to Vergil: Casali (2011), 93-4. For its relation to the problem of the 'end' of the poem: Stover (2008).

Verg. *Geo*. 1.479 *sistunt amnes terraeque dehiscent* and 3.432 *terraeque ardore dehiscunt* are questioned by Lucan at 1.645-7 *terrae**ne** dehiscent / subsidentque urbes, an tollet feruidus aer / temperiem**?***[535]

Apart from the turning of a statement into a question, or vice versa, the later author can activate a dialogue with a previous text also through the emphatic addition of a word or phrase,[536] or through the sarcastic repetition of a term of the source, which now takes on a sharper sense.

For instance, at Hor. *Od*. 3.27.37 *leuis una mors est* is appropriated and rectified by Deianira in a lengthy monologue (*Oet*. 842-84), in which she reflects on how to commit suicide to punish herself for causing Hercules' death; at 866, she says: *leuis una mors est – leuis, at extendi potest*, quoting verbatim the Horatian sentence in order better to expose why it is flawed.

At Ov. *Met*. 1.230, in his own narration of how he punished Lycaon, Jupiter says: *ego **uindice flamma** / in domino dignos euerti tecta penates*. In her intense confrontation with Jason, for a moment Medea diverts her focus from her present interlocutor to respond to Ovid's Jupiter, and exclaims (531-3)

> <u>nunc</u> summe toto **Iuppiter** caelo tona,
> intende dextram, **uindices flammas** para
> omnemque ruptis nubibus mundum quate!

Before Seneca, the phrase *uindex flamma* is not attested outside these two passages.[537] For anybody familiar with Ovid's text, it is difficult not to perceive the strong emphasis of *nunc*

[535] Casali (2011), 93-4.

[536] Cf. the repetition of *hic* at *BC* 2.317, which I discussed two paragraphs above.

[537] Cf. *ThLL* 6.870.31-2 and Jakobi (1988), *ad loc*.

(531) in Seneca. It is 'now' (i.e. in Seneca's play), more than at any other moment in history (and literature), that Jupiter's intervention is required.

At *Agam.* 604-9, the chorus of captive Trojan women reflect on the fact that, in their situation, the only alternative to servitude is suicide:

> Solus seruitium perrumpet omne
> contemptor leuium deorum,
> **qui** uultus Acherontis atri,
> **qui** Styga tristem non tristis uidet
> audetque uitae ponere finem:
> **par *ille* regi, par superis erit**.
> o quam miserum est *nescire* mori!
>
> Only the person who scorns the capricious gods can break through all forms of enslavement. He can look without grimness on the face of dark Acheron, he can look on grim Styx. He's brave enough to impose a limit on life. He'll be a match for kings and for gods up above. Oh, what suffering it is not know how to die!

In the space of just two lines, this passage offers us two cases of allusive 'replies' to famous previous texts. Line 608 clearly reproduces Catullus' 51.1-2 ***ille*** *mi* ***par esse deo*** *uidetur, /* ***ille****, si fas est, superare* ***diuos***; but the *ille* of the new context sounds like a peremptory correction of the predecessor's picture: 'equal to the gods is *that one* – namely the courageous man that I have just described, not your model of a successful playboy'.

The polemical vein is maintained in the immediately following line, which reworks Turnus' words at *Aen.* 12.646 *usque adeo mori miserum est?* There is a certain analogy between Turnus' situation (he is expressing his resolution to challenge Aeneas in a duel, even though he knows that this will probably bring about his death) and the chorus' exaltation of suicide, but the formal differences of the two utterances are also important. Not only Turnus' question has

become a positive statement; the chorus' formulation also exhibits the significant addition of *nescire*: what is really miserable is, not to die, but rather *not to know* how to die.

Looking back at Ch. 5, it is important to observe that negative, antonymic, synonymic, and phonic allusions can often be considered as cases of dialogic allusivity, in which either the negative particle or the altered term(s) possess an emphatic force that pointedly responds to the previous text. Here follow two instances among the countless that could be cited.

Horace's *Ode* 3.5 opens as follows: *caelo tonantem credidimus Iouem / regnare*, which is responded to and corrected by Lucan at 7.447 *mentimur regnare Iouem*.[538]

Manilius' *miseris notissima nautis / signa* (1.294-5) is corrected by Lucan at 8.173-4 *miseros fallentia nautas / sidera*, underlining the latter's gloomier view of the human understanding of the world.[539]

[538] Henderson (1988), 148-9 and n. 195.

[539] This case was identified and well discussed by Tracy (2010), 643-4.

8. AN ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE?

The Neronian poets (it should now be clear) are fixated on negating, inverting, correcting, questioning, displacing, and in general modifying their models. The long lists offered in the previous sections document the anomalous quantity of this phenomenon, deemphasizing the contextual function that specific allusions might, or might not, have in specific circumstances. Although it is sometimes possible to find contextual reasons why a poet might have overturned the meaning of a certain model in this or that passage (and I have not refrained from doing precisely that in some of my close readings), when we take into consideration the massive proliferation of these procedures as a whole, the suspicion arises that this contrarian mode of allusivity is a compulsive, almost automatic behavior, which is performed, not because *the new texts* need certain allusions to fully realize their meaning, but rather because *the new poets* need to allude, and change, previous texts so as to satisfy an inner demand. Correcting the (mostly Augustan) predecessors appears to be, for the Neronians, an almost unthinking habit, a technique which is so overdone as to become predictable.

Of course, my purpose is not to criticize the Neronian poets on aesthetic grounds. In fact, I love and enjoy reading their works, and I experience great intellectual pleasure whenever I discover or ponder an allusion. What here I am reacting to is not Neronian poetry itself, but a certain strand of recent scholarship, which seems to appreciate the negative nature of Neronian allusions as a sign of ideological opposition, intellectual independence, or even originality;[540]

[540] See Ch. 1.3 and 1.4.

this current adopts, whether explicitly or not, Harold Bloom's notorious concept of 'the anxiety of influence', a notion that requires inspection.

According to Bloom, poetic influence is one major factor contributing to the creation of high poetry, 'strong poetry' in his formulation. Any new 'strong' poet, to be successful, effects 'a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence [...] is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist'.[541] Poems, in other words, come to life in response to other poems, through a process of artistically fruitful differentiation. 'Poetry is the anxiety of influence' and 'criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem'.[542] Put in these terms, the Neronians' revisionist relation to their literary ancestors might well look like a typical example of this anxiety of influence. However, this would be a way too literal and simplistic approach, against which I will direct two distinct critiques: one against Bloom's theory itself, the other against its applicability to Neronian literature.

The 'anxiety of influence', as a theory, originated from a rearguard need to salvage the autonomy of the 'Author' as the subject in control of 'His' work, in an era in which various currents of postmodernism and post-structuralism were starting to question these notions.[543] The theory was formulated by Bloom, and has been employed by many others, as an interpretive tool that emphasizes 'anxiety' as a guarantee of the originality, and supposed high quality, of the author in question. But Bloom's tendentious focus on 'anxiety=originality' confirms (in my

[541] Bloom (1973), 30.

[542] Bloom (1973), 95-6.

[543] R. Barthes' 'The death of the author' was first published in 1967, six years before Bloom's book.

opinion) what it tries to negate, because if there is an anxiety, it must be because there is an unavoidable influence, and the stronger the former, the more real the latter must be. It is a naive perspective which interprets a poet's reworking or misreading of another poet's text as a proof of independence and power. A more perceptive reader may view the same dynamic as evidence of a circumstance that that author, qua agent and creator, is not willing to acknowledge, namely that, in one way or another, he cannot avoid being influenced by his predecessors, whose texts, therefore, do exercise some control over his.

Even assuming that Bloom's theory is valid, to apply it to the adversarial attitude of the Neronians toward the Augustans would be a mistake for the simple reason that the former is an exaltation of poetical originality, not of revisionism per se. At the core of Bloom's theory resides the assumption that the greater the 'anxiety', the more forcefully it will prompt a 'strong' author to be original. The kind of allusive techniques I have described above, however, leave only minimal room for the production of something truly new: for the most part, they consist in the simple negation or distortion of what others have said. They are 'negative' in the same way in which, in photography, we call a 'negative' an image in which the lightest and the darkest areas of the photographed subject have been inverted. The colors might change, but the contours and shapes of the image remain the same. For the most part, when it comes to allusivity, the Neronians limit themselves to repeating their models' words, with a small 'not' in front of it or equivalently minor variations.

Although in different ways, both Bloom's 'strong' poets and the Neronian hyper-revisionist poets, ultimately, depend on their predecessors. They could not exist without them, they could not ignore them, they could not avoid trying being *like* them. Bloom's 'strong' poets, through all their misreadings, misprisions, and caricatures, the Neronians through all their

negations, antonyms, and phonic variations, *do* repeat the forbears' texts. What I am suggesting is that any 'negation' of a previous poet by a later poet, in whatever form, necessarily involves a certain dose of self-contradiction. Inasmuch as a new text comes to life, the operation has a creative component. But in as much as an old text fails to be forgotten, a deep fixation is revealed, and any attempt to negate that desire to imitate implodes on itself, because, in the very act of negating that desire, it realizes it. 'The lady doth protest too much, methinks'.

A model that, compared to Bloom's anxiety of influence, has better chances of explaining the inner dynamics of Neronian allusivity is 'Freudian negation', a form of reaction formation that negates something all the more forcefully because that 'something', even though possibly not fully brought to awareness, or not accepted by the individual, is true:[544]

> The manner in which our patients bring forward their associations during the work of analysis gives us an opportunity for making some interesting observations. 'Now you'll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I've no such intention'. We realize that this is a rejection, by projection, of an idea that has just come up. Or: 'You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother'. We amend this to: 'So it *is* his mother'. In our interpretation, we take the liberty of disregarding the negation and of picking out the subject-matter alone of the association. It is as though the patient had said: 'It's true that my mother came into my mind as I thought of this person, but I don't feel inclined to let the association count'.

So insistently and repetitively did the Neronians express a will to be 'different' from their models, that we start to doubt whether the opposite might be true. May we, like Freud, take the liberty of disregarding the negation?

Adopting this perspective would entail looking at Neronian literature with new eyes, namely as a corpus of texts whose authors systematically fail to silence previous texts. In

[544] Freud (1925 [2001]), 235-6.

Neronian literature, far from being ‘controlled’ by the Neronian authors, Other texts seem to speak *despite* the latters’ best efforts to repress them. This paradoxical conclusion can be illustrated through one last textual example. After the reconciliation of Atreus and Thyestes, the Chorus celebrates the brotherly love that they seem to have witnessed (*Thy*. 546-622); as is typical of Senecan choruses, they demonstrate a great inability to understand what is really going on around them. They have recourse to an extended Horatian imitation to signify their sense of regained peace (573-5):

> Iam **minae** saevi cecidere *ferri*,
> iam **silet** *murmur* grave classicorum,
> iam **tacet** stridor *litui strepentis*:
> alta pax urbi revocata laetae est.
>
> But now the threats of the brutish sword have passed, now silent is the baneful blare of trumpets, now the clarion’s shrill call is hushed: deep peace has returned to the rejoicing city.

This passage imitates Hor. *Od*. 2.1.17-20:

> Iam nunc **minaci** *murmure* cornuum
> **perstringis auris**, iam *litui* ***strepunt***,
> iam fulgor *armorum* fugaces
> terret equos equitumque vultus.
>
> Now you rasp our ears with the horns’ threatening bray, already bugles blare, already the flash of weapons strikes fear into the nervous horses and the horsemen’s faces.

The imitation/reversal is clear: the Senecan Chorus negates practically every element of the Horatian text, which constitutes a praise of the vividness of Pollio’s narration of Rome’s civil

wars.[545] Thus in Seneca the Chorus describes a situation that they perceive as a moment of idyllic peace by essentially re-writing an Horatian description of real warfare. But the Chorus is totally mistaken: the peace between the two brothers is only apparent, as the Chorus will soon discover. Therefore, their studied negation of the Horatian model amounts to a delusion: the Augustan text (= the horror of fratricidal war) will soon seize control of the play, annihilating the fictitious peace conjured by the Neronian text. In short, the 'negation' of Horace operated by the Chorus is evanescent and ineffectual: the Horatian voice which they attempt to bridle will prove to be stronger than theirs.[546]

In this chapter, I have argued that the Neronian authors behave exactly as the Senecan Chorus of the last example: their 'negations' are, after all, weak and minimal gestures that emphatically fail to erase the words of the predecessors. Paradoxically, precisely because these gestures are repeated so obsessively, they in fact render it impossible to read Neronian literature without thinking all the time about Augustan literature. In more technically psychoanalitic terms, the negative form of the Neronians' allusive procedures may be read as a compromise formation by which they defend against, while at the same time realizing, a profoundly ambivalent need to be *like* their literary fathers. Their remarkable display of the anxiety of influence is only one side of the coin, the other side being a deeper and, in some respects, masochistic fascination for letting the predecessors' texts take control of their works.

[545] Sen. *iam* x3 ~ Hor. *iam* x3. Sen. *minae* ~ Hor. *minaci*. Sen. *murmur* ~ Hor *murmure*. Sen. *classicorum* ~ Hor. *cornuum*. Sen. *litui strepentis* ~ Hor *litui strepunt*. Sen. *ferri* ~ Hor. *armorum*. Sen. *silet* and *tacet* are antonyms of Hor. *perstringis auris* and *strepunt*.

[546] Previous readings of this allusion differ considerably from mine: Tarrant (1985), *ad loc*. limits himself to noting that the allusion inverts the model; Trinacty (2014), 55 that the allusion 'suggests the hopeful reversal of the recent civil war'; Boyle (2017), 300 comments that, through this allusion, Seneca connects his mythic subject to contemporary Rome.

Epilogue

‘Theme and variations’ is a common musical structure, in which an initial, extremely simple melody originates a number of elaborate transformations. The structure of this dissertation may be compared to that of a ‘theme and variations’ piece. In the five chapters that constitute the main body of my study I have analyzed authors that are considerably different from one another, from perspectives and through methods that, too, are considerably different from one another. But the central thesis of this dissertation, which constitutes the foundation of each single chapter and chapter-section, is remarkably simple: in Neronian literature, the relation between the speaking subject and its own discourse is problematic, and often even conflictual.

I suggest that, if we adopt this interpretive key, many bizarre features of Neronian literature become easier to make sense of. Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius continuously conjure human speakers who fail fully to own their own discourse; these authors’ own practice of literature displays ambiguous, contradictory, neurotic, and quasi-postmodernist elements that render their works so intellectually fascinating and artistically powerful.

Like ‘theme and variation’ pieces, this dissertation has an ‘open’ structure, meaning that no ‘variation’, in itself, is necessary to the general argument, and no specific sequence of reading is recommended. The main purpose of this study has been to present an innovative way of reading Neronian literature, which seems to me highly promising; this is my ‘theme’. Its various ‘variations’ are meant to show the validity of this central idea. The ‘open’ structure of this study has allowed me to adopt an experimental approach, in which rigorous philological analyses and more speculative psychological interpretations coexist side by side.

In this spirit, the Appendices that follow constitute a second set of 'variations' of my main 'theme'. There are several reasons why I have created this bipartite structure: some appendices gather corroborative materials that could not be presented in the regular chapters because of their size (Appendices 1, 2, 3); other appendices represent more speculative elaborations on the regular chapters (4, 5); other appendices contain solid philological analyses that (in my opinion) shed important new light on aspects of Neronian literature, and have been relegated to this secondary half of the study simply because their scope is narrower compared to that of the primary chapters, not because their conclusions are less cogent (6, 7).

It was typical of 18th- and 19th-century composers to write their own 'variations' on someone else's 'theme'. It is my hope that this study might inspire other scholars to read Neronian literature with new eyes.

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APPENDIX 1

CORRECTIO IN SENECA

A1 = RE-CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

A1-α: Explicit re-definitions through the verb *esse*

Prov. 4.12 uerberat nos et lacerat fortuna: patiamur. Non *est* **saeuitia**, **certamen** *est*.
Const. 3.3 inuulnerabile *est* non **quod non feritur**, sed **quod non laeditur**.
Ira 1.20.1 non *est* enim illa **magnitudo**: **tumor** *est*;
Ira 2.2.5 sed omnia ista ... *sunt* ... nec **adfectus** sed **principia proludentia adfectibus**.
Ira 3.41.2 aequalitas uitae fidem fecit non **segnitiem** illam animi esse sed **pacem**.
Brev. 2.2 ceterum quidem omne spatium non **uita** sed **tempus** *est*.
Brev. 12.1 non *est* ergo hic **otiosus**, aliud illi nomen inponas: **aeger** *est*, immo **mortuus** est.
Helv. 17.2 omnia ista ad exiguum momentum prosunt nec **remedia** doloris sed **inpedimenta** *sunt*.
Ep. 2.6 non **qui parum habet**, sed **qui plus cupit**, pauper *est*
Ep. 3.5 illa tumultu gaudens non *est* **industria** sed **exagitatae mentis concursatio**.
Ep. 3.5 haec non *est* **quies** quae motum omnem molestiam iudicat, sed **dissolutio et languor**.
Ep. 9.10 ista quam tu describis **negotiatio** *est*, non **amicitia**.
Ep. 35.1 **amas me**, **amicus** non es
Ep. 45.1 qui quo destinavit pervenire vult unam sequatur viam, non per multas vagetur: non **ire** istuc sed **errare** *est*.
Ep. 51.11 aspice quam positionem elegerint, quibus aedificia excitaverint locis et qualia: scies non **villas** *esse* sed **castra**.
Ep. 33.11 qui ante nos ista moverunt non **domini** nostri sed **duces** *sunt*.
Ep. 67.14 nihil habere ad quod exciteris, ad quod te concites, cuius denuntiatione et incursu firmitatem animi tui temptes, sed in otio inconcusso iacere, non *est* **tranquillitas**: **malacia** *est*.
Ep. 87.36 non *est* id bonum **quod plus prodest**, sed **quod tantum prodest**.
Ep. 95.72 **censura** *fuit* illa, non **cena**.
Ep. 98.10 quidquid est cui dominus inscriberis **apud te** *est*, **tuum** non *est*.
Ep. 104.16 non *erit* hoc **peregrinari** sed **errare**.
Ep. 114.15 quorundam non *est* **compositio**, **modulatio** *est*.
Ep. 123.10 non *est* istud **vivere** sed **alienae vitae interesse**.

A1-β: Explicit re-definitions through a verb of saying

Brev. 12.2 quorum non **otiosa uita** *dicenda est*, sed **desidiosa occupatio**.
Ep. 108.5 quos ego non **discipulos** philosophorum sed **inquilinos** *voco*.

Ep. 120.8 non *voco* ego **liberalem pecuniae suae iratum**.

A1-γ: Explicit re-definitions through a verb of thinking

Const. 6.6 non est quod **me uictum uictoremque te** *credas*: **uicit fortuna tua fortunam meam**.
Helv. 10.2 *intellego* me non **opes** sed **occupationes** perdidisse.
Ep. 8.3 **habere** nos *putamus* – **haeremus**.
Ep. 52.13 non **laudatur** ille nunc, *si intellegis*, sed **conclamatur**.
Ep. 70.3 **scopulum** esse illum *putamus* dementissimi – **portus** est.
Ep. 99.7 quem *putas* **perisse praemissus** est.

A1-δ: Implicit redefinitions without *esse* or a verb of saying or thinking

Const. 12.3 non enim **se ulciscitur**, sed **illos emendat**.
VB 21.2 non **abigit illa a se**, sed **abeuntia securus prosequitur**.
Ot. 5.6 utrum contraria inter se elementa sint, an non **pugnent** sed **per diuersa conspirent**.
Brev. 12.4 non habent isti **otium** sed **iners negotium**.
Pol. 9.8 erras: non **perdidit lucem** frater tuus sed **sinceriorem sortitus est**.
Pol. 9.8 non **reliquit** ille nos sed **antecessit**.
Ep. 28.5 nunc <non> **peregrinaris** sed **erras et ageris ac locum ex loco mutas**.
Ep. 36.10 **desinunt** ista, non **pereunt**.
Ep. 36.11 nihil in hoc mundo **extingui** sed **uicibus descendere ac resurgere**.
Ep. 93.3 non **vixit** iste sed **in vita moratus est**.
Ep. 93.3 nec **sero** mortuus est, sed **diu**.
Ep. 94.63 non ille **ire** vult, sed **non potest stare**.
Ep. 100.5 Fabianus non erat **neglegens** in oratione sed **securus**.
Ep. 100.5 **electa** verba sunt, non **captata**
Ep. 120.8 qui non **donant** sed **proiciunt**.
Ep. 122.3 non **convivantur** sed **iusta sibi faciunt**.

A2 = ACTIVE-PASSIVE

A2-α: Different voice, same verb

Ira 1.17.1 **habent**, non **habentur**.
Ira 3.5.5 **nocere** ei quem odit, non **noceri** uult.
Ira 3.13.2 **feratur**que, non **ferat**.
Ep. 15.8 non enim id agimus ut **exerceatur** vox, sed ut **exerceat**.

A2-β: Different voice, different verb

Ira 3.3.2 non **it** sed **agitur**.
Ep. 23.8 non **eunt** sed **feruntur**.
Ep. 37.5 turpe est non **ire** sed **ferri**.
Ep. 114.3 nec **ire** sed **ferri**.

A2-γ: Same voice, different verb
(active-passive dichotomy conveyed implicitly through verbs of opposite meaning)

Const. 12.3 non quia **accepit** iniuriam, sed quia **fecerunt**.
VB 14.3 nec **uoluptates sibi emit** sed **se uoluptatibus uendit**.

A2-δ: Same voice, same verb
(active-passive dichotomy conveyed implicitly through subj./obj./agent/etc. inversion)

VB 14.1 non **ipsi uoluptatem**, sed **ipsos uoluptas** habet.

A3 = TENSE OR MOOD

A3-α: Tense

Marc. 10.3 amet ut **recessura**, immo tamquam **recedentia**.
Ep. 45.13 non enim **vivunt** sed **victuri sunt**: omnia differunt.
Ep. 81.24 non enim illum **accipere** sed **accepisse** delectat.
Ep. 87.25 statim puniuntur cum **facta sunt**, immo dum **fiunt**.
Ep. 87.31 non quia ipsae **faciunt** aliquid, sed quia **facturos** inritant.
Ep. 88.2 non **discere** debemus ista, sed **didicisse**.
Ep. 120.17 nihil est satis **morituris**, immo **morientibus**.

A3-β Mood

VB 1.3 pergentes non quo **eundum est** sed quo **itur**.
VB 18.1 omnes enim isti dicebant non quemadmodum **ipsi uiuerent**, sed quemadmodum **esset <et> ipsis uiuendum**.
VB 18.2 perseuerem laudare uitam non quam **ago** sed quam **agendam** scio.
Ep. 2.6 quid enim refert quantum illi in arca ... si non **adquisita** sed **adquirenda** conputat?

A4 = AUXILIARY VERB

A4-α: *Posse*, *debere*, *solere*

Ep. 21.11 si modo das illi quod **debes**, non quod **potes**.
Ep. 49.10 **posse** fieri, immo saepissime fieri.
Ep. 70.4 itaque sapiens vivet quantum **debet**, non quantum **potest**.
Ep. 91.4 cogitandumque non quidquid **solet** sed quidquid **potest** fieri.
Ep. 96.1 male valeo: pars fati est. Familia decubuit, fenus offendit, domus crepuit, damna, vulnera, labores, metus incucurrerunt: **solet** fieri. Hoc parum est: **debuit** fieri.
Ep. 99.32 omnia eius tela non tamquam **possent** venire sed tamquam utique **essent** ventura prospiceres.
Ep. 123.6 utebamur enim illis non quia **debebamus** sed quia **habebamus**.

A4-β: *Velle*, *nolle*, *malle*

Ep. 9.5 ita sapiens se contentus est, non ut **velit** esse sine amico sed ut **possit**.
Ep. 20.11 leve argumentum est bonae voluntatis grabattus aut pannus, nisi apparuit aliquem illa non necessitate pati sed **malle**.
Ep. 88.29 scit optimum esse modum cupitorum non quantum **velis**, sed quantum **debeas** sumere.
Ep. 105.5 qui contemnitur quia **voluit**, non quia **debuit**.
Ep. 124.24 non dico quod **malis**, sed quod **velis**.

A4-γ: *Videri* (or sim.)

Ep. 49.11 non ubique se mors tam prope **ostendit**: ubique tam prope **est**.
Ep. 65.10 fer ergo iudex sententiam et pronuntia quis tibi **videatur** verisimillimum dicere, non quis verissimum dicat.
Ep. 85.26 scit enim illa non **esse** mala, sed **videri**.
Ep. 110.20 id ages ut **sis** felix, non ut **videaris**.

A5 = CONJUNCTION

Ira 2.31.8 ergo ne homini quidem nocebimus **quia** peccauit, sed **ne** peccet.
Ep. 63.13 non **ut** tam *diu* lugerent sed **ne** *diutius.*
Ep. 78.16 nec tantum **quia** pugnant ista patiuntur, sed **ut** pugnent.
Ep. 87.26 non ideo, inquam, mihi urna aurum dat **quia** viperam habet, sed aurum dat, **cum** et viperam habeat.
Ep. 90.33 ista sapiens licet invenerit, non **qua** sapiens erat invenit.

A6 = PREPOSITION

VB 7.2 infelices quidam non **sine** uoluptate, immo **ob** ipsam uoluptatem sunt.
Prov. 3.7 multa milia ciuium Romanorum uno loco **post** fidem, immo **per** ipsam fidem trucidata.
Tranq. 14.10 nec usque **ad** mortem tantum, sed aliquid etiam **ex** ipsa morte discit.
Ep. 24.7 nec agebam tanta pertinacia ut liber, sed ut **inter** liberos, viverem
Ep. 41.7 nihil horum **in** ipso est sed **circa** ipsum
Ep. 58.21 nec tantum **extra** opus est, sed **ante** opus
Ep. 73.16 deus **ad** homines venit, immo quod est propius, **in** homines venit
Ep. 78.4 putabam, inquam, me victurum non **cum** illis, sed **per** illos.
Ep. 117.18 omnia ista **circa** sapientiam, non **in** ipsa sunt.

A7 = PREFIX

Const. 16.3 non **sapiente** opus est uiro, sed tantum ***con*sipiente**.
Tranq. 17.7 **lusisse** tu Canum illa tabula putas? ***in*lusit.**
Ep. 64.9 multum **egerunt** qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non ***per*egerunt.**
Ep. 71.30 **suadeo** adhuc mihi ista quae laudo, nondum ***per*suadeo**.
Ep. 100.2 Fabianus mihi non ***ef*fundere** videtur orationem sed **fundere**.
Ep. 105.5 quibus ***ad*plicari** expediet, non **inplicari**.
Ep. 123.17 haec **discenda**, immo **ediscenda** sunt.
Ep. 64.9 multum **egerunt** qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non ***per*egerunt**.

A8 = ADJECTIVE, PRONOUN, ADVERB, OR COMBINATION THEREOF

A8-α: Adjective or pronoun

Ira 1.19.7 non tantum ut pereant **ipsi**, sed ut **alios** pereundo deterreant.
Ep. 12.11 qui in verba iurant nec **quid** dicatur aestimant, sed a **quo**.
Ep. 35.3 si non tantum **quem** uelis sed **qualem** uelis uideas.
Ep. 70.5 cogitat semper **qualis** vita, non **quanta** sit.
Ep. 110.20 ut **tibi** videaris, non **aliis**.
Ep. 123.5 si non tantum **aequus** molestias sed **placidus** aspexit.

A8-β: Adverb

Ep. 40.9 recte ergo facies si non audieris istos qui **quantum** dicant, non **quemadmodum** quaerunt.
Ep. 44.6 intuendum est non **unde** veniant, sed **quo** eant.
Ep. 87.36 non est id bonum quod **plus** prodest, sed quod **tantum** prodest.
Ep. 89.23 stude, non ut **plus** aliquid scias, sed ut **melius**.
Ep. 93.2 non ut **diu** vivamus curandum est, sed ut **satis**.
Ep. 101.15 quam **bene** vivas referre, non quam **diu**.
Ep. 121.19 primum quaeritur **an** intellegat, non **quemadmodum** intellegat

A8-γ: Combination

Prov. 2.4 non **quid** sed **quemadmodum** feras interest.
Prov. 4.4 et **quo** tendat, non **quid** passura sit cogitat.
Ep. 19.4 ignis non refert **quam magnus** sed **quo** incidat.
Ep. 71.24 non tantum **quid** videas, sed **quemadmodum**, refert.
Ep. 94.11 audire enim debet non tantum **quid** sibi praecipiatur sed etiam **quare**.
Ep. 104.8 non **aliubi** sis oportet sed **alius**.
Ep. 115.1 quaere **quid** scribas, non **quemadmodum**.

A9 = POINTED ADDITION

A9-α: Adverb

VB 9.1 non enim **hanc praestat**, sed ***et*** **hanc**.
VB 9.1 nec **huic laborat**, sed **labor** eius, quamuis aliud petat, **hoc** ***quoque*** adsequetur.
Ep. 9.13 se contentus est sapiens **ad** ***beate*** **vivendum**, non **ad vivendum**.
Ep. 18.13 quarum **possessionem** tibi non interdico, sed efficere volo ut illas ***intrepide*** **possideas**.
Ep. 67.6 non enim **pati** tormenta optabile est, sed **pati** ***fortiter***.
Ep. 70.4 non enim **vivere** bonum est, sed ***bene*** **vivere**.
Ep. 94.33 ordinatur sine dubio **ista** ratione animus, sed non **ista** ***tantum***.

A9-β: X > X(genitive) + added noun/adjective (or vice versa)

Ira 3.36.4 uide, non tantum an **uerum** sit quod dicis, sed an ille cui dicitur **ueri** ***patiens*** sit.
Ep. 30.17 non **mortem** timemus sed ***cogitationem*** **mortis**.
Ep. 42.10 scies non **damnum** in iis molestum esse, sed ***opinionem*** **damni**.
Ep. 65.13 ***pars*** **causae** est, non **causa**.
Ep. 87.13 tu ad ***supellectilem*** **artis**, non ad **artem** venis.
Ep. 90.46 et in optimis quoque, antequam erudias, **virtutis** ***materia***, non **virtus** est.
Ep. 92.12 itaque non est bonum per se **munda vestis** sed **mundae vestis** ***electio***.
Ep. 124.7 non dico **bonum**, sed ***initium*** **boni**.

A9-γ: Verb

Ira 1.6.1 (castigatio) non enim **nocet** sed ***medetur specie*** **nocendi**.
Ira 1.19.7 non tantum **ut pereant ipsi**, sed **ut alios pereundo** ***deterreant***.
Ira 2.17.1 'Orator' inquit '**iratus** aliquando melior est'. Immo ***imitatus*** **iratum**.
VB 4.5 quibus delectabitur non **ut bonis** sed **ut** ***ex*** **bono** ***suo ortis***
Tranq. 2.1 horum, Serene, non **parum sanum** est corpus, sed **sanitati parum** ***adsueuit***
Ep. 38.1 non hoc agendum est, ut ***uelit*** **discere**, sed ut **discat**.
Ep. 49.11 rationem dedit in**perfectam**, sed **quae perfici** ***posset***.

A9-δ: Other

Ira 2.2.5 sed omnia ista ... sunt ... nec **adfectus** sed ***principia proludentia*** **adfectibus**.
VB 20.2 generosa res est respicientem non **ad suas** sed **ad** ***naturae*** **suae uires** conari alta temptare.
VB 21.2 ait ista debere contemni, non **ne habeat**, sed **ne** ***sollicitus*** **habeat**.
Ep. 24.7 nec agebam tanta pertinacia **ut liber**, sed **ut** ***inter*** **liberos**, viverem.

A10 = REPETITION OF THE SAME WORD OR ROOT WITH A SIGNIFICANT VARIATION

Ira 1.17.1 **habeat**, non **habeatur**.
Ira 2.8.8 non **peccatis** irascitur sed **peccantibus**.
Ira 3.13.2 **feratur**que, non **ferat**.
Ira 3.39.1 nec enim **sani esse** tantum uolumus, sed **sanare**.
Marc. 10.3 amet ut **recessura**, immo tamquam **recedentia**.
VB 1.3 pergentes non quo **eundum est** sed quo **itur**.
VB 18.1 omnes enim isti dicebant non quemadmodum **ipsi uiuerent**, sed quemadmodum **esset <et> ipsis uiuendum**.
VB 18.2 perseuerem laudare uitam non quam **ago** sed quam **agendam** scio.
Ot. 1.3 id optimum nobis uidetur quod **petitores laudatoresque** multos habet, non id quod **laudandum petendumque** est.
Ot. 6.3 si non **actor** deest sed **agenda** desunt.
Pol. 11.4 **omnes**, immo **omnia** in ultimum diem spectant.
Ep. 2.6 quid enim refert quantum illi in arca ... si non **adquisita** sed **adquirenda** conputat?
Ep. 4.2 adhuc enim non **pueritia** sed, quod est grauius, **puerilitas** remanet.
Ep. 12.11 qui in verba iurant nec **quid** dicatur aestimant, sed a **quo**.
Ep. 15.8 non enim id agimus ut **exerceatur** vox, sed ut **exerceat**.
Ep. 18.4 **eadem**, sed non **eodem modo** facere.
Ep. 30.5 **morientis** vitium esse, non **mortis**.
Ep. 45.13 non enim **vivunt** sed **victuri sunt**: omnia differunt.
Ep. 63.13 non ut tam **diu** lugerent sed ne **diutius**.
Ep. 81.24 non enim illum **accipere** sed **accepisse** delectat.
Ep. 88.2 non **discere** debemus ista, sed **didicisse**.
Ep. 92.12 **actiones** nostrae honestae sunt, non **ipsa quae aguntur**.
Ep. 98.10 quidquid est cui dominus inscriberis **apud te** *est*, **tuum** non *est*.
Ep. 104.8 si vis ista quibus urgueris effugere, non **aliubi** sis oportet sed **alius**.
Ep. 114.12 non tantum **vitiosa** sed **vitia** laudentur.

A11 = TRICKY SIMILARITY BETWEEN WORDS

A11-α: Quasi-synonym

Prov. 5.6 nihil patior inuitus, nec **seruio** deo sed **assentior**.
Prov. 5.6 non, ut putamus, **incidunt** cuncta sed **ueniunt**.
Const. 3.3 inuulnerabile est non quod non **feritur**, sed quod non **laeditur**.
Ira 1.20.1 nec ... morbus **incrementum** est sed pestilens **abundantia**.
Ira 2.16.3 quos quidem non **simplices** dixerim sed **incautos**.
VB 7.2 qua uirtus saepe **caret**, numquam **indiget**.
VB 7.3 quid **dissimilia**, immo **diuersa** componitis?
Ot. 1.4 non quo **miserint** me illi, sed quo **duxerint** ibo
Tranq. 17.2 multum interest, **simpliciter** uiuas an **neglegenter**.
Brev. 2.2 ceterum quidem omne spatium non **uita** sed **tempus** est.
Ep. 15.6 dandum est aliquod intervallum animo, ita tamen ut non **resolvatur**, sed **remittatur**.
Ep. 33.6 non enim **excidunt** sed **fluunt**.
Ep. 33.11 qui ante nos ista moverunt non **domini** nostri sed **duces** sunt.
Ep. 36.10 **desinunt** ista, non **pereunt**.
Ep. 36.10 mors, quam pertimescimus ac recusamus, **intermittit** vitam, non **eripit**.
Ep. 39.6 non solum **delectant** sed etiam **placent**.
Ep. 44.7 non tantum **ferunt** sarcinas sed **trahunt**.
Ep. 58.35 si mihi non **uitam** reliquerit sed **animam**.
Ep. 71.31 animum non **coloravit** sed **infecit**.
Ep. 80.1 non **servio** illis, sed **assentior**.
Ep. 81.20 gratus sum non quia **expedit**, sed quia **iuvat**.
Ep. 83.18 nunc quoque non est **minor** sed **brevior**.
Ep. 87.27 lucrum istud non est **adpositum** sceleri sed **inmixtum**.
Ep. 89.2 philosophiam in **partes**, non in **frustra** dividam.
Ep. 89.2 **dividi** enim illam, non **concidi**, utile est.
Ep. 90.5 officium erat **imperare**, non **regnum**.
Ep. 90.11 omnia enim ista **sagacitas** hominum, non **sapientia** invenit.
Ep. 92.27 **accedimus** ad illa, non **pervenimus**.
Ep. 93.8 qui ad illam pervenit attigit non **longissimum** finem, sed **maximum**.
Ep. 96.2 non **pareo** deo, sed **adsentior**.
Ep. 100.12 talia mihi videbantur, non **solida** sed **plena**.
Ep. 114.7 apparet enim **mollem** fuisse, non **mitem**.

A11-β: Degree

Const. 5.1 qua non **laeduntur** homines sed **offenduntur**.
Ira 1.20.6 nec enim **magnitudo** ista est sed **immanitas**.
Ira 3.1.5 non **eunt** sed **cadunt**.
Const. 10.3 non **miserias** animorum sed **molestias**.

Ep. 63.1 **lacrimandum** est, non **plorandum**.
VB 23.5 habebit sinum **facilem**, non **perforatum**.
Ot. 5.4 ut scias illam **spectari** uoluisse, non tantum **aspici**.
Tranq. 1.17 non **tempestate** uexor sed **nausea**.
Pol. 16.3 **laedi** me posse, **uinci** non posse.
Ep. 4.2 nec **puerorum** tantum sed **infantum**.
Ep. 5.5 **frugalitatem** exigit philosophia, non **poenam**.
Ep. 12.5 iucundissima est aetas **devexa** iam, non tamen **praeceps**.
Ep. 14.1 non nego **indulgendum** illi, **serviendum** nego.
Ep. 16.2 iam de te **spem** habeo, nondum **fiduciam**.
Ep. 19.1 iam non **promittunt** de te sed **spondent**.
Ep. 19.2 id age ut otium tuum non **emineat** sed **appareat**.
Ep. 24.26 vitae non **odium** sed **fastidium**.
Ep. 35.4 hic **commouetur** quidem, non tamen **transit**.
Ep. 36.3 non illa quibus **perfundi** satis est, sed haec quibus **tingendus** est animus.
Ep. 45.9 quem fortuna ... **pungit**, non **vulnerat**.
Ep. 71.1 res nostrae **feruntur**, immo **volvuntur**.
Ep. 71.30 **suadeo** adhuc mihi ista quae laudo, nondum **persuadeo**.
Ep. 72.6 medicus, etiam si **reddit**, non **praestat**.
Ep. 82.1 in isto te vitae habitu compone **placide**, non **molliter**.
Ep. 83.4 aetas nostra non **descendit** sed **cadit**.
Ep. 86.8 minimae sunt **rimae** magis quam **fenestrae**.
Ep. 87.33 non **inritantem** tantum animos sed **adtrahentem**.
Ep. 94.37 at haec non **cogunt** sed **exorant**.
Ep. 97.10 non **pronum** est tantum ad vitia sed **praeceps.**
Ep. 104.10 non enim **vitat** sed **fugit**.
Ep. 116.1 cum tibi **cupere** interdixero, **velle** permittam.
Ep. 119.14 quemadmodum non **impleat** ventrem sed **farciat**.
Ep. 120.8 multi, inquam, sunt, Lucili, qui non **donant** sed **proiciunt**.
Ep. 120.18 **carpit** nos illa, non **corripit**.
Ep. 123.5 si non tantum **aequus** molestias sed **placidus** aspexit.

A11-γ: Same prefix

Const. 5.7 se urbe capta non **_in_uictum** tantum sed **_in_demnem** esse testatus est.
VB 15.2 sunt enim ista bona, sed **_con_sequentia** summum bonum, non **_con_summantia**.
Tranq. 10.6 nec **_sub_leuatos** se sed **_suf_fixos**.
Pol. 2.5 quibus non **_in_nutritus** tantum sed **_in_natus** est.
Helv. 5.4 **_abs_tulit** illa, non **_a_uulsit**.
Helv. 16.1 cui paene concessum est **_in_moderatum** in lacrimis ius, non **_in_mensum** tamen.
Ep. 6.6 nec in hoc te acberso tantum, ut **_pro_ficias**, sed ut **_pro_sis**.
Ep. 15.8 cum recipies illam revocarisque, **_de_scendat**, non **_de_cidat**.
Ep. 24.8 spiritum non **_e_misit** sed **_e_iecit**.
Ep. 30.15 qui ad mortem veniunt sine odio vitae et **_ad_mittunt** illam, non **_ad_trahunt**.
Ep. 51.9 inter tot adfectus **_dis_trahar**, immo **_dis_cerpar**.
Ep. 117.19 nec, ut putatis, **_ex_acuunt**, sed **_ex_tenuant**.

A11-δ: Phonic similarity

Ep. 52.15 si modo non **institorem** sed **antistitem** nancta est.
Ep. 59.9 non enim **_in_quinati** sumus sed **_in_fecti**.
Ep. 99.7 quem putas **perisse praemissus** est.
Ep. 122.23 **nascitur** ars ista, non **discitur**.

A12 = ANTONYM OR OPPOSITE MEANING

Ira 2.10.6 neminem **nasci** sapientem, sed **fieri**.
Pol. 17.2 non **iniuriam** sed **ius** mortalitatis iudicauerunt.
Ep. 37.5 non **consilio** adductus sed **impetu** impactus.
Ep. 38.1 nec enim **multis** opus est sed **efficacibus**.
Ep. 39.6 **seruiunt** itaque uoluptatibus, non **fruuntur**.
Ep. 66.32 non enim **servit** sed **imperat** sensibus.
Ep. 68.9 non **medicus** sed **aeger** hic habitat.
Ep. 78.22 praeterea duo genera sunt voluptatum. Corporales morbus **inhibet**, non tamen tollit; immo, si verum aestimes, **incitat**.
Ep. 85.40 tu illum **premi** putas malis? **utitur**.
Ep. 86.9 in **usum** non in **oblectamentum** reperta.
Ep. 86.11 veniebat enim ut **sudorem** illic ablueret, non ut **unguentum**.
Ep. 86.15 non quid **verissime** sed quid **decentissime** diceretur aspexit.
Ep. 86.15 nec agricolas **docere** voluit sed legentes **delectare**.
Ep. 96.2 **ex animo** illum, non **quia necesse est**, sequor.
Ep. 115.1 non ut **scribas** sed ut **sentias**.
Ep. 117.19 nec, ut putatis, **exacuunt**, sed **extenuant**.
Ep. 122.23 **nascitur** ars ista, non **discitur**.
Ep. 124.5 quid si quis vellet non **oculis** sed **tactu** minuta discernere?

APPENDIX 2

PARADOXES AND *SENTENTIAE* IN SENECA

B1 = RE-CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

B1-α: Explicit re-definitions through the verb *esse*

Prov. 4.6 **calamitas uirtutis occasio** *est*.
Prov. 4.16 Hoc quod tibi **calamitas** uidetur **tot entium uita** *est*.
Prov. 4.16 aequo animo ferre quae ***non sunt*** **mala** ***nisi*** **male sustinenti**.
Prov. 6.5 **non egere felicitate felicitas uestra** *est*.
Marc. 21.7 **incrementa** ipsa, si bene computes, **damna** *sunt*.
VB 4.2 uera **uoluptas** *erit* **uoluptatum contemptio**.
Tranq. 10.3 omnis **uita seruitium** *est*.
Tranq. 10.5 quae **excelsa** uidebantur **praerupta** *sunt*.
Brev. 13.1 Non *sunt* **otiosi** quorum uoluptates **multum negotii habent**.
Pol. 6.4 Multa tibi non licent quae humillimis quoque et in angulo iacentibus licent: **magna seruitus** *est* **magna fortuna**.
Pol. 11.2 quid enim est noui hominem mori, cuius tota **uita** nihil aliud quam **ad mortem iter** *est*?
Hel. 6.1 uideamus quid *sit* **exilium**. Nempe **loci commutatio**.
Ep. 4.11 cui cum **paupertate** bene convenit **dives** *est*.
Ep. 101.13 quod autem **vivere** est **diu mori**?

B1-β: Explicit re-definitions through a verb of saying

Ira 3.30.2 ut interdum **iniurias** *vocent* **modica beneficia**.
Marc. 16.6 numquam tamen **iniuriam** *dixeris* **ex aequo cum potentiore diuidere**.
Marc. 21.7 **mors** *sub ipso* **uitae** *nomine* latet.
Ep. 15.1-2 Mos antiquis fuit, usque ad meam servatus aetatem, primis epistulae verbis adicere ‘si **vales** bene est, ego valeo’. Recte nos *dicimus* ‘si **philosopharis**, bene est’. Valere enim hoc demum est.
Ep. 42.7 ea **gratuita** *vocamus* pro quibus nos ipsos **inpendimus**.
Ep. 83.27 istas quae **voluptates** *vocantur*, ubi transcenderunt modum, **poenas** esse.
Ep. 90.39 licet in provinciarum spatium rura dilatet et **possessionem** *vocet* **per sua longam peregrinationem**.
Ep. 110.3 Quotiens enim **felicitatis** et causa et initium fuit quod **calamitas** *vocabatur*!
Ep. 119.12 Apud quos falso **divitiarum** *nomen* invasit **occupata paupertas**.

B1-γ: Explicit re-definitions through a verb of thinking

Marc. 21.7 **incrementa** ipsa, *si bene computes*, **damna** sunt.
Ep. 101.10 singulos **dies** singulas **vitas** *puta*.

<u>B1-δ: Implicit redefinitions without *esse* or a verb of saying or thinking</u>

Prov. 5.5 sed ne nunc quidem auferetis, quia **nihil eripitur nisi retinenti**.
Helv. 13.4 Socrates [...] carcerem intrauit, ignominiam ipsi loco detracturus; neque enim poterat **carcer** *uideri* **in quo Socrates erat**.
Ep. 4.3 necesse est aut **non perveniat** aut **transeat**.
Ep. 8.6 qui **nihil** agere *videntur* **maiora** agunt.
Ep. 36.11 omnia quae *videntur* **perire mutari**.
Ep. 120.8 cum plurimum intersit utrum quis **dare sciat** an **servare nesciat**.

B2 = ACTIVE-PASSIVE

B2-α: Different voice, same verb

Prov. 6.6 contemnite dolorem: aut **soluetur** aut **soluet**.
Const. 15.3 **uincit** nos fortuna, nisi tota **uincitur**.
Ira 2.15.4 nemo autem **regere** potest nisi qui et **regi**.
Ira 2.34.5 ille est melior qui prior pedem rettulit, **uictus est** qui **uicit**.
Ira 2.35.4 **rupturus se** nisi **eruperit**!
Ira 3.3.2 ea deprimens quae **mergi** nisi cum **mergente** non possunt.
Ira 3.5.5 illae enim infelicem **fieri** uolunt, haec **facere**.
Ira 3.27.4 quanto satius est iram **relinquere** quam ab ira **relinqui**.
Tranq. 10.3 **alligati**que sunt etiam qui **alligauerunt**.
VB 14.2 uoluptates ... **captae**que **cepere**.
Helv. 1.1 timebam ne a me **uicta** fortuna aliquem meorum **uinceret**.
Ep. 11.9 qui sic aliquem **vereri** potest cito **erit verendus**.
Ep. 40.4 quomodo autem **regere** potest quae **regi** non potest?
Ep. 51.6 armis **vicit**, vitiis **victus est**.
Ep. 52.11 quid laetaris quod ab hominibus his **laudatus es** quos non potes ipse **laudare**?
Ep. 78.17 brevis morbus ac praeceps alterutrum faciet, aut **extinguetur** aut **extinguet**.
Ep. 84.11 uides autem quam miser sit si is cui **invidetur** et **invidet**.
Ep. 94.51 **regi** ergo debet dum incipit posse se **regere**.
Ep. 94.54 dum **facit** quisque peiorem, **factus est**.
Ep. 94.61 hi quoque, ut **vincerent** hostem, cupiditate **victi sunt**.
Ep. 94.61 tunc cum **agere** alios visi sunt, **agebantur**.
Ep. 94.67 Isti cum omnia **concuterent, concutiebantur** turbinum more.
Ep. 105.4 qui **timetur timet**.

B2-β: Different voice, different term

Pol. 6.1 **obseruantur oculi** tui.
Ep. 36.4 quemadmodum omnibus annis **studere** honestum est, ita non omnibus **institui**.
Ep. 39.5 quae **fecere patiuntur**.

B2-γ: Same voice, different verb
(active-passive dichotomy conveyed implicitly through verbs of opposite meaning)

Ira 2.11.4 quidquid **terret** et **trepidat**.
Ep. 7.8 mutuo ista fiunt, et homines dum **docent discunt**.
Ep. 36.4 quae tam **dare** prodest quam **accipere**.
Ep. 47.20 **acceperunt** iniuriam ut **facerent**.

B2-δ: Same voice, same verb
(active-passive dichotomy conveyed implicitly through subj./obj./agent/etc. inversion)

Ep. 29.11 *quis* enim **placere** populo potest *cui* **placet** virtus?
Ep. 37.4 multos **reges**, si ratio *te* **rexerit**.

Ep. 37.5 non minus saepe *fortuna in nos* **incurrit** quam *nos in illam*.
Ep. 49.10 effice ut *ego* mortem non **fugiam**, vita *me* non ef**fugiat**.
Ep. 94.56 pedibus aurum argentumque subiecit **calcandumque ac premendum** dedit quidquid est propter quod **calcamur ac premimur**.
Ep. 94.61 nemo *illis* venientibus **restitit**, sed nec *ipsi* ambitioni crudelitatique **restiterant**.
Ep. 94.67 *Marius* exercitus, *Marium* ambitio **ducebat**.
Ep. 94.67 turbinum more, qui rapta **convolvunt** sed *ipsi* ante.
Ep. 98.2 si qui **habet** illa *se* quoque **habet** nec in rerum suarum potestate est.
Ep. 101.14 **trahere** animam tot tormenta **tracturam**.

Ep. 86.3 eo perducta res erat ut aut *libertas Scipioni* aut *Scipio libertati* **faceret iniuriam**.
Ep. 87.16 utrum *illum pecunia* **inpurum effecit** an *ipse pecuniam* **inspurcavit**?

B3 = TENSE OR MOOD

B3-α: Tense

Ira 1.3.1 iniuriam qui **facturus** est iam **facit**.
Ira 2.36.3 qui ad speculum uenerat ut se **mutaret**, iam **mutauerat**.
Ira 3.33.1 **facient** iterum, si se **fecisse** crediderint.
Ira 3.26.2 maxima est enim factae iniuriae poena fecisse.
Tranq. 1.16 puto multos potuisse ad sapientiam **peruenire**, nisi putassent se **peruenisse**.
Brev. 1.3 quam **ire** non intelleximus **transisse** sentimus.
Pol. 9.2 quis iste furor est, pro eo me numquam **dolere** desinere qui numquam **doliturus est**?
Ep. 9.7 artifici iucundius **pingere** est quam **pinxisse**.
Ep. 9.11 magna pars **peccatorum** tollitur, si **peccaturis** testis adsistit.
Ep. 51.7 intempestivam desidiam, **victori** quoque, nedum **vincenti**, periculosam.
Ep. 76.1 quid autem stultius est quam quia diu non **didiceris** non **discere**?
Ep. 79.5 **inventuris inventa** non obstant.
Ep. 81.28 quaeris quid sit quod oblivionem nobis **acceptorum** faciat? cupiditas **accipiendorum**.
Ep. 90.39 cum omnia fecerimus, multum **habebimus** – universum **habebamus**.
Ep. 98.11 **habere** eripitur, **habuisse** numquam.
Ep. 98.14 quidquid fieri **potuit potest**.
Ep. 97.14 prima illa et maxima **peccantium** est poena **peccasse**.
Ep. 101.7 quid autem stultius quam mirari id ullo die **factum** quod omni **potest fieri**?

B3-β Mood

Const. 14.3 maiore animo non **agnouit** quam **ignouisset**.
Ira 2.36.3 qui ad speculum uenerat ut se **mutaret**, iam **mutauerat**.
Ep. 81.28 quaeris quid sit quod oblivionem nobis **acceptorum** faciat? cupiditas **accipiendorum**.
Ira 1.7.4 et non **licet** eo non peruenire quo non ire **licuisset**.

B4 = AUXILIARY VERB

Ira 3.30.3 minus habeo quam speraui: sed fortasse plus speraui quam **debui**.
Tranq. 1.16 puto multos **potuisse** ad sapientiam peruenire, nisi putassent se peruenisse.
Tranq. 6.2 ante omnia necesse est se ipsum aestimare, quia fere plus nobis **uidemur** posse quam possumus.
Ep. 71.36 magna pars est profectus **velle** proficere.
Ep. 101.7 quid autem stultius quam mirari id ullo die factum quod omni **potest** fieri?
Ep. 105.8 putat enim se, etiam si non deprenditur, **posse** deprendi.

B5 = CONJUNCTION

Ep. 104.21 alter te docebit mori **si** necesse erit, alter **antequam** necesse erit.

B6 = PREPOSITION

Ira 3.13.2 si eminere illi **extra** nos licuit, **supra** nos est.
Ep. 4.3 mors **ad** te venit: timenda erat si te**cum** esse posset.
Ep. 47.4 sic fit ut isti **de** domino loquantur quibus **coram** domino loqui non licet.
Ep. 59.8 interritus et **contra** illa ibit et **inter** illa.
Ep. 90.46 **ad** hoc quidem, sed **sine** hoc nascimur.
Ep. 104.21 avarus, corruptor, saevus, fraudulentus, multum nocituri si **prope a** te fuissent, **intra** te sunt.

B7 = PREFIX

Const. 14.3 maiore animo non **agnouit** quam **ignouisset**.
Ira 1.7.4 et non licet eo non **peruenire** quo non **ire** licuisset.
Ira 2.35.4 **rupturus se** nisi **eruperit**!
Brev. 1.3 quam **ire** non intelleximus **transisse** sentimus.
Helv. 10.3 nec piget a Parthis, a quibus nondum poenas **repetimus**, aues **petere**.
Helv. 14.2 uiderint illae matres quae **potentiam** liberorum muliebri **inpotentia** exercent.
Ep. 24.20 tunc ad illam **pervenimus**, sed diu **venimus**.
Ep. 49.10 effice ut ego mortem non **fugiam**, vita me non **effugiat**.
Ep. 86.11 non in multa luce **decoquebatur** et expectabat ut in balneo **concoqueret**.

B8 = ADJECTIVE, PRONOUN, ADVERB, OR COMBINATION THEREOF

α: Adjective or pronoun

Ira 1.12.5 uenitque in **alienam** potestatem dum in **sua** non est
Ira 3.12.7 non sit iste seruus in **eius** potestate qui in **sua** non est.
Tranq. 10.3 quibusdam **aliena** supra caput imperia sunt, quibusdam **sua**.
Tranq. 10.6 maximum *onus* **suum** esse, quod **aliis** *graues* esse cogantur.
Brev. 20.1 hi si uolent scire quam breuis **ipsorum** uita sit, cogitent ex quota parte **sua** sit.
Helv. 13.6 nemo ab **alio** contemnitur, nisi a **se** ante contemptus est.
Ep. 4.8 quisquis vitam **suam** contempsit **tuae** dominus est.
Ep. 4.8 quid ad te itaque quam potens sit **quem** times, cum id **propter quod** times nemo non possit?
Ep. 10.2 non invenio cum **quo** te malim esse quam **te**cum.
Ep. 16.7 quidquid bene dictum est ab **ullo meum** est.
Ep. 35.1 cum **te** ualde rogo ut studeas, **meum** negotium ago.
Ep. 35.4 propera ad **me**, sed ad **te** prius.
Ep. 81.1 ita ne apud **alium** pereant, apud **te** peribunt.
Ep. 101.7 quid autem stultius quam mirari id **ullo** die factum quod **omni** potest fieri?
Ep. 102.18 ita enim animo compositus sum, ut **aliorum** bonum **meum** iudicem.

β: Adverb

Ep. 49.10 ut qui **diu** vixit **parum** vixerit.
Ep. 98.8 **plus** dolet quam necesse est qui **ante** dolet quam necesse est.
Ep. 101.15 quam bene vivas referre, non quam diu; saepe autem in hoc esse **bene**, ne **diu**.
Ep. 122.3 hos tu existimas scire **quemadmodum** vivendum sit, qui nesciunt **quando**?

B9 = POINTED ADDITION

Prov. 4.16 aequo animo ferre quae non sunt **mala** nisi **male sustinenti**.
Ira 2.17.1 et saepe id quod **ueri adfectus** non effecissent effecit **imitatio adfectuum**.
Ira 3.34.1 crede mihi, **leuia** sunt propter quae **non leuiter** excandescimus.
Marc. 21.3 nulla erit illa breuissimi longissimique aeui differentia, si inspecto **quanto quis uixerit** spatio comparaueris **quanto non uixerit**.
VB 4.2 cui uera **uoluptas** erit **uoluptatum contemptio**.
Ot. 6.5 hi multum **egisse** uisi sunt, quamuis nihil **publice agerent**.
Tranq. 6.2 ante omnia necesse est se ipsum aestimare, quia fere plus nobis **uidemur posse** quam **possumus**.
Tranq. 11.4 saepe enim causa **moriendi** est **timide mori**.
Brev. 2.2 exigua **pars** est **uitae** qua **uiuimus**.
Brev. 11.1 uis scire quam non **diu uiuant**? uide quam **cupiant diu uiuere**.
Ep. 22.3 censeo aut **ex ista vita** tibi aut **e vita** exeundum
Ep. 30.6 mors adeo **extra omne malum** est ut sit **extra omnem malorum metum**.
Ep. 67.15 **torqueor**, sed **fortiter**.
Ep. 67.15 **occidor**, sed **fortiter**.
Ep. 67.15 **uror**, sed **inuictus**.
Ep. 71.36 magna pars est **profectus velle proficere**.
Ep. 97.17 ideo numquam **fides latendi** fit etiam **latentibus**.
Ep. 101.7 quid autem stultius quam mirari id ullo die **factum** quod omni **potest fieri**?
Ep. 101.15 discendumque nihil interesse **quando** patiaris quod **quandoque** patiendum est.
Ep. 105.8 putat enim se, etiam si non **deprenditur**, **posse deprendi**.

B10 = REPETITION OF THE SAME WORD OR ROOT WITH A SIGNIFICANT VARIATION

Prov. 4.3 **miserum** te iudico, quod numquam fuisti **miser**.
Const. 2.2 neque enim **Cato post libertatem** uixit nec **libertas post Catonem**.
Const. 7.4 potest aliquis **nocens** fieri, quamuis non **nocuerit**.
Ira 1.1.1 dum alteri noceat sui neglegens, in ipsa inruens tela et **ultionis** secum **ultorem** tracturae auidus.
Ira 1.16.1 non oportet **peccata** corrigere **peccantem**.
Ira 3.30.3 numquam erit **felix** quem torquebit **felicior**.
Marc. 16.4 tamen et acerbam mortem filii et inultam tam magno animo **tulit** quam ipse leges **tulerat**.
Marc. 26.1 illo ingenio quo ciuilia bella defleuit, quo proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit.
Helv. 1.4 possum instar efficacissimae **consolationis** esse ipse **consolator**.
Ira 2.2.5 sed omnia ista **motus** sunt animorum **moueri** nolentium.
Ep. 8.5 nihil praeter animum esse mirabile, cui **magno** nihil **magno**.
Ep. 8.6 qui nihil **agere** videntur maiora **agunt**.
Ep. 24.12 scies nihil esse in istis **terribile** nisi ipsum **timorem**.
Ep. 32.5 ille demum necessitates supergressus est et exauctoratus ac liber qui **vivit vita peracta**.
Ep. 42.8 multa possum tibi ostendere quae adquisita acceptaque libertatem nobis extorserint; **nostri** essemus, si ista **nostra** non essent.
Ep. 78.17 Quid autem interest, non **sit** an non **sim**? in utroque finis dolendi est.
Ep. 86.5 hoc illum pavimentum tam vile **sustinuit** – at nunc quis est qui sic lavari **sustineat**?
Ep. 97.14 **sceleris** in **scelere** supplicium est.
Ep. 103.4 illa te sinu suo proteget, in huius sacrario eris aut **tutus** aut **tutior**.
Ep. 104.30 nemo **mutatum** Catonem totiens **mutata** re publica vidit.

B11 = TRICKY SIMILARITY BETWEEN WORDS

B11-α: Quasi-synonym

Pol. 17.2 et non sentire mala sua non est **hominis** et non ferre non est **uiri**.
Ep. 33.8 aliud autem est **meminisse**, aliud **scire**.
Ep. 36.4 quemadmodum omnibus annis **studere** honestum est, ita non omnibus **institui**.
Ep. 86.10 nihil mihi videtur iam interesse, **ardeat** balineum an **caleat**.
Ep. 92.17 multum interest utrum aliquid **obstet** tantum *an* **inpediat**.
Ep. 120.18 ad mortem dies extremus **pervenit**, **accedit** omnis.

B11-β: Degree

Ira 1.1.7 quid ergo interest? quod alii adfectus **apparent**, hic **eminet**.
Ira 3.1.3 cetera uitia **inpellunt** animos, ira **praecipitat**.
Tranq. 17.6 multum interest, **remittas** aliquid an **soluas**.
Ep. 35.3 cogita te **mortalem** esse, me **senem**.
Ep. 45.9 quem aliqua uis **mouet**, nulla **perturbat**.
Ep. 55.4 multum autem interest utrum uita tua **otiosa** sit an **ignaua**.
Ep. 101.2 facilius enim **crescit** dignitas quam **incipit**.

B11-γ: Same prefix

VB 23.5 ex quo multa ***ex*eant** et nihil ***ex*cidat**.
Prov. 4.7 quisquis uidetur ***di*missus** esse ***di*latus** est.
Tranq. 15.2 humanius est ***de*ridere** uitam quam ***de*plorare**.
Ep. 4.5 vivere ***no*lunt**, mori ***ne*sciunt**.

B11-δ: Phonic similarity

Marc. 15.3 **flente** populo Romano non **flexit** uultum.
VB 3.4 depulsis iis quae aut **irritant** nos aut **territant**.
Tranq. 1.16 puto multos **potuisse** ad sapientiam peruenire, nisi **putassent** se peruenisse.
Helv. 10.3 epulas quas toto orbe **conquirunt** nec **concoquere** dignantur.
Helv. 10.7 maiores nostri, quorum **uirtus** etiamnunc **uitia** nostra sustentat.
Ep. 47.19 **verborum** castigatione uteris: **verberibus** muta admonentur.

B12 = ANTONYM OR OPPOSITE MEANING

B12-α: Opposite

Prov. 5.5 Quid opus fuit **auferre**? **accipere** potuistis.
Prov. 6.9 quod tam **cito** fit timetis **diu**!
Marc. 3.1 **funus triumpho** simillimum.
Marc. 4.1 ut **inhumano** ferre **humana** iubeam modo.
Marc. 11.1 **moderandum** est itaque uobis maxime, quae **inmoderate** fertis.
Marc. 20.3 caram te, **uita**, beneficio **mortis** habeo.
Tranq. 11.4 *male* **uiuet** quisquis nesciet *bene* **mori**.
Brev. 20.1 cum in consummationem **dignitatis** per mille **indignitates** erepsissent.
Brev. 16.2 mortem saepe *ideo* **optant** *quia* **timent**.
Ep. 4.7 ut non tantum illi **minaretur** quantum **permiserat**.
Ep. 4.8 non pauciores **servorum** ira cecidisse quam **regum**.
Ep. 4.8 quisquis vitam *suam* **contempsit** *tuae* **dominus** est.
Ep. 4.8 quid ad te itaque quam **potens** sit quem times, cum id propter quod times **nemo non possit**?
Ep. 11.7 nec **prohibetur** hic nec **adducitur**.
Ep. 39.1 qui **notorem** dat **ignotus** est.
Ep. 39.6 eo peruenerunt ut illis quae **superuacua** fuerant facta sint **necessaria**.
Ep. 39.6 quae fuerant **uitia mores** sunt.
Ep. 47.17 '**Servus** est'. Sed fortasse **liber** animo.
Ep. 58.23 vis tu non timere ne **semel** *fiat* quod **cotidie** *fit*!
Ep. 98.3 **certus** adversus **incerta**.
Ep. 101.5 quid autem ad me an naturae **certum** sit quod mihi **incertum** est?
Ep. 101.9 ille enim ex **futuro** suspenditur cui inritum est **praesens**.
Ep. 101.9 si **certus** sis adversus **incerta**.
Ep. 104.28 **aequalis** fuit in tanta **inaequalitate** fortunae.

B12-β: Illogical behavior or counterintuitive situation

Ira 1.11.8 pericula, dum **inferre** uult, **non cauet**.
Ira 2.28.6 saepe adulatio **dum blanditur offendit**.
Ira 3.3.2 **non sine pernicie sua perniciosus**.
Ira 3.5.6 **dat poenas dum exigit**.
Ira 3.8.1 demus operam ne **accipiamus** iniuriam, quia **ferre** nescimus.
Ira 3.24.4 neminem tam timidum offensarum qui non in illas **dum uitat incidat**.
Ira 3.26.2 maxima **est enim factae iniuriae poena fecisse**.
Ira 3.27.3 **mansuete inmansueta** tractanda sunt.
Ira 3.42.3 quid inbecillitatis obliti ingentia odia suscipimus et **ad frangendum fragiles** consurgimus?
Marc. 7.4 praesumpta opinio **de non timendis terribilis**.
Marc. 11.4 **sine quibus uiuere non potest mortifera sunt**.
VB 1.1 quae (via) ubi in contrarium ducit, **ipsa uelocitas maioris interualli causa fit**.
VB 13.4 uoluptates ... quo magis **inplentur** eo magis **inexplebiles**.
Tranq. 5.3 hunc tamen Athenae ipsae in carcere occiderunt, et qui tuto insultauerat agmini tyrannorum, **eius libertatem libertas non tulit**.

Tranq. 3.8 saepe grandis natu senex nullum aliud habet argumentum quo se probet **diu uixisse** praeter **aetatem**.
Tranq. 8.3 ideoque **laetiores** uidebis quos **numquam fortuna respexit**.
Tranq. 11.2 scit **se suum** <u>non</u> esse.
Tranq. 16.4 isti leui temporis inpensa inuenerunt quomodo aeterni fierent, et **ad inmortalitatem moriendo uenerunt**.
Brev. 7.2 uidebis quemadmodum illos respirare non sinant uel **mala** sua uel **bona**.
Brev. 7.3 uiuere tota uita discendum est et, quod magis fortasse miraberis, **tota uita discendum est mori**.
Brev. 9.1 operosius occupati sunt ut melius possint uiuere, **inpendio uitae uitam instruunt**.
Brev. 13.1 non sunt otiosi **quorum uoluptates multum negotii habent**.
Brev. 16.1 sero intellegunt miseri tam diu se, **dum nihil agunt, occupatos fuisse**.
Pol. 6.4 multa tibi non licent quae humillimis quoque et in angulo iacentibus licent: **magna seruitus est magna fortuna**.
Pol. 7.2 cui **omnia licent**, propter hoc ipsum **multa non licent**.
Pol. 11.2 tota **uita** nihil aliud quam ad **mortem** iter est?
Helv. 9.5 quantus ille uir fuit qui effecit ut aliquis **exul sibi uideretur quod ab exule recederet**!
Helv. 10.1 bene ergo exilium tulit Marcellus **nec quicquam** in animo eius **mutauit** loci **mutatio**.
Ep. 4.3 quaedam ideo **minus timenda** quia **multum metus** adferunt.
Ep. 7.3 **inhumanior**, quia inter **homines** fui.
Ep. 32.5 qui **vivit vita peracta**.
Ep. 36.12 eam securitatem nobis **ratio** non praestat ad quam **stultitia** perducit.
Ep. 39.6 **mala sua**, quod malorum ultimum est, et **amant**.
Ep. 44.7 dum **petunt fugiunt**.
Ep. 47.17 nulla **servitus** turpior est quam **voluntaria**.
Ep. 86.1 pietatemque, quam magis in illo admirabilem iudico cum **reliquit** patriam quam cum **defendit**.
Ep. 86.12 postquam **munda** balnea inventa sunt, **spurciores** sunt.
Ep. 91.12 inter **peritura vivimus**.
Ep. 91.13 multa **ceciderunt** ut altius **surgerent**.
Ep. 94.67 non est quod credas quemquam fieri aliena **infelicitate felicem**.
Ep. 98.6 calamitosus est animus futuri anxius et **ante miserias miser**.
Ep. 101.9 scit nihil interesse inter **diem** et **saeculum**.
Ep. 101.10 cui vita sua **cotidie** fuit **tota**.
Ep. 101.14 magnum **beneficium** esse naturae quod necesse est **mori**.
Ep. 122.3 hi **mortem** timent, in quam se **vivi** condiderunt?
Ep. 124.24 cum intelleges **infelicissimos** esse **felices**.

<u>B12-γ: Oxymoron</u>

Ira 2.5.3 **per otium saeui**.
Ira 2.27.3 **profutura torquent**.
Ira 2.36.5 **amicissimis hostes vitandique carissimis**.
VB 15.7 deo **parere libertas** est.
Tranq. 5.2 cum **inter** triginta **dominos liber** incederet.
Tranq. 12.3 his plerique similem uitam agunt, quorum non inmerito quis **inquietam inertiam** dixerit.
Brev. 12.2 quorundam **otium occupatum** est.
Brev. 12.4 non habent isti otium sed **iners negotium**.
Ep. 19.8 aliquid et **pro otio audendum** est.
Ep. 30.3 in quocumque corporis habitu fortem laetumque **nec deficientem quamvis deficiatur**.
Ep. 36.4 turpis et ridicula res est **elementarius senex**.
Ep. 49.8 **acutae delirationis**.

Ep. 56.8 interdum **quies inquieta** est.
Ep. 63.5 [Attalus' words] sic amicorum defunctorum memoria iucunda est quomodo poma quaedam sunt **suaviter aspera**.
Ep. 74.4 occurrent, quod genus egestatis gravissimum est, **in divitis inopes**.
Ep. 88.19 isti **ieiuni vomitores**.

APPENDIX 3

THE NARRATOR AND HIS LANGUAGE IN LUCAN: ETHNOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY, MYTHOLOGY, SINGLE WORDS

This Appendix constitutes an extension of Ch. 3.4.

- *More on ethnography and geography.* The fixation on the Nile (see Ch. 3.4) explains other elements of the poem, such as the geographic excursus on the Apennines in Book 2 and, in general, the poem's obsession with rivers. At 2.392-438, the narrator devotes almost fifty lines to the Apennines (a physical barrier that Caesar has to overcome on his way to Rome), thus conjuring a narratorial 'barrier' that impedes the continuation of his own narration. The Apennines is a symbol of civil war in a number of ways: it divides Italy 'in the middle' (396-7 *mediam ... Italiam*); it is located in between two opposite seas (399-400 'midway (*medius*) between twin (*geminas*) waters of the Lower and Upper Seas'; cf. my discussion on *Ursa Maior~Minor* in Ch. 3.4); it generates 'enormous rivers' (403 *inmensos amnes*), which it scatters 'on to the diverging slopes of the twin seas' (404 *gemini diuortia ponti*). All these evocations of doubleness and division are not the only way in which this geographical digression fails fully to be a 'narratorial barrier'. Its central section is devoted to a list of Italian rivers (405-426). Their characterization as 'enormous' (403) is a patent exaggeration, which functions as a first hint at their symbolism. The list compulsively lists Italian rivers, thus naming as many analogues of the Rubicon, the Italian boundary that Caesar violated in the previous book. These rivers also occasion a proleptic evocation of the locale of Pompey's death, the estuary of the Nile, which is

explicitly mentioned (oddly, twice) at 416-417 (*Nilo ... Nilus .. harenis*). Rivers are a constant presence all through the poem, and their imagery invariably evokes civil war.[547] In the final part of the excursus, the Appennines 'abandons Italy' (432-3 *deserit ... Hesperiam*) precisely as Pompey does at the end of the same book (cf. 2.734 *Hesperiae*; 3.5-7 *ab Hesperia ... Magnus*, etc.). Fittingly, the Appennines is interrupted by another instance of 'topographic' civil war, the Strait of Messina (437 *gemino ... profundo*, 'twin seas').

At first glance, the excursus on the Gallic tribes in Book 1 (392-465), too, may seem like a paradigmatic example of an unnecessary pause in the narration, during which (one may surmise) the narrator enjoys talking about exotic peoples rather than traumatic Roman events. But it is not so, because the Roman civil war and the death of Pompey are repeatedly conjured up in a number of ways. (i) The long list of Gallic tribes, inevitably, brings to mind Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*. (ii) The juxtaposition, in the singular, of the Leuci and Remi at line 424 (*Leucus Remusque*) evocatively associates Leucas, i.e. Actium, which for the narrator was unequivocally a great disaster for Rome,[548] and Rome's first civil-war perpetrator, Remus. (iii) Repeated references to the Gauls' hair remind us of both Caesar (since earlier in the book, at 1.183, we have encountered a clear pun of Rome's *caesaries*, 'hair', when she meets Caesar) and of Pompey's head.[549] (iv) Repeated references to rivers figure civil war.[550]

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[547] For the Gallic rivers, see point 'iv' in the next paragraph. The Euphrates and Tigris constitute alter-egos of the Nile, for instance at 8.435-9 (discussed below). On the topography of the Spanish rivers as evocative of civil war, cf. Masters (1992), 45-53.

[548] Cf. 1.42-3 *aspera ... Leucas*; 7.872 *Mutina et Leucas puros fecere Philippos*.

[549] 1.442-3 *tonse ... per colla ... crinibus ... Comatae*; 463 *crinigeros*. Cf., only a couple of pages later, 566-7 *crinemque rotantes / sanguineum ... Galli* (in the list of *omina* discussed above).

[550] The two clearest examples are 399-401 (a symbolical fight between two rivers, one of which loses its name becoming the tributary of the other) and 409-11, which describes a 'natural' civil war ('the stretch of changing shore rejoices too, claimed by land and sea alternatively when the mighty Ocean floods in or with receding waves withdraws').

- *Mythology*. On the rare occasions in which it has a prominent place in the poem, mythology tends to signify much more than it seems at first sight, conjuring one of the narrator's obsessions.[551] Sometimes it is even possible to demonstrate that this happens as if unbeknownst to the narrator himself, as in the Medusa excursus, which I discussed in Ch. 1.2. A similar interpretation can be applied to the other major excursuses. At 6.334-412, when Caesar first enters Thessaly, the narrator launches a long excursus on the mountains, cities, rivers, peoples, and legends of this region. As is usual in Lucan's digressions, a number of elements scattered through these lists associatively conjure up civil war or Pompey's head.[552] But, in this case, there is more. As in Book 9 the list of snakes is preceded and explained by an act of heroic violence (the snakes that emerge from the sand constitute the offspring of the blood spilled from Medusa's head), so in Book 6 the cities and rivers listed by the narrator come to existence after another mythical figure, Hercules, removes an entire mountain, thus causing the water of a giant swamp to flow out of Thessaly (347-9). At the beginning of Book 8 (the book that culminates in Pompey's beheading), Pompey flees beyond this 'Herculean throat' (1 *Herculeas fauces*).[553] How could anybody read this initial line without finding it ominous?[554] This suggests that, in part, the (only apparently digressive) narration of the geographic throat-cutting perpetrated on

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[551] Here I focus on the larger excursuses. In Appendix 4, I will show that the same is true of the occasional mythological references.

[552] For instance, there are repeated references to 'heads' (at line 338 Mount Othrys 'removes', *summovet*, Lion's *caput*; at 379 the river Titaresos is said to 'remember' its *caput*). At 364 *gener*, referring to the relation between two rivers, calls to mind the familial ties between Caesar and Pompey.

[553] For *fauces* in the sense 'a narrow pass', cf. OLD s.v. 4b

[554] Only a dozen lines later, several references to Pompey's and Caesar's neck (11 *iugulum*; 12 *cervice*) and to Pompey's face (14 *facies*) immediately activate the sinister potential of the Herculean throat of line 1. A commentator observes on lines 11-12: 'the theme of decapitation is set before the reader' (Mayer 1981, 84), failing to note that the theme is in fact already suggestively introduced at line 1. The other two available commentaries on this book, Postgate (1917) and D'Urso (2019), too, fail to comment on 1 *fauces* as evocative of Pompey's death.

Thessaly by Hercules constitutes, for the narrator, a disguised rehearsal of the scene of Pompey's throat-cutting.[555]

Another mythological excursus involving Hercules opens the last part of Book 4, set in Africa. After reaching the site of Hercules' fight with Antaeus, Curio asks a local peasant why the place is called 'Antaeus' Kingdom' (4.589-660). The peasant narrates how Hercules came to Africa and defeated a local monster, the giant Antaeus. A lot of ink has been spilled concerning the possible 'meaning' or 'symbolism' of this episode with respect to the main plot of the poem.[556] Is this mythical struggle meant to be an analogue of the war between Caesar and Pompey (won by the Caesarian party) or of the imminent fight between Curio and Juba (won by the Pompeian party)? And which mythical figure equates which later general? Answering these questions has proved to be impossible because both Hercules and Antaeus possess attributes of each of the four later characters that I have just mentioned.[557] This situation of hermeneutic impasse is determined by scholars' traditional unwillingness to renounce the idea of an author in total control of every aspect of the meanings of his work. An alternative, more (post)modern interpretation consists in assuming that any clear equation is deliberately confused so as to reflect the irrationality of civil war.[558] But if we accept the latter view, we would in a sense end up with a meaningless text, whereas, as I have argued and shown so far, the *Bellum Civile* is affected by

[555] The flowing of the Thessalian rivers out of the primordial swamp, described in detail by the narrator at 6.360-80, may symbolize the trickles of blood flowing out of Pompey's decapitated body.

[556] See e.g. Grimal (1949); Thompson and Bruère (1970); Ahl (1972); Ahl (1976), 91-115; Saylor (1982); Asso (2010), 220-222.

[557] Curio is an invader like Hercules, but he is defeated like Antaeus. Juba is the final winner like Hercules, but an African barbarian like Antaeus. Pompey can be identified with Hercules as the defender of order (Antaeus being an anti-Olympian giant) and because the motto of his party was 'Hercules victor', but at the same time, like Antaeus, he unsuccessfully defends his own homeland from an external invader who 'uproots' him. Caesar is an invader and wins the war like Hercules, but aspects of his personality are monstrous like Antaeus.

[558] Ahl (1976), 102-3.

an excess, not a lack, of signification. In this poem, everything seems to be over-determined, rather than absurd. If, instead, we look at the excursus according to the general law I proposed above, it becomes possible to account for the irredeemable nature of this conundrum while not renouncing the notion that the text possesses an internal logic: once again, our narrator attempts to talk about 'something else' through a digression, but the content of this digression – beyond his intentions – keeps conjuring up the characters of the 49-48 BCE civil war. The psychoanalytic method of interpreting dreams is particularly useful in this case. The figures of Hercules and Antaeus can be seen as the result of 'condensation' (one of the most typical ways in which the repressed 'returns', in hidden fashion, in dreams and symptoms), re-arranging aspects of Caesar, Pompey, Curio, and Juba in a way that ambiguously projects the narrator's desire to re-write history, but also his impotence to do so.[559]

- *Single words*. In this poem, many single words are (as it were) an excursus – an attempt at signifying a *specific* meaning (i.e. a meaning different from 'civil war'). And like the various discourses that I have described so far, many single words, too, ultimately fail to perform their signifying function. They obsessively end up designating something else, namely those few meanings that we may call the 'archetypes' of this poem. Every time we read the terms *caput* or *truncus* or *litus*, even when the context does not present any compelling reason to do so, for instance when it is about a bull shaking his head or tree-trunks used to build a ship, we are prompted to think about *that* head, *that* truncated body, *that* shore where Pompey was killed. For

[559] The picture is complicated by the fact that this African excursus rewrites a famous Vergilian scene, namely the duel between Hercules and Cacus. I discussed this intertextual aspect of the African excursus in Ch. 3.5. On 'condensation' cf. e.g. Freud (2010 [1900]), 296-321; Brenner (1974), 51-2, 159. Here as elsewhere, I am using Freudian terminology simply because I assume that it is better known to the larger public, not because I prioritize Freudian psychoanalysis over other psychoanalytic currents; according to a leading contemporary post-Bionian analyst, a dream 'is not something to decode or decipher, but a poem of the mind that syncretizes the emotional state of the moment' (Ferro 2015, 148).

reasons of space I will limit my analysis to one random example.[560] At 8.435-9 Lentulus dissuades Pompey from seeking refuge among the Parthians by suggesting that, at his arrival, he would encounter numerous reminders of the defeat of Carrhae:

> Tunc plurima cladis
> occurrent monimenta tibi: quae moenia trunci
> lustrarunt ceruice duces, ubi nomina tanta
> obruit Euphrates et nostra cadauera Tigris
> detulit in terras ac reddidit.
>
> Then numerous reminders of defeat will meet your eyes: the walls round which our generals passed, their heads cut off, the place where Euphrates smothered names so mighty and Tigris carried Roman corpses down inside the earth and brought them out again.

Lentulus is talking about Crassus' disaster at Carrhae. Unwittingly, however, he ends up talking about Pompey's disaster (*cladis*), as so many 'reminders' (*monimenta*) tell us: decapitated Roman generals (*trunci … ceruice duces*), 'mighty names' (at 1.135 Pompey has been described as 'the shadow of a great name'), destroyed by a huge Eastern river (the Euphrates; Pompey's death is indissolubly liked to another huge Eastern river, the Nile); corpses released by a huge Eastern river (Tigris) some time after death (cf. 8.718-26: Cordus rescues Pompey's body from the sea and buries him).

[560] I discussed the term *truncus* in more detail in Ch. 3.5.

APPENDIX 4

NEUROTIC PLEASURE (II): CIVIL WAR AND 'FAMILY DRAMA' IN LUCAN

When the Massilian ambassadors illustrate to Caesar their reasons for not taking part in the civil conflict, one of their major arguments is expressed in the form of two rhetorical questions: 'Who will not drop his arms when he sees his father facing him? Who will not be stopped from throwing weapons by brothers on the other side?' (3.326-7). Put in these terms, the issue looks like a no-brainer. There are universal boundaries that a human being will not violate under any circumstances. What can there be more disgusting, horrific, and inhuman than to shed the blood of your father or brother? And yet, the poem continuously disproves the validity of such considerations. All through, one of its most recurrent leitmotifs is the circumstance that, in a civil war, parents fight against their offspring, and *vice versa*, and siblings fight against siblings.[561]

Starting from the programmatic 'kindred armies' of the proem (1.4 *cognatas acies*) all the way down to the Egyptian civil war, which pits two brothers against each other (e.g. 9.1066-71), this specific manifestation of the war of the same against the same, namely intra-familial conflict, is omnipresent in the poem. Only in Book 7, for instance, there are eight instances, such as:

> 7.180-2 The multitude is conscious of its wicked prayer – it hoped for <u>fathers'</u> throat, for <u>brothers'</u> breasts.

[561] Two previous discussions of this feature of Lucan's poem are Viansino (1974), 9-15, and Fantham (2010).

> 7.462-6 That they might profoundly know what horrors they would commit, they saw their parents with opposing faces, their brothers' weapons close at hand – and did not choose to change position!

> 7.626-30 Who strikes his brother's breast, cuts off the head and throws it far away so he can plunder the familiar corpse? Who mangles his father's face and proves to those who watch by his excessive wrath that the man he slaughters is not his father?

Apart from the narration of these and similar episodes,[562] the theme of intrafamilial conflict is also brought to the fore in at least two other ways. The narrator constantly calls attention to the fact that Pompey and Caesar are relatives, often with sarcasm.[563] Besides, in a poem where so little recourse is made to the traditional apparatus of mythology, it is remarkable that a high number of the myths alluded to by the narrator have to do with strife among family members.

Sometimes the narrator explicitly establishes a link between the narrated events and these myths. For instance, in Book 1, in the space of just about twenty lines he compares the incipient civil war to the fratricidal clash between Romulus and Remus and to the Sabine war, in which the Sabine women were torn between love for their parents and husbands (1.95; 1.114-8). In the list of omens in Book 1, the Erinys that was seen wandering around the city is compared to 'the Eumenis who drove Agave of Thebes and hurled the weapons of fierce Lycurgus' and to 'Megaera, who caused Alcides to shudder' so that he ended up exterminating his wife and

[562] Only in Book 7 cf. also: 7.320-5 (quoted below); 7.453-4 'For wielding swords which are alike, so many swords of brothers and of fathers, will Thessaly be granted daylight by him [Jupiter]?'; 7.550-2 'Here the soldiers waging war were not assembled from the royal auxiliaries but wielded weapons in their hands unasked: that place contained their brothers and their fathers'; 7.762-3 'On the beds of fathers, beds of brothers, the guilty men laid down their limbs'; 7.773-6 'Each man is tormented by a terrifying vision all his own: he sees faces of old men, he the forms of younger men, he in all his dreams is harried by his brother's corpse, in this breast is his father'.

[563] Some random examples: 6.5 'Caesar refuses to be in debt to Fate for Victory in war except against his son-in-law'; 6.11 'when he sees his son-in-law, can be roused to battle by no commotion'; 6.304-5 'the greatest of your crimes is your advantage, Caesar: to fight a righteous son-in-law'; 6.316; 7.334-6; 2.595; 2.652; etc. Cf. also 7.70-2 (in Cicero's speech).

children (1.574-77); all three myths narrate intra-familial killing. At 7.449-55, the narrator asks why Jupiter seems to be unmoved by the events at Pharsalus, whereas he had deprived the day of the sun when Thyestes took a brutal revenge on his brother. At 7.777-80, Caesar is compared to Orestes and Agave, who killed, respectively, his mother and her son.

On other occasions, myths of intrafamilial conflict are evoked in a more unwarranted and unexpected fashion. At 6.355-9, in a list of geographical erudition that has apparently no connection to the narration of civil war, the narrator records, of a certain locality, that 'there once Agave, exiled, bearing Pentheus' neck and head, committed them to the final fire, complaining that she had seized this only of her son'. At 8.407, Lentulus compares the Parthian king to Oedipus, the parricide par excellence. At 9.644-8, in the description of Medusa, the narrator observes that this monster was feared by her father, mother, and sisters. At 10.464-7, Caesar dragging the young king Ptolemy around is compared to Medea ready to fight her father while wielding her brother's head, whom she had killed.

The characters engaging in civil war are fully aware of their parricidal/fratricidal tendencies. In fact, they seem to relish them. In the speech in which he tries to convince Caesar to start the war, Laelius claims: 'I swear that, if you [= Caesar] bid me plunge my sword in brother's breast or parent's throat or womb of wife great with child, I will do it all, though with unwilling hand' (1.374-8). In his own speech before Pharsalus, Caesar exhorts his troops not to hesitate to commit parricide if necessary: 'while their [= our enemies'] weapons glitter, let no image of affection or glimpse of parents in opposing rank shake you: disfigure with your sword the faces which demand respect. If any man attacks his kinsman's breast with hostile blade or if he violates no bond when he wounds, let him count his unknown enemy's slaughter as a credit' (7.320-5). The old man narrating the civil war between Sulla and Marius recalls that 'sons were

drenched with father's blood, competed for possessions of the parent's severed head; brothers fell as brother's prizes' (2.149-51).

In the paradoxical world of civil war, parricide may even become an act of piety. The Massilian ambassadors, speaking for the entire community, declare that, in order to avoid civil war, 'wives shall ask for death at their dear husbands' hands, brothers will exchange death-wounds' (3.349-55). When Vulteius' men perform their notorious collective suicide, 'brothers charge at brothers and son at father, they thrust their swords not with shaking hand but with all their weight' (4.563-4).

Once again, I have ended up compiling a long list, as I did at the beginning of Ch. 3. It was necessary, because my point is precisely that the image of intrafamilial war is conjured up by both the narrator and his projective characters with a degree of obsessiveness that is unwarranted, and therefore puzzling. For, although it is true that in a civil war there might be occasional episodes in which members of the same family are pitted against each other, this scenario can hardly be normal: members of the same family tend to fight on the same side, for obvious reasons; in the case of fathers and sons, only some of the men whose children were old enough to take arms would have been young enough to do the same, in part also because for Roman soldiers it was normal to start a family and raise children only after retirement;[564] it is statistically unrealistic that family members fighting in opposite armies might end up, literally, facing each other on the battlefield. Tacitus mentions one episode in which a man killed his brother in the civil war of 69 CE, making it abundantly clear that it was considered an absolute

[564] Augustus prohibited soldiers beneath a certain rank from marrying during their time of service (Dio 60.24.3). Cf. Jeffers (1999), 177.

rarity (*Hist*. 3.51). In the light of these considerations, why is this poem so fixated on parricide and fratricide, that is, acts that are universally abhorred by humankind?

Unequivocally, the narrator presents the multifarious ways in which the Romans engage in parricide and fratricide as the result of folly. He goes out of his way to express his detestation for what his characters do to their family members. And yet he indulges in narrating these crimes with an insistence that, as we have seen, seems exaggerated, unwarranted, and ultimately sadomasochistic: an unnecessary infliction of pain on himself and his readers. For readers, too, (we may rest assured) are disturbed by reading about all these brothers, fathers, and sons killing each other. Lucan has enjoyed an enormous success in many, if not all, historical periods. Should we say that this happened *despite* the poem's constant, and disgusting, conjuring of parricide? Yes, in part. But the picture might be more complicated, if one adopts a psychoanalytic perspective.

As is well known, psychoanalysis, both Freudian and non-Freudian, posits that secret hostility toward one's parents and siblings is not only inevitable, but in fact one of the defining features of humanity and a decisive factor in the process of self-development that every individual has to go through.[565] Ambivalence toward the parents and jealousy toward siblings constitute the origin and foundation of the inherently conflicted nature of the human psyche. Intrafamilial conflict, as internalized in the psyche, is often the ultimate cause of mental conflict and neurosis. From this perspective, therefore, it might not be that surprising to encounter such an obsessive thematization of parricide in a poem that, as I have shown all through this chapter, is so neurotic.

[565] For a modern examination of the Oedipus complex in Freudian, object-relations, and self-psychology psychoanalytic theory cf. the important work by Greenberg (1991), with further bibliography.

In a brilliant study, Francesco Orlando has suggested that literature, at least sometimes if not always, becomes the avenue of a controlled 'return of the repressed', in which unwished and disavowed desires may be conjured, in more or less subtle and indirect ways, in the minds of those who participate in the literary process.[566] In Orlando's view, the practice of literature offers the individual, especially through the mechanism of identification with the characters, a partial and unconscious outlet for repressed desires. For instance, Orlando notes the strange circumstance that, in the history of both ancient and modern dramaturgy, two of the most frequently represented myths, that of Oedipus and that of Hippolytos, involve incest. Oedipal issues are evident in several of Shakespeare's plays, too, such as Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, and Julius Caesar, to mention only some of the countless possible non-ancient examples. The writing and representation of such tragedies becomes, respectively for the author and the spectators/readers, a way to realize (through identification) repressed wishes that they themselves may find repugnant at the level of consciousness, but that are in fact operative in their unconscious.[567]

Something similar, I propose, might be true in the case of the *Bellum Civile*, his narrator, and his readers through the ages. This is a painful poem in many respects, but also one that excites us. It excites us *despite* the countless and disgusting atrocities that it offers. My suggestion is that this 'despite' is a problematic one, one that the paradoxical functioning of our psyche might render a synonym of 'because'. How truly repugnant are all these chopped heads

[566] Orlando (1978). Schiesaro (2003), a major study of the plays of Lucan's uncle Seneca, is heavily indebted to Orlando's ideas (in my opinion to a much greater degree than his footnotes seem to acknowledge).

[567] On the relation between the act of reading, the mechanism of identification, and unconscious mental processes, see also the stimulating considerations by Poulet (1980) and Segal (1986), 20 and 23-26. Cf. esp. Segal (1986), 20 'Drama and fiction enable us to project upon the characters in the story hidden alter egos that reflect back to us what we do not recognize, or refuse to recognize, in ourselves'.

of fathers and brothers? Is Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, the forbidden, inviolable boundary par excellence, outrageous or exciting? Many recent scholars have observed that this poem continuously evokes, or even sets up, 'boundaries', again and again staging their transgression;[568] might this obsessive re-enactment be a displaced and symbolic realization of some other archetypal, unspeakable, and otherwise impossible boundary violation?

In the previous two paragraphs, the focus has shifted from the narrator alone to a notion of shared humanity encompassing the narrator and his readers through the ages. The idea that this poem gives expression, and therefore somehow caters, to unresolved conflicts of the human psyche can in fact be extended, I believe, from Oedipal ambivalence to any of the neurotic tendencies that are so conspicuously on display in this poem. In the last two thousand years, the *Bellum Civile* has been read and admired by authors such as Statius, Claudian, Dante, Montaigne, Milton, Voltaire, Goethe, Shelley, Baudelaire, and countless other individuals, each of them with his or her own neuroses and internal conflicts. As I showed in the first two sections of Ch. 3, the *Bellum Civile* has a lot to offer to every 'neurotic character': the depressed, the anxious, the masochist, the sadist, the narcissist, the obsessive-compulsive, the complainer will all find their own neurotic tendencies reflected in the poem. If psychoanalysis is right that all these traits are not exclusive to pathological cases, but are in fact physiologically and simultaneously operative, with varying degrees, in each individual, then the case can be made that the *Bellum Civile* is a poem that engages and resonates with the various neurotic elements of the conflicted psyches of all of us. One reason why this quirky, grotesque poem has been, perhaps against all odds, so much loved in epochs so diverse might be that, through the powerful mechanism of unconscious identification, it realigns us (as it might have realigned its own

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[568] See especially Masters (1992), 1-42 and passim; Bartsch (1997), 13-22.

narrator) with parts of ourselves that, outside the artistic experience, we avoid, disown, resist, and repress.

APPENDIX 5

NEUROTIC PLEASURE (III): LUCAN'S OTHER CIVIL WAR

In Ch. 3 and Appendices 3-4, I have avoided attributing the narratorial voice to Lucan. Lucan (a real human being) and the narrator of his poem (a fictional entity) belong to two different dimensions and, therefore, have to be kept separate. However, though it would be naive to identify the two figures, it would also be inconsiderate to forget that every literary work was produced in a specific historical moment by a specific individual, and will inevitably reflect those circumstances. In creating his narrator, Lucan wrote in the first person, thus lending him, at least to some degree, his own voice; this fact determines an overlap that, however partial, begs for some comment.

Innumerable elements, in Lucan's (narrator's) treatment of the 49-48 BCE civil war, can be read as reflecting Lucan's historical era and life situation. The most obvious, of course, is that Julius Caesar, the character, was an ancestor and precursor of another Caesar, the historical tyrant Nero, at whose court and in whose company Lucan lived for most of his life. Talking about the former Caesar inevitably involves conjuring up the latter Caesar. Other characters, apart from Caesar, seem to possess Nero-like qualities. As I have argued at the beginning of Chapter 1, Erichtho's omnipotent powers and lack of moral standards can be read as an imaginative projection of Nero's vicious and in many respects monstrous tyranny. In the last part of the poem, elements in the characterization of the young king Ptolemy, too, are suggestive of

Nero.[569] Acoreus' remark that the Nile frustrated past kings who attempted to tease out its secrets (10.272-280) could not be read, in the '60s of the 1st century CE, without evoking Nero's own Nile expedition of ca. 61.[570] Beheading became a central political theme in 62 CE (when Lucan was about to start, or had just started, composing the poem),[571] with the execution of two prominent individuals: Rubellius Plautus and Octavia. As Tacitus narrates, the decapitated heads of both were carried to Rome and showed to the emperor and Poppaea.[572] If Lucan saw those heads, this might have been a shocking experience that might explain in part the poem's obsession with amputated heads.

The examples may be multiplied. The point I am trying to make is that, in so many ways, facts and events of Lucan's life period make their presence felt in the poem, and elements of the latter take on a different meaning if considered in the light of their Neronian correspondents. This rather banal premise is important for my next argument, which aims to describe what is, to my mind, a crucial, yet under-exploited, aspect of Lucan's poem. Lucan wrote the last portion of his 'Civil war' at a time when he was plotting, in his real life, another 'civil war'. As the ancient sources tell us, in the last months of his life he was actively engaged in the Pisonian conspiracy, which aimed at murdering Nero. Normally, scholars discuss this fact in connection to the issue of the probably unfinished status of the poem: since Lucan was forced to commit suicide in 65,

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[569] For instance, at 8.448-453 Lentulus persuades Pompey to seek refuge at Ptolemy's court because he is just a boy and 'nothing shames men grown accustomed to the sceptre: mildest is the lot of realms beneath a new king'. As is well known, the reign of Nero, who became emperor as a teenager, seems to have been characterized by a sharp change between the initial positive years, the so called *quinquennium Neronis*, and a later tyrannical phase. Both Nero and Ptolemy married their sisters. Ptolemy's incestuous marriage with Cleopatra is repeatedly noted upon in Book 10 (e.g. 10.357).

[570] Barrenechea (2010); Manolaraki (2011) and (2013), 80-117; Tracy (2014).

[571] For the chronology of Lucan's composition: Ahl (1976) and Fantham (2011). But the connection between political beheading and the content of the poem is my own proposal.

[572] The two deaths are narrated in sequence at *Ann*. 14.58-64.

soon after the plot was discovered, this might explain why the poem seems to lack an end. This means that the Pisonian conspiracy is normally viewed as a factor that *prevented* Lucan from (continuing) writing. I wonder, however, whether a different approach could be taken, consisting in investigating how Lucan's conspiratorial activity might have affected what he *has* written.

I personally find revealing the circumstance that, in the last book, Lucan has either the narrator or a character make, in total, no less than seven references to a hypothetical, and sometimes recommended, assassination of (Julius) Caesar. Twice Pothinus urges Achillas to cut Caesar's throat (10.387-8 'Caesar's throat drained dry can give me this advantage'; 393-4 'fiercely attack Caesar's throat'). Caesar's murder is repeatedly conjured also by the narrator (409 'attack Caesar's throat'; 420 'Caesar's blood'; 423-4 'Caesar's blood might have been shed among the royal cups and his head have settled on the table'; 528 'until his country's swords reach Caesar's guts'). Sometimes, these references have the form, so to speak, of conspiratorial hints: this is the case at 429-30 ('it seemed that to let that hour for killing Caesar pass was a loss they could retrieve'), where the narrator seems to be speaking as a plotter who knows all too well how crucial right timing is in the execution of a coup, and at 374 ('let us kill our cruel lord (*dominam*) on the couch itself'), a line that almost sounds as a coded exhortation, addressed to Lucan's co-conspirators, to kill the 'cruel lord' Nero. Surely, Lucan's obsession with killing Nero must have dominated his mental life during his last months. When considered in this perspective, these repeated references to a planned Caesaricide, all of which are concentrated in the last two hundred lines of the last book, assume the status of a covert confession, almost as if Lucan, while articulating the fictional world of the poem, was unable to contain his excitement at the prospect of getting rid, in the real world, of (Nero) Caesar.

My third hypothesis concerning the narrator's neurosis (after the two that I advanced in Ch. 3.6 and Appendix 4 respectively) is that, among other things, it reflects *Lucan*'s ambiguous fascination with 'civil war'. He detested the civil war fought by Julius Caesar and Pompey, because it was one of the decisive steps toward the advent of the Julio-Claudian autocracy. But inasmuch as it was a victorious coup, it represented a model of action: a successful subversion of the established order, which resulted in a dramatic political change. Lucan the idealist may have sided with Pompey, but Lucan the conspirator (or even, more simply, Lucan the hater of Nero, who might well have wished his nemesis dead even before factually taking part in a plot)[573] had to successfully take on the role of a new, similarly 'criminal' Caesar if he was ever to reach his goal.[574] According to the Suetonian Life, after joining the Pisonian conspiracy, Lucan became an active, and indiscreet, recruiter thereof, 'even going to the length of offering Caesar's <u>head</u> to all his friends' (*usque eo intemperans ut Caesaris <u>caput</u> proximo cuique iactaret*). If narrating Pompey's decapitation meant, in a literary disguise, *also* to rehearse the wished-for removal of Nero, it becomes easier for us to understand why, despite all Lucan's (narrator's) protestations to the contrary, he seems to enjoy it so much.

[573] Regardless of when exactly his friendship with Nero collapsed, for sure Lucan wrote most of the poem after the emperor became (openly) his mortal enemy. Ahl (1976) and Fantham (2011) quote the available sources.

[574] A crucial idea, which however to my knowledge has been commented upon in previous scholarship only by O'Hara (2007), 139.

APPENDIX 6

‘I CANNOT TELL YOU THE EXACT HOUR’: THE HYBRID SEGMENTS OF THE *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS*

Appendices 6 and 7 bring to light a neglected aspect of Neronian prosimetra, namely their hybrid segments. In these works, which consist of a sequence of discrete parts alternately written in either verse or prose, the prose parts themselves incorporate pseudo-metrical patterns that cannot be defined either as poetry or as prose proper. The philological analysis contained in Appendices 6 and 7 serves the argument of Ch. 4 in that it helps to clarify how the relation between prose and poetry in the Neronian prosimetra is one of dynamic tension rather than merely formal juxtaposition. I will show that in both works there exist several liminal points where the boundaries between prose and poetry are blurred, and that this circumstance helps us to understand how these works were originally meant to be read.

Before I start, a few premises are necessary. First. These two works were meant for readers who, differently from us, had a natural, immediate sensitivity for prosodic lengths. This means that they were likely to recognize metrical patterns whenever such metrical patterns were noticeable enough.

Second. These two works were meant for readers who were familiar with Latin poetry and its functioning. Not all word sequences that scan as six dactylic feet are automatically hexameters; other factors such as caesurae, elisions, word length in specific metrical positions,

and diction are important in rendering a sequence of words a poetic line. Seneca's and Petronius' target readers were certainly familiar with all these elements.

Third. These two works were meant for readers who were familiar with the prosodic norms of prose writing. It is well-known that Latin prose writers paid careful attention especially to sentence-endings (or *clausulae*). Certain prosodic patterns were felt to be good for closing a sentence, others were felt to be inappropriate and therefore avoided. In the latter category belong the so called 'heroic clausula,' namely an hexametrical ending closing a prose sentence. We will see a few cases of 'heroic clausulae', both in the *Satyrica* and in the *Apocolocyntosis*, that appear to have been placed by the two authors at strategic junctures of the text in order to be noticed as such, not out of negligence.[575]

Four. These two works were meant for readers who were *expecting* to read poetry. A reader is more likely to spot and appreciate a metrical segment embedded in a prose section, such as the ones I will soon discuss, if s/he is reading a text that programmatically alternates prose and verse (as opposed, say, to historiographical or philosophical texts, which are not expected to contain poetical units). This is especially true if the metrical segment opens its sentence. Since in ancient Rome typographical devices (line separation, indentation, Italics, etc.) were unsophisticated, rarely adopted, and unsystematic, ancient readers of prosimetra must have known that a poem might theoretically start at each new sentence. If a new sentence in effect started with four or five feet of an hexameter, one would realize that one was *not* reading an

[575] Heroic clausulae were prohibited by grammarians and rhetoricians (see the list in Bornecque (1907), 471), including Quintilian (*Inst. Or*. 9.4.102). Cicero, too, mostly avoids them; occasionally, he makes exceptions, but only if the coincidence of accent and ictus that is characteristic of the epic hexameter is absent (Powell 2005; cf. Laurand 1911 and Shipley 1911), which is not the case in my examples. Adams (2013) argues that the Ciceronian exceptions *were meant to be noticed* for ironical purposes; if this hypothesis is correct, it would corroborate my thesis that the heroic clausulae in the *Apocolocyntosis* and Petronius, too, were meant to be noticed. Further discussion and bibliography in Broadhead (1922), 66-100; Schmid (1959); Oberhelman (2003).

hexameter only at the end of that metrical sequence. There are cases in both the *Satyrica* and in the *Apocolocyntosis* in which this psychological mechanism of recognition and frustration plays an important role, as I will show.

Five. These two works were meant for readers who were expecting to find poetic segments integrated into the prose sections of the work that they were reading. In both the *Satyrica* and the *Apocolocyntosis*, a reader encounters numerous quotations of past poets. In most cases, such quotations are syntactically perfectly integrated into the surrounding prose, and very short (often they are shorter than one full line, and in some cases they are only two or three feet long).[576] Apart from rare exceptions, the author is not mentioned, nor any other indication is provided that signals the presence of the quotation. Crucially, it was up to the reader to identify a quotation. In the absence of scientifically commented editions and computers, the operation could be complicated. For instance, a reader might correctly identify a poetical quotation as being a quotation, but be unable to remember the author, book, or original context. Readers might fail to notice a quotation at a first reading, and notice it only the second or third time. All ancient readers must have been aware that, in the prose sections of the two works that we are considering, there could be poetical quotations; but no reader knew where and in what form s/he would encounter them, nor could s/he be sure that s/he would recognize them.

In the light of these considerations, one may legitimately conclude that the modern practice consisting in printing the verse parts as typographically separated or diversified from the prose parts significantly distorts the reading experience as conceived by the ancient authors and enjoyed by the ancient readers. The former were aware that they could not control the material transmission of their own works and, therefore, that the separation between prose and poetry,

[576] For examples, see below.

quotations and non-quotations had to be left to the readers' expertise. And the readers, too, were aware that they had to exercise a particular alertness when they were reading prosimetrical works. They had to be constantly on the lookout, because the task of identifying the verse sections, be it quotations or original pieces, especially those that are short or syntactically embedded in a larger prosaic section, was left to their ability. In Appendices 6-7, I will argue that, through the 'hybrid segments', which have so far remained unnoticed, the Neronian prosimetra played with and frustrated the expectations of their readers, and that the latters recognized and expected this as being part of the game.

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Let us start from the *Apocolocyntosis*. In this work, the segments that are not in prose can be divided into two categories according to their length: (a) poems of *three or more complete lines*, which in most of cases are syntactically clearly demarcated from the surrounding prose; (b) short segments, consisting of *one line or less*, which in most of cases are syntactically integrated into the prose sections. Segments belonging to (a) are always original,[577] whereas segments belonging to (b) are always quotations from other poets.[578] There is only one case of a short verse segment that is not identifiable as a quotation with certainty (9.5 *ferventia rapa vorare*), but nobody has ever questioned the (very plausible) hypothesis that it is a quotation from a lost work.[579] I will

[577] For instance, the poems at 2.1 (6 hexameters), 2.4 (3 hexameters), 4.1 (32 hexameters), etc.

[578] For instance, *Aen*. 2.724 at *Apoc*.1.2 *idem Claudium vidisse se dicet iter facientem* non passibus aequis; or *Il*. 6.142 and *Il*. 2.548 at Apoc. 9.3 *itaque ne videar in personam, non in rem dicere sententiam, censeo ne quis post hunc diem deus fiat ex his, qui* ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν *aut ex his, quos alit* ζείδωρος ἄρουρα.

[579] There is a wide consensus on the attribution to Lucilius (fr. 1357 Marx): see Skutsch (1968), 111 and Eden (1984) *ad loc*. Martial 13.16 probably alludes to this line.

now discuss two short hexametrical segments that seem to have escaped the notice of scholars so far and belong to neither of the just described categories, because they are shorter than one line and they are unlikely to be quotations of lost poetry.

(i) Apart from a brief quotation of Virgil (1.2 *non passibus aequis*), the first poetic insertion proper that the reader of the *Apocolocyntosis* encounters is a six-line hexametrical poem meant to indicate, through an elaborate periphrasis, the date at which emperor Claudius died. As we saw in Ch. 4.1, the disproportion between the length and bombastic erudition of the poem and its meaning, a mere date, has humorous connotations, which are stressed by the narrator himself (2.1-2):

> iam Phoebus breviore via contraxerat arcum
> lucis et obscuri crescebant tempora Somni,
> iamque suum victrix augebat Cynthia regnum,
> et deformis Hiems gratos carpebat honores
> divitis Autumni iussoque senescere Baccho
> carpebat raras serus vindemitor uvas.
>
> Puto magis intellegi si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III idus Octobris.
> Horam non possum certam tibi[580] dicere – facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conveniet – tamen inter sextam et septimam erat.

The poem is interrupted by a brisk, self-ironical consideration by the narrator, who prosaically (in every sense) reformulates the content of the long and obscure circumlocution: *puto magis intellegi si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III idus Octobris*, 'I think this is better understood if I say: the month was October, the day the thirteenth'. After this deflating explanation, the narrator goes on as follows:

[580] Compelling stemmatic reasons make it certain that *certam tibi* (SV) is the original word order, as opposed to *tibi certam* of L. Cf. the *stemma codicum* in Eden (1984), 25.

horam non possum | certam | tibi dicere,

which constitutes the first five feet of a perfect hexameter, with both penthemimeris and hepthemimeris caesurae. Its recognizability for an ancient reader is guaranteed by numerous and diverse factors.

(1) It is syntactically isolated, i.e., it immediately follows and immediately precedes a strong syntactical pause.

(2) It comes only one sentence after the closure of a six-line hexametrical poem, at a time, one may well argue, when the mind of the reader is still 'tuned in' to the hexametrical rhythm. In this respect, it is worth noting that our quasi-line has a slow and solemn prosodic structure, which is almost identical to that of the poem's last line, with a preponderance of spondees and the co-presence of the same three main caesurae:

Last line: — — — | — — | — — | — — ∪∪ — —

Our segment: — — — | — — | — — | ∪∪ — ∪∪ [— —].

(3) Each element of our segment has numerous occurrences, in the same metrical position, in existing Latin poetry. The term *hora* opens a dactylic line no less than 15 times.[581] For an example in which the term *horam* in the accusative opens at the same time an hexameter and a poem cf. CLE 880 = CIL 3.45 (134 CE) *Horam cum primam cumque horam sole*

[581] For instance, Verg. *Geo*. 1.426, Lucan. 6.807, etc.

secundam / prolata Oceano luminat alma dies, / vox audita mihi, etc. The term *hora*, although in a different case, opens at the same time a line and a sentence also at Manil. 3.284 *Hora novo crescit per singula signa quadrante*.

(4) The adjective *certus* in the same position (between the caesura penthemimeris and the caesura hepthemimeris) has numerous occurrences in Latin hexametrical authors: for instance, 15 in Lucretius, 5 in Virgil, 7 in Horace.[582]

(5) For the structure A^1BA^2, with A^1 = (noun opening the hexameter), B = verb, and A^2 = (adj. in agreement with A^1 exactly placed between the caesura penthemimeris and the caesura hepthemimeris), cf. the following examples, in each of which, as in our quasi-hexameter, A^1 and A^2 are accusatives:

Geo. 4.138 aestatem *increpitans* | seram | Zephyrosque morantis
Geo. 4.337 caesariem *effusae* | nitidam | per candida colla
Aen. 3.179 Anchisen *facio* | certum | remque ordine pando
Aen. 7.579 stirpem *admisceri* | Phrygiam, | se limine pelli
Aen. 12.228 rumoresque *serit* | varios | ac talia fatur.[583]

(6) For *non possum* immediately before the caesura penthemimeris in an hexameter cf.:

Ov. Her. 12.171 quae me non possum, | potui sopire draconem
Ov. Tr. 3.5.43 denique non possum | nullam sperare salutem
Mart. 11.39.15 desine; non possum | libertum ferre Catonem.

[582] E.g. Lucr. 2.260 *nec regione loci | certa, | sed ubi ipsa tulit mens?*; Verg. *Aen*. 3.179 *Anchisen facio | certum | remque ordine pando*; Hor. *Serm*. 2.3.49 *palantis error | certo | de tramite pellit*.

[583] With A^1 and A^2 being accusatives, but B not being a verb cf., in Vergil alone, *Aen*. 12.834 *sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt*, 1.184, 2.460, 6.340.

(7) For the iunctura *tibi dicere* in the same metrical position,[584] in combination with the verb 'can', cf.:

Ov. Ars. 2.265 rure suburbano *poteris* | tibi dicere missa
Ov. Met. 13.823 nec, si forte roges, *possim* | tibi dicere, quot sint
Ov. Trist. 4.3.15 quodque polo fixae *nequeunt* | tibi dicere flammae.

(8) Two dactylic cases of the iunctura *horam ... certam* (acc. sing.) with strong hyperbaton are (albeit in different metrical positions): Propert. 2.27.1-2 *at vos incertam, mortales, funeris horam / quaeritis*; Ov. 1.3.53-54 *a! quotiens certam me sum mentitus habere / horam*.

(9) For the combination [*possum* + *tibi* + present infinitive of a verb of saying] in the same hexameter (although in different metrical positions) cf. Lucr. 1.411 *hoc tibi de plano possum promittere Memmi*; Verg. G. 1.176 *possum multa tibi veterum praecepta referre*.

These considerations suggest that, in a different context, our dactylic segment might well have been part of an hexametrical poem.[585] It presents no flaw, in either prosody, style, or diction, that could be pointed out as evidence that it belongs in a prose text. Its hexametrical nature, therefore, must have been apparent to the readers of a prosimetric work.[586] We can also

[584] Of which I was able to find 9 occurrences in Latin poetry: e.g. Tibull. 1.3.31 *bisque die resoluta comas tibi dicere laudes*; Hor. Serm. 2.7.1; [Ov.] Epic. Drus. 7; etc.

[585] *Exempli gratia*, add *mortis* as the closing word and take *horam* as meaning 'time, moment' and you have a self-contained and idiomatic hexameter which out of context might have been a solemn oracular response to someone asking for the circumstances of one's death. In fact, I would not exclude that Petronius' original text might have included *mortis* after *dicere* so as to form a complete hexameter; supplementing *mortis*, however, would seem to me a banalizing intervention, since it would destroy the mechanism of ironical frustration of the readers' expectations that I will describe below.

[586] I believe that this conclusion has been sufficiently demonstrated by the various arguments that I have presented so far. However, there are further ways by which the 'poetical' nature of this segment could be confirmed. A recent study of computational stylometrics claims to have identified twenty-six stylometric features that, computationally analyzed, reveal signature characteristics that differentiate prose and poetry for Latin literature: see Chaudhuri et alii (2019); cf. Bolt et alii (2019). Unfortunately, the 'hybrid' segments that I identify in this and the following appendices do not provide a 'quantity' of text that would allow for a

be sure that it was intentionally created by the author. Two closely interconnected aspects should be considered: the relation of *horam ... dicere* with what precedes, and its relation with what follows.

Horam ... dicere opens a new sentence. When reading this segment in his roll, an ancient reader might get the impression that the recapitulation in prose *puto magis ... Octobris* is a mere parenthesis, and the hexametrical poem is now being resumed: after the date, it now focuses on the hour of Claudius' death, according to a widespread Roman practice attested by funerary inscriptions.[587] Only when reading *facilius* would one realize that one was not reading a complete hexameter. The effect must have been one of puzzlement. A few lines later, at 2.4, the poem does indeed start again, with three hexameters dealing precisely with the hour of Claudius' death: a delayed continuation which confirms that the segment *horam ... dicere* was meant by the author to function as a false start of this second half of the poem.

Horam ... dicere is immediately followed by a surprising and humorous remark on the incapability, typical of philosophers, to come to terms with each other (2.2 *facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conveniet*). One reason why this quip on philosophers is surprising and humorous is that it comes precisely when the hexameter is *not* fulfilled: the sense

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meaningful statistical analysis comparable to that devised by Chaudhuri's team. But although this specific study is not helpful, the type of stylistic analysis that it entails is promising, especially in as much as it can be tailored to the specific circumstances of a single author or work. It seems to me possible, in principle, to identify ways to further corroborate the poetic status of what I call 'hybrid segments' through stylistic analyses inspired, for instance, by the field of authorship attribution (I am thinking of works such as Adams (1972a) and (1977) and Marriott (1979)) or studies of the evolution of an author's style such as Adams (1972b). More specifically on this quasi-hexameter, for instance, it could be demonstrated that the type of hyperbaton separating an adjective from the noun with which it agrees (*horam ... certam*), although perfectly admissible in Latin prose, is almost systematically avoided by Seneca in the prosaic sections of the *Apocolocyntosis* (to limit myself to the section of the work that precedes our first 'hybrid segment', cf. 1.1 *anno novo*, 1.1 *saeculi felicissimi*, 1.1 *suum diem*, 1.2 *divum Augustum*, 1.3 *bono nuntio*, 1.3 *medio foro*, etc.), whereas it is normal in the poetical sections (in the same part of the work, cf. 2.2 *obscuri ... Somni*, 2.3 *suum ... regnum*, 2.3 *victrix ... Cynthia*, 2.4 *gratos ... honores*, 2.6 *raras ... uvas*).

[587] For the Romans' practice of recording the hour of death in epitaphs, see the ample study by Ehrlich (2012).

of metrical frustration conveyed by the prosodically unexpected *facilius* (∪∪∪∪ instead of — —) coincides with, and therefore enhances, the unexpected change of tone, from serious to jovial, determined by the joke. Note that the quasi-hexameter is serious in content and solemn prosodically (being full of spondees); consequently, this micro-context repeats the pattern [serious poetry > funny prose] that I analyzed in Ch. 4.1.

Can this incomplete hexameter be a quotation? Hardly so. To be effective, the mechanism just described presupposes that a first reader misinterprets our hexametrical false start as opening, as it were, a new section of the same poem on the 'date and time' of Claudius' death. A quotation would spoil this sense of continuity. Since both the poem at 2.1 and its real continuation at 2.4 are original pieces, it seems natural tu assume that its false-start continuation at 2.2 is also original.

*

(ii) As is well known, Latin prose writers avoid heroic clausulae. It must have surprised ancient readers to discover that the (prose) closure of the *Apocolocyntosis* (15.2 *Is Menandro liberto suo tradidit, ut a cognitionibus esset*) ends with a half hexameter, with caesura penthemimeris:

[—∪∪ —∪∪ —] | a cognitionibus esset.

Hexasyllables of the kind —∪∪—∪∪ (*cognitionibus*) in the same metrical position are perfectly admissible in Latin hexametrical poetry. In fact, they are far more common in epic than they are in the stylistically less demanding genres of satire and elegy. There are dozens of

examples in Augustan poets.[588] Cases in which the hexasyllable is separated from the caesura penthemimeris by one monosyllable and the word in question is a noun ending in -*ibus* include:

Virg. Aen. 10.181 Astyr equo fidens | *et* versicoloribus armis
Hor. Serm. 1.6.73 quo pueri magnis | *e* centurionibus orti
Ov. Met. 12.569 decidit in terram, | *non* concipientibus auras

In Latin literature, the form *esset* closes an hexameter frequently: for instance, 9 times in Lucretius, 6 in Virgil, 5 in Horace, 26 in Ovid[589] (without counting the innumerable instances of the cognates *essem*, *esses*, *essent*, and *esse* in the same metrical position).[590]

As the previous two paragraphs demonstrate, the phrase *a cognitionibus esset* fits the ending of a Latin hexameter. Both intrinsic plausibility and chronology strongly suggest that this is not a quotation from a lost work. It seems difficult to imagine what poet might have inserted a reference to a bureaucratic technical term such as this in his poem: the line, quite peculiarly, must have referred to the appointment of a freedman as imperial secretary. Moreover, the office *a cognitionibus* seems to have been established by Claudius himself.[591] Our hypothetical poet,

[588] Here is a random selection: Verg. Geo. 3.284 *sed fugit interea, fugit* inreparabile *tempus*; 4.341 *Oceanitides ambae*/; Aen. 4.40 *insuperabile bello*/; 5.591 *inremeabilis error*/; 5.781 *exsaturabile pectus*/; 6.425 *inremeabilis undae*/; 8.18 *Laomedontius heros*/; 10.467 *inreparabile tempus*/; 11.363 *inviolabile pignus*/; 12.858 *immedicabile torsit*/; Hor. Serm. 2.7.104 *perniciosius est cur*/; Epist. 1.18.71 *irrevocabile verbum*/; Ov. Met. 1.190 *inmedicabile curae*/; 1.225 *experientia veri*/; 1.703 *inpedientibus undis*/; 1.275 *auxiliaribus undis*/; 2.825 *inmedicabile cancer*/; 3.198 *Autonoeius heros*/; 4.80 *non pervenientia contra/*; 4.333 *auxiliaria lunae*/; 6.257 *exitiabile telum*/; Met. 6.536 *nec coniugialia iura*; Lucan 1.509 *inrevocabile volgus*/; Stat. Achill. 1.96 *inremeabile portae*/; 1.147 *advigilantia somnis*/; 1.214 *exaturabile Diris*/; Sil. 1.147 *immedicabilis ira*; etc.

[589] E.g. Lucr. 1.217 *nam siquid mortale e cunctis partibus* esset; Verg. Geo. 1.195 *grandior ut fetus siliquis fallacibus* esset; Ov. Her. 21.209 *mirabar quare tibi nomen Acontius* esset; etc.

[590] For instance, *essem* alone has 18 occurrences at the end of an hexameter in Ovid.

[591] Hence the irony inherent in his becoming, in the Underworld, the *libertus a cognitionibus* of one of his ancient *liberti*. See Eden (1984), 150.

therefore, must have operated under his reign. As it happens, all the other poetical quotations in the *Apocolocyntosis* are from celebrated authors of the past: Homer, Ennius, Catullus, Virgil, and Horace.[592]

Not a quotation, therefore, but not chance either. It can hardly be a coincidence that an hexametrical segment of three feet and a half closes a prosimetrum. A much more plausible explanation is that the narrator chose to conclude with a last metrical insert. How can we interpret this strange hexametrical closure? It can be seen as a gesture of poetical playfulness that fittingly ends a piece entirely based on the playful alternation of prose and verses. Although *a cognitionibus esset* is a prosaic phrase, its status as heroic clausula transforms it into the mockingly solemn hexametrical closure of the entire work. Besides, the violation of a rule (the prohibition of heroic clausulae in prose) would be in line with the Saturnalian, power-subverting atmosphere that pervades the work. On a deeper level, however, if read according to my analysis of the *Apocolocyntosis*' neurotic qualities (Ch. 4.1), this ending also appears to be Tyrannical Poetry's last-ditch effort to regain mastery over Liberated Prose. The attempt is successful: the work closes under the yoke of an heroic clausula, preluding the imminent end of this Saturnalian interregnum and the accession of a new monarch.

[592] Scholars agree that the only unidentifiable quotation (9.5) is from an archaic poet (probably Lucilius or Ennius): see above.

APPENDIX 7

‘I SPEAK FREELY’: THE HYBRID SEGMENTS OF THE *SATYRICA*

The prosimetrical form of Petronius’ novel[593] can be seen as the result of the strong generic tension inherent in the work. The *Satyrica*’s fundamental narrative and psychological mechanisms are based on an unresolved conflict between prose and poetry. Although the novel is mainly written in prose, most of the characters are poets: all of the numerous poetical insertions are uttered by either the first-person narrator Encolpius (the protagonist) or other figures with whom, at one moment or another, he comes into contact. Throughout the novel, poetic aspirations and prosaic realities intermingle, opposing and defining each other in ever surprising ways.[594] Poetic insertions are not limited to original poems. The characters often quote Virgilian lines; without exceptions, they do so in the least appropriate circumstances.[595] On top of being poets and quoters, the novel’s main characters are pretentious ‘mythomaniacs’ who constantly react to concrete life situations by trying to impersonate the heroes of epic or tragedy (Ch. 4.2). In short, our novel is populated by petty and sordid figures who, both as authors and in their behavior, constantly ape the sublime models of literature. The constant interplay between

[593] On Petronius’ prosimetrum see the discussion and bibliography in Schmeling (2011), xxvii, xxxiv, xxxix-xlv; see also the monumental work on the poetry of Latin prosimetra by Yeh (2007).

[594] Cf. Ch. 4.2-3.

[595] A few examples. In warning his dinner guests that they do not know what he is capable of in terms of gastronomical refinement, the nouveau riche Trimalchio has recourse to the same rhetorical question addressed by Laocoon to his fellow citizens in a tragic scene of *Aen*. 2 (39.3 *sic notus Ulixes?*); at 111.12 and 112.2 a maid quotes lines from Anna’s speech to Dido in *Aen*. 4 in order to persuade her mistress to accept the sexual advances of a soldier; at 132.11 Encolpius addresses his own penis with a Virgilian cento.

poetical postures and disreputable situations has, obviously, ironical connotations. In the following close readings, I will analyze how this constitutive tension between prose and poetry manifests itself in hybrid micro-contexts in which the two poles are indissolubly mingled and sophisticatedly engage with each other.[596]

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Chapters 83-90 narrate the first encounter, in the *pinacotheca*, between the first-person narrator Encolpius and the poetaster Eumolpus. It is on this occasion that Eumolpus, in order to explain the subject of a painting, declaims the second-longest of the novel's poetic insertions: his *Troiae Halosis*, in tragic iambic trimeters (89). The following scene, after a lacuna, is set in some thermal baths, where Encolpius, unexpectedly, falls upon his darling Giton; the lad had previously abandoned Encolpius, causing him grief and despair. At 91.1-2 we read:

> video Gitona cum linteis et strigilibus parieti applicitum tristem confusumque. Scires non libenter servire. Itaque ut experimentum oculorum caperem <...> convertit ille solutum gaudio vultum et 'miserere' inquit 'frater. Ubi arma non sunt libere loquor. Eripe me latroni cruento et qualibet saevitia paenitentiam iudicis tui puni. Satis magnum erit misero solacium, tua voluntate cecidisse'.

Giton already regrets his choice to follow the *latro cruentus* Ascyltus instead of his *frater* Encolpius. He exhorts Encolpius to punish his former 'judge' (i.e. Giton himself) with the

[596] This Appendix should be read along with Connors (1998) and Rimell (2002), two important studies that, from different perspectives, investigate the relation between prose and poetry in the *Satyrica*, showing the diverse ways in which these two modes of composition play and collide with each other. Note the colorful terminology in Rimell (2002), 10: 'the *Satyricon*'s repeated description of recitation as a penetration of solid physical boundaries not only connects episodes but also intrudes on the definability of poetry and prose *per se*, which melt into and devour one another apparently without control or distinction'.

greatest cruelty: wretched Giton will find consolation in the very fact that he will die by his companion's will. Giton's tone is emotional and 'theatrical' in a marked degree.[597] His first words, indeed, resemble a tragic trimeter:

> 'Miserere, frater! Ubi arma non sunt libere loquor'.
>
> ∪∪—∪ — | ∪ ∪ —∪ || — | — — ∪—

This quasi-trimeter presents a hepthemimeral caesura (||), which is less frequent than the penthemimeral in Seneca, but still amply attested. The substitution of the first ∪ of the first metrum with ∪∪ and the substitution of the first ∪ of the third metrum with — are normal in Senecan tragedy. The substitution of the first ∪ of the second metrum with ∪∪ is rare, but not unparalleled (significantly, there are cases both in Seneca and in the non-Senecan *Octavia*).[598] Admittedly, the split resolution at the beginning of the second metrum (*-ter. U-*) is not admissible in tragic trimeters. However, this is not crucial for my argument. I am not proposing that this is a quotation from a real tragedy; rather, here I am looking for 'pseudo-metrical patterns that cannot be defined either as poetry or as prose proper', 'liminal points where the boundaries between prose and poetry are blurred', according to the definition of 'hybrid segments' that I provided at the beginning of Appendix 6. Despite this minor imperfection, I

[597] For instance, Courtney (2001), 144, commenting on this scene, stresses Giton's 'histrionic posturing' and compares his position to that of Lausus dying at the hand of Aeneas at *Aen.* 10.829.

[598] Examples (always in combination with a caesura hephtemimeris as in our passage): Med. 676 *evasit et / penetrale // fu/nestum attigit*; 897 *amas adhuc / furiose // si / satis est tibi*; 911 *iuvat iuvat / rapuisse // fra/ternum caput*; 912 *artus iuvat / secuisse et // ar/cano patrem*; 949 *iam iam meo / rapientur // a/vulsi e sinu*; Tro. 561 *sed si placet / referamus // hinc / alio pedem*; 904 *magnus dolor / sociosque // non / numquam sui*; 942; 1148; 1172; Phoen. 604; Thy. 1063 *viventibus / gracilique // tra/iectas veru*; 1100 *quid liberi / meruere? // Quod / fuerant tui*; Herc. Oe. 1737 *semiustus ac / laniatus, // in/trepidum tuens*; 715 *quis tam impotens / miseranda // te / casus rotat*; 1319; Oct. 447 *aetate in hac / satis esse // con/silii reor*; 737.

would argue that Giton's exclamation does 'sound' like the declamation of a tragic line, both because of its prosody and diction (see below) and because of the 'theatrical' manner of its delivery.[599] In fact, one may even suspect that Petronius deliberately attributed a flawed trimeter to Giton so as to stress this character's pretentious hypocrisy (Giton is a would-be tragic hero unable to live up to the model that he sets for himself); Petronius does something similar when he portrays Trimalchio as failing to compose an elegiac distich (55.3).[600]

For *miserere* + vocative of a family member at the beginning of a tragic trimeter cf.

HF 1192 miserere, genitor, supplices tendo manus;
Tro. 792 miserere, mater. (*An*.) Quid meos retines sinus.

For *miserere* at the beginning of a tragic trimeter in highly pathetic contexts cf. also, e.g.:

Tro. 694 miserere matris et preces placidus pias;
Med. 482 miserere, redde supplici felix vicem;
Phae. 636 miserere, pavidae mentis exaudi preces.[601]

[599] On the affinities between exclamation and poetical declamation more below.

[600] Trimalchio's poem at 55.3 is irregular both because it is formed by two hexameters followed by a pentameter and, more importantly, because neither hexameter scans as such (despite obviously having being composed by Trimalchio, extemporaneously, as a hexameter). Predictably, some editors, like Müller (2009), have found it irresistible to emend the text so as to fix the meter, but this intervention is obviously unnecessary and, in fact, a banalization, because it eliminates an element in the characterization of Trimalchio. Moreover, it would constitute an incredible coincidence if at least *two* words had dropped from the manuscripts without compromising the intelligibility and completeness in meaning of *either* line (each of the two defective hexameters constitutes a separate clause, and together they form a meaningful sentence). Both Setaioli (see Schmeling (2011), 224) and Walsh (1970, 128) rightly defend the transmitted (unmetrical) text.

[601] Other examples: Tro. 703 *miserere matris: unicum adflictae mihi*; Phae. 623; 671.

The term *frater* has, in the same metrical position, no less than 22 occurrences in the Senecan corpus.[602] The term *arma* has, in the same metrical position, 9 occurrences in the Senecan corpus.[603] At HF 403 *cecidere fra|tres? arma non | servant modum*, we have a line where the three terms *frater*, *arma*, and *non* are located in the same metrical position they have in Giton's pseudo-trimeter. The similarity is strengthened by the fact that in both lines the sequence of these three words is introduced by a quadrisyllabic verb ending in -*ēre* (*cecidere~miserere*). One cannot exclude that Petronius had this Senecan line in mind, or was subconsciously influenced by it, when composing this scene. However, even if the correspondence is accidental, it is a significant one, because it confirms the 'trimetrical' nature of Giton's pseudo-trimeter.

The sequence [long monosyllable > long monosyllable > cretic trisyllable] at the end of a trimeter has numerous parallels in Seneca. For example, there are 7 cases in the *Hercules Furens*.[604] For an example of this sequence in which the word *sunt* is in the same position as in Giton's pseudo-trimeter, cf. *Phoen.* 279 *paternus ani|mus. Iacta iam |* ***sunt*** *semina*.

Giton's quasi-trimeter has deeply ironic implications, in at least three respects. First, Giton's tragic gesture, as in general the ostentation of pathos characterizing the entire scene, is of bad taste and ridiculous. The relation between Giton and Encolpius has never been anything more than a strictly carnal and reciprocally unfaithful affair between semi-vagrant rascals. That

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[602] Oed. 253 *sororque fra|tri semper occurrens tuo*; Phoen. 479 *post ista fra|trum exempla ne matri quidem*, 128, 362, 529, 621, 637; HF 389, 403, 723; Med. 278; Phaed. 555; Ag. 987; Thy. 530; 628; 727; 1006; HO 881; Oct. 103; 141; 535; 790.

[603] HF 120 *regam furen|tis arma, pu|gnanti Herculi*; 1153 *ubi tela? ubi ar|cus? arma quis | vivo mihi*; 1271; 1284; Troad. 182; 531; Phoen. 526; 621.

[604] 265 *haec | quae caelites /*; 1139 *an | sub cardine /*; 1197 *aut | quae dextera /*; 1252 *ex | te contigit /*; 1290 *et | si fortibus /*; 1323 *aut | quis Persica /*; 1329 *in | quas impius /*.

such characters, of all people, talk to each other in tragic trimeters cannot fail to produce a comic effect on the reader.

Second, if considered in its larger context, the recourse to a quasi-iambic sequence by Giton looks like an intratextual response to Eumolpus' *Troiae Halosis*, which is composed in iambic trimeters. Eumolpus declaims this ninety-five-line Senecan-style iambic poem only few pages earlier, at chapter 89. Of course, the boy was not present at Eumolpus' performance; therefore, his picking up Eumolpus' meter unknowingly contributes an element of irony to the scene.

Third, involuntarily ironical is also Giton's reference to his *libere loqui*. 'Now that I am not threatened by weapons anymore, *I can speak freely*', he asserts. This might be true (if one believes him) on the psychological level: Ascyltos' absence allows him to express his real feelings for Encolpius. But prosodically Giton is speaking, not *libere* (that is, *solute*), but rather under the constraints of meter.[605]

Giton utters a segment that resembles a iambic trimeter; the text Petronius wrote, however, does not present us with a continuous metrical sequence: Giton's voice, and therefore the quasi-trimeter, is interrupted by the parenthetical remark *inquit* by the narrator. This detail is worth reflection. It seems legitimate to hypothesize that, as was normal in 1st century Rome, the *Satyrica* was recited in front of an audience, either soon after or during its composition.[606] If this is true, there are obvious ways in which the reciter could stress the metrical nature of our line, so that the presence of *inquit* (uttered in a different voice register) would not hinder its recognition.

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[605] On the imagery connecting prose with freedom and poetry with restriction, see Ch. 4.

[606] For the hypothesis that the *Satyrica* might have been meant to be recited in front of a literary coterie associated with Nero, cf. Sullivan (1968), 36, Schmeling (1991) and (2011), xxii.

However this might be, Petronius must have known that his novel was bound to become a work merely to be read. For a reader, as compared to a listener, it might have been less immediate to recognize our line, but surely it was not impossible at an age when people still had sensitivity for prosodic quantities and tragedy was a genre commonly practiced by men of letters.[607] In our case, the parenthetical *inquit* represents a small element of disturbance, but does not compromise the recognition of the quasi-poetical quality our segment; it simply renders it a bit more challenging, and therefore gratifying, for an attentive reader.

Whether on a listener or on a reader, the presence of *inquit* might have had a distancing effect. By interrupting the metrical rhythm, it implicitly stresses the fact that one is reading, not poetry proper, but prose. This kind of interpenetration between meter and prose subtly undermines any claim to sublimity Giton's quasi-line might have had in itself. Elsewhere in the novel we find a case that is formally opposite, but ultimately produces a similar effect of inter-penetrative irony. At 108.13-14, a postposed *verbum dicendi* syntactically belonging to the preceding prose sentence is metrically incorporated into a poem:

> Data ergo acceptaque ex more patrio fide protendit ramum oleae a tutela navigii raptum, atque in colloquium venire ausa:
>
> 'Quis furor' exclamat 'pacem convertit in arma?
> Quid nostrae meruere manus? Non Troius heros
> Hac in classe vehit decepti pignus Atridae, *etc*.[608]

[607] As demonstrated by the Senecan corpus and for instance Quintil. *Inst.* 10.1.99; Tac. *Dial.* 2-4; cf. Fantham (1982), 3-9.

[608] This case of interaction between narratorial prose and non-narratorial verse has already been well analyzed in previous scholarship. The point is that, if *exclamat* is uttered by a voice other than that of the character, obviously that character could not have pronounced her speech in hexameters in reality. Encolpius' narration is not an objective account of what had happened, but a distorted version; we, as readers, see the events through the misleading and poetically deformed perspective of a mythomaniac narrator. See, most recently, Jensson (2004), 34-37; Habermehl (2006), 454; Vannini (2010), 205; Setaioli (2011), 169-173 with further bibliography.

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The two lovers leave the baths and reach Encolpius' inn room (91.3). Here they lie embracing on the bed; their weeping and kissing is so intense that they are unable to utter a single word (91.4-5). Then, it is Encolpius' turn to declaim a most passionate and stylistically pretentious speech about his love for Giton (91.6). After a (most probably short) lacuna, he goes on thus (91.7-8):

> 'nec amoris arbitrium ad alium iudicem <de>tuli. Sed nihil iam queror, nihil iam memini, si bona fide paenitentiam emendas'. 8 haec cum inter gemitus lacrimasque fudissem, detersit ille pallio vultum et 'quaeso' inquit 'Encolpi, fidem memoriae tuae appello: ego te reliqui an tu <me> prodidisti? equidem fateor et prae me fero: cum duos armatos viderem, ad fortiorem confugi'.

Immediately after Encolpius the character finishes his speech, Encolpius the narrator starts off with an almost complete hexameter (with perfect caesura) about sobs and tears:

> haec cum inter gemitus | lacrimasque [∪— X]

There can be no doubt that this must have appeared as a perfectly admissible hexametrical segment to any ancient reader: each single element is paralleled in extant hexametric poetry.

For the sequence *haec cum*, with postposed *cum*:

> Verg. Geo. 1.118 nec tamen, haec cum sint hominumque boumque labores
> Ovid. Ex Pont. 4.13.37 atque aliquis 'Scribas haec cum de Caesare' dixit.

For the demonstrative *hic* and the preposition *inter* in the same metrical position in the

same line we have two parallels in Petronius himself:

> 108.14.6 hos inter fluctus quis raptis evocat armis?
> 131.8.4 has inter ludebat aquis errantibus amnis.

For an elided *cum* followed by a word starting with the vowel *i* in the same metrical position in previous poetry cf.

> Catull. 68.37 quod cum ita sit, nolim statuas nos mente maligna
> Virg. Geo. 3.358 nec cum invectus equis altum petit aethera, nec cum
> Virg. Geo. 4.103 at cum incerta volant caeloque examina ludunt
> Ov. Am. 1.5.15 quae cum ita pugnaret, tamquam quae vincere nollet.[609]

I have not found the elided sequence *cum inter* in extant hexametrical Latin poetry. But the sequence *cum interea* is attested twice in Catullan hexameters (64.305; 95.3), and cf. Virg. Ecl. 10.40 *mecum inter salices lenta sub vite iaceret* (in which both *cum* and *inter* occupy the same metrical position as in our Petronian line); Ov. Met. 1.389 *verba datae sortis secum inter seque volutant*. Cf. also, with both *cum* and *inter* in the same metrical position (in a pentameter) as in our Petronian passage, Tibull. 1.9.56 *tecum interposita languida veste cubet*.

The elision *cum inter* is attested in iambic poetry, not only in other authors (Plaut. *Truc*. 381 *cum inter nos*; Sen. Troad. 185 *cum inter acies*) but also in Petronius. Only a couple of pages before, in Eumolpus' *Troiae Halosis*, we read: 89.56 *cum inter sepultos Priamidas nocte et mero*.

For *inter gemitus* in hexametric poetry, cf. Sil. 9.156 *tandem inter gemitus miserae*

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[609] Cf. also, with a different vowel, Prop. 2.22.29 *quid? cum e complexu*; Virg. *Geo*. 1.107 *et, cum exustus*; Ov. *Fast*. 6.751 *tum cum observatas*.

erupere querelae; 15.591-592 ***hos*** inter gemitus *obscuro noctis opacae / succedit castris Nero*. In both passages the expression *inter gemitus* occupies the same metrical position it has in our Petronian segment, and in the latter it is preceded by *hos* (cf. *haec* in Petronius). For *inter lacrimas*: Val. Fl. Arg. 2.428 ***has*** *inter lacrimas* *legitur piger uncus harenis* (for *has* cf. *haec* in Petronius); 5.13-14 *ecce* *inter lacrimas* *interque extrema virorum / munera*.

For the expression *gemitus lacrimasque* in hexametric poetry cf.:

Virg. Aen. 10.505 oderit. At socii multo gemitu lacrimisque
Lucan. 7.724 Pompeium sonipes. Gemitus lacrimaeque sequuntur
Lucan. 9.146 audisset, non in gemitus lacrimasque dolorem
Stat. Theb. 11.385 iam tacet; erumpunt gemitus, lacrimasque fatetur.[610]

The flawless nature, considerable length, and prominent position (right after a full stop and right after the end of a reported speech) of this hexametrical segment make it likely that, apart from being recognizable as such to ancient readers, it was deliberately crafted by the author. This conclusion is confirmed by two facts.

The first one is that Petronius'

haec cum inter gemitus | lacrimasque fudissem

evokes *Aen*. 10.465 (describing god Hercules' compassion for Pallas):

corde premit gemitum | lacrimasque effundit inanis.[611]

[610] And cf. below.

[611] The fact that the syntax is different is immaterial in such cases of intertextuality: cf. Rudoni (2014) for another case of allusions disrupting the syntax of the intertext in Petronius. Quotations of and references to the

The second fact is that Encolpius (as narrator) does something analogous on at least another occasion. At 61.5 Niceros' preamble to his werewolf story is closed by the narrator as follows: *'Satius est rideri quam derideri!' Haec ubi dicta dedit, talem fabulam exorsus est*. Like at 91.8, the narrator marks the end of a speech by making recourse to an hexametrical sequence, which in this case is a formula dear, among others, to Virgil.[612] The parallelism between *haec ubi ... dedit* and our *haec cum ... fudisset*, on the level of meaning, situation, structure – and meter, is apparent.[613]

*

At chapter 118, to introduce the declamation of his own *Bellum civile*, Eumolpus illustrates his principles of poetics. He opens as follows:

> 118.1 'multos', inquit Eumolpus, 'o iuvenes, carmen decepit. Nam ut quisque versum pedibus instruxit sensumque teneriore verborum ambitu intexuit, putavit se continuo in Heliconem venisse', etc.

Aeneid are a costant of the entire novel: see for instance Zeitlin (1971), 59-61 and 67-72; Harrison (2008), 229; Panayotakis (2009), 52-55 and 57-58.

[612] Lucil. fr. 18 M; *Aen*. 2.790; 6.628; 7.323; 7.471; 8.541; 10.633; 12.81; 12.441; etc. Cf. Schmeling (2011), *ad loc*.

[613] Another parallel might be 108.15, where an hexametrical poem uttered by a character is closed by the narrator thus: *haec ut turbato clamore mulier effudit*, etc. Setaioli (1998), 230 suggests that the spondaic hemistich *haec ut turbato* might have been deliberately devised as a sort of hexametrical continuation of the poem, which for a brief moment prevents the reader from realizing that the poem is over.

An important textual issue concerns the interjection *o* of the initial line. Some scholars, following Bücheler, delete it, on the assumption that *iuvenes* should be interpreted as an accusative connected to *multos*: 'many youngsters have been deceived by poetry: as soon as one is capable of producing correctly a line of poetry, one believes to have attained ultimate poetical refinement'.[614] Since numerous scholars view Eumolpus' *Bellum Ciuile* as a parody or rewriting of Lucan's homonymous work, *iuvenes* (if *o* is excised) might conceal a polemical allusion to the young poet Lucan. The transmitted text, however, makes perfect sense. Eumolpus is characterized as an old man, one or two generations older than the other main characters (e.g. 83.7 *senex canus*). Encolpius and Giton are referred to as *iuvenes* numerous times in the course of the novel, including three times by Eumolpus.[615] The Teubner editor, Müller, rightly defends the transmitted text by stressing the fact that the sequence *inquit Eumolpus o* forms a perfect (prosaic) numerus: a double cretic.[616] Another compelling reason suggests itself:

multos, o iuvenes, | carmen | decepit [∪— X]

constitutes an almost complete hexameter (with both penthemimeris and hepthemimeris caesurae).

The spondaic adjective *multus* occurs at the beginning of an hexameter hundreds of times in Latin poetry (more than 50 only in Virgil). Numerous instances could be quoted in which it, as it does in our Petronian passage, at the same time opens a line, opens a sentence, and is a

[614] Sullivan (1968), 166.

[615] At 16.4 by Quartilla's servant, at 17.8 by Quartilla, at 102.11 and 130.1 by Encolpius, and, only few pages above, at 107.5, 107.7, and 107.12, by Eumolpus.

[616] See Müller (2009)'s apparatus *ad loc*. and cf. pp. xxv-xxvi of his *Praefatio*.

masculine plural indicating a specific category of men. For instance: Prop. 1.6.27 *multi longinquo periere in amore libenter, / in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat*; Virg. Geo. 3.398-399 *multi etiam excretos prohibent a matribus haedos, / primaque ferratis praefigunt ora capistris*; Hor. Epist. 1.1.80 *multis occulto crescit res fenore*.[617]

The iunctura *o iuvenes* occurs in the same metrical position in previous poets at:

Virg. Aen. 8.273 quare agite, o iuvenes, | tantarum in munere laudum
Ov. Ars 2.557 quo magis, o iuvenes, | deprendere parcite vestras
Ov. Ars 2.667 utilis, o iuvenes, | aut haec, aut serior aetas.[618]

I have found 20 occurrences of the term *carmen* (nom. or acc. sing.) in the same metrical position (between a caesura penthemimeris and a caesura hepthemimeris); cf. for instance:

Tibull. 1.8.23 quid queror heu misero | carmen | nocuisse, quid herbas?
Hor. Ars 129 rectius Iliacum | carmen | deducis in actus
Ov. Fast. 5.377 floreat ut toto | carmen | Nasonis in aevo.

For *decepit* in the same metrical position:

Propert. 2.21.11 Colchida sic hospes quondam | decepit Iason
Calpurn. Ecl. 7.83 longius; ac, nisi me visus | decepit, in uno

[617] The list could be longer: Lucr. 4,1020; 6.1178; Prop. 1.11.28; 3.1.15; Virg. *Geo*. 1.225; *Aen*. 5.302; 7.54; etc.

[618] In later poets: Stat. *Theb*. 1.557 *forsitan, o iuvenes, | quae sint ea sacra quibusque*; Val. *Arg*. 4.206; Iuven. 7.20; Sil. 2.575. I have found 13 occurrences of *o iuvenes* (plural) in Latin poetry: in 7 cases it occupies the same metrical position it has in our Petronian passage; in the other 5 cases it occupies the first foot and half of the hexameter (Ov. Met. 3.541; 8.393; Statius Theb. 6.915; Silius 5.247; 6.715). Also the iunctura *o iuvenis* (singular) is common in poetry (15 occurrences in total), and in the great majority of cases (11) it is found in the same metrical position of our Petronian passage: Calp. Ecl. 4.10 *despicit, o iuvenis, sed magnae numina Romae*; Ov. Met. 6.331 *non hac, o iuvenis, montanum numen in ara est*; 8.880; 12.80; Her. 19.181; ex Ponto 3.5.7; 3.5.37; Lucan 6.606; Stat. Theb. 10.662; Silius 6.545; 10.366 (in other positions: Lucan 6.803; Statius, Silv. 4.8.14; Silius 6.601; 17.311).

Ov. Met. 6.125 Liber ut Erigonen falsa | deceperit uva.[619]

Eumolpus warns his young interlocutors that ‘poetry has deceived many’. Obviously, the primary meaning of *carmen* here is ‘poetry’ in general; but a second, mischievous sense is concealed in this exclamation. All through the novel, Eumolpus is characterized as an incontinent poet (cf. Ch. 4.2). As he emphatically declaims the first sentence of his poetical manifesto at 118.1, his interlocutors (and his readers) might very well get the impression, at least for a few instants, that he is about to recite his metapoetical considerations in hexameters, like Horace had done before him.[620] Only once they hear (or read) *nam ut quisque* will they realize that that impression is wrong, and Eumolpus' incomplete hexameter is just a joke – or the unwitting parapraxis of a compulsive poetaster. Like the *multi*, they too have been deceived by a *carmen*.

*

As we saw above in Appendix 6, Latin prose writers avoid hexametrical sentence ending. The compulsive poetaster Eumolpus, unsurprisingly, takes delight in infringing the rule. For instance, he manages to violate it twice in only one page when he narrates of his affair with the *ephebus* in Pergamum.

(i) 85.1 *suspectus amator*. (*... excogitavi rationem, qua non essem patri familiae*

[619] Cf. also Ov. *Met*. 13.163 *dissimulat cultu natum, et | deceperat omnes*; Trist. 1.3.37; Trist. 4.1.23; Ex Pont. 2.2.61.

[620] Eumolpus' quasi-hexameter, in fact, appears to be a reference to *Ars*. 24-25 (*maxima pars uatum, pater et iuuenes patre digni, / decipimur specie recti*), as many scholars have noted: cf. George (1974), 121; Beck (1979), 243 n. 17; La Penna (1988), 259-61, Labate (1995),161-2.

suspectus amator. *Quotienscumque enim in convivio* ...). For *suspectus* (nom. masc. sing., although as noun) in hexametrical poetry in the same metrical position cf. Verg. Aen. 6.579 *quantus ad aetherium caeli suspectus Olympum*; Ov. Fast. 5.31 *protinus intravit mentes suspectus honorum*. In extant hexametrical poetry, *amator* is found in the same metrical position in no less than 19 cases, and in several of them it is preceded by a nominative singular ending in -*us*;[621] in the following three cases, *amator* is preceded by a masculine past participle metrically equivalent to *suspectus*:

> Prop. 1.7.13 me legat assidue post haec *neglectus* amator
> Ov. Am. 3.12.11 me lenone placet, duce me *perductus* amator
> Ov. Rem. 3.17 cur aliquis laqueo collum *nodatus* amator.

Importantly, all of these three lines are from elegists. The poet Eumolpus makes recourse to an elegiac gesture precisely when narrating in first-person, as all elegists do, his love affair. The unusual, surprising clausula, thus, constitutes a compelling reason for *not* accepting Fraenkel's normalizing, and banalizing, deletion of *amator*: an important element in the characterization of Eumolpus as a compulsive poet would be lost.

(ii) 85.6 *stertere coepit*. (*'Domina', inquam, 'Venus, si ego hunc puerum basiavero ita ut ille non sentiat, cras illi par columbarum donabo'. Audito voluptatis pretio puer stertere coepit. Itaque aggressus simulantem aliquot basiolis invasi*). In Latin literature hexameters whose clausula is formed by an active present infinitive of a third-conjugation verb followed by *coepi* or *coepit* are frequent. A few examples:

[621] Prop. 2.20.35 *solus amator/*; Tibull. 1.8.29 *canus amator/*; Ov. Am. 1.4.39 *manifestus amator/*; and cf. below. With a different syntax: Hor. *Epist*. 1.1.38 *invidus, iracundus, iners, vinosus, amator*. Without preceding -*us*: Tibull. 1.5.47; Hor. *Serm*. 2.3.259; *Epist*. 1.20.8; Ov. *Am*. 1.8.31; 3.11a.13; *Ars*. 3.209; 3.481; 3.497; 3.591; Lucan. 8.364; 9.562; Manil. 5.250; Iuv. 2.168.

Enn. Ann. 8.292 ob Romam noctu legiones ducere coepit
Hor. Epist. 2.1.162 et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit
Ov. Met. 11.480 cum mare sub noctem tumidis albescere coepit.[622]

(i) and (ii), considered as a couple, are not only significant because they are concentrated in the same page and in the same short story narrated by Eumolpus (85), but also because they occur only few pages after the poetaster makes his first entrance onto the scene (at 83),[623] at a moment, that is, when neither Encolpius nor we readers know yet of his annoying tendency to express himself in meter even in the least appropriate circumstances (he has recited only a 6-line poem so far, at 83.10). The heroic clausulae incorporated in the Pergamene boy story, therefore, perform an important function in the characterization of Eumolpus: they provide a small clue, to Encolpius and Petronius' readers, of what is to come. There are obvious ways in which, in the course of a live recitation, the reciter could emphasize Eumolpus' quirky switches between prose and poetry, arousing the curiosity of his listeners about this mysterious new character. In this context, it is important to note that the *Satyrica* was certainly composed with a special consideration for prose rythms, to a degree even higher than that of other 1st-century prose writing; this circumstance, too, suggests that the two heroic clausulae that I have just discussed are not accidental.[624]

[622] Also: Enn. *Ann*. 7.212 *discere coepit/*; Sed. inc. 617 *protendere coepit/*; Lucil. *Sat. inc*. 1102 *mittere coepit/*; Lucr. 5.1014; 6.1120; Hor. *Serm*. 1.9.63; Ov. *Her*. 6.31; *Met*. 13.888, 14.279; *Fast*. 3.371; Iuven. 6.434; Mart. 12.94.9.

[623] It is certain that between 83 and 84 there are some lacunae; the context makes it equally certain, however, that they must be of marginal extension.

[624] Di Capua (1948) analyzes 40 chapters of the *Satyrica*, finding no less than 435 clausulae.

On another occasion, a mythological allusion makes it plausible that Eumolpus' exclamation is deliberately poetical:

(iii) 92.3 *laudo Ganymedem!* (*ille ut se in grabatum reiecit viditque Gitona in conspectu ministrantem, movit caput et 'laudo' inquit 'Ganymedem! Oportet hodie bene sit'. Non delectavit me tam curiosum principium timuique ne in contubernium recepissem Ascylti parem*). The noun *Ganymedes* closes an hexameter on at least four occasions in extant Latin poetry, and has Greek parallels too. For instance:

Ov. Met. 11.756 Ilus et Assaracus raptusque Iovi Ganymedes
German. Arat. 318 unguibus innocuis Phrygium rapuit Ganymeden
Iliad 20.232 Ἶλός τ' Ἀσσάρακός τε καὶ ἀντίθεος Γανυμήδης
Theogn. 2.1345 Παιδοφιλεῖν δέ τι τερπνόν, ἐπεί ποτε καὶ Γανυμήδους.[625]

After Lucretius, Latin poets systematically avoid Latin quadrisyllabic words at the end of an hexameter (e.g. Lucr. 1.424 *haut erit occultis de rebus quo referentes*). However, they normally admit, in that position, Greek quadrisyllabic words, especially names: in Vergil, for instance, there are several dozens of cases of Greek quadrisyllabic words ending the hexamter, with more than one third of them being personal names.[626] I would argue, therefore, that far from hindering the recognition of our segment as a heroic clausula, the quadrisyllabic Greek personal name in fact enhances it: Eumolpus' exclamation represents a typical poetical mannerism. It does not

[625] Iuven. 5.59 *tu Gaetulum Ganymedem/*; 9.22; Quint. Posthom. 8.429 ἀγακλειτὸς Γανυμήδης/; Nonn. Dionys. 11.134; 12.40; 14.433; 17.77; 25.438; 25.449; 27.245; 33.75; 33.99; 39.6; 47.98.

[626] Here is a selection of examples. Names: Aen. 3.401 *Lyctius Idomeneus; hic illa ducis Meliboei*; 3.553 *Scylaceum*; 3.614 *Adamasto*; 4.146 *Agathyrsi*; 5.448 *Erymantho*; 6.445 *Eriphylen*; 6.484 *Polyboeten*; 6.802 *Erymanthi*; 10.60 *Simoenta*; 10.749 *Erichaeten*; 12.515 *Peridiae*; Ecl. 8.44 *Garamantes*; 10.12 *Aganippe*; Geo. 1.437 *Melicertae*. Nouns: Virg. Ecl. 3.63 *munera sunt, lauri et suave rubens hyacinthus*; 6.53; Geo. 4.137; 4.183; 3.60; 4.516; Aen. 1.651; 3.328; 3.464; 3.680; 4.99; 4.316; 6.623; 6. 895; 7.344; 7.358; 7.398; 7.555; 10.136; 10.720; 11.69; 11.217; 11.355; 12.805; 12.419.

seem implausible to me that Encolpius' irony on Eumolpus' exclamation (*non delectavit me tam curiosum principium*) is, at least partially, due to its metrical character.

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At 91.1-2, as we have seen above, Encolpius and Giton reunite. They abandon Eumolpus at the baths and hurry to Encolpius' inn room. When later Eumolpus rejoins them, he narrates that, soon after their departure, a young man started crying out the name of Giton at the baths (92.7-10). Eumolpus cannot (but we readers do) know that the young man is no other than Ascyltus, Encolpius' ex-companion, who is now seeking for the boy after the latter has left the baths in the company of Encolpius. While Eumolpus is being laughed at by some youngsters, Ascyltos is the object of the general, and Eumolpus' own, admiration, due to the size of his *inguinum pondus* (92.9):

> 9 Habebat enim inguinum pondus tam grande, ut ipsum hominem laciniam fascini crederes. <u>O iuvenem laboriosum!</u> Puto illum pridie incipere, postero die finire.

The underlined exclamation is metrically peculiar: it may be seen as a Phalaecian hendecasyllable lacking the first two syllables:

> o iuvenem laboriosum!
> —∪∪—∪—∪—X

By a poet, this can hardly be a coincidence. The adjective *laboriosus* is loved by poets writing in this metre, as is demonstrated by its occurrences in one of Calvus' fragments, in the *Carmina*

Priapea, and in Martial, always at the end of a Phalaecian:

> Calvus 2.2 durum | rus fugit et laboriosum/
> Priap. Pr. 2.3 scripsi | non nimium laboriose/
> Mart. 7.39.7 ince|ditque gradu laborioso/
> Mart. 10.104.13 iucun|dos mihi nec laboriosos/
> Mart. 11.6.3 versu | ludere non laborioso/
> Mart. 11.106.3 et non | es nimium laboriosus/.

Eumolpus makes recourse to a Phalaecian ending with *laboriosus* precisely while uttering an exclamation, which is a distinctively Catullian gesture:

> 1.7 doctis, | Iuppiter, et laboriosis!
> 38.2 malest, | me hercule, et laboriose!

In Petronius, the recognizability of this segment as influenced by Catullus' hendecasyllables is determined by the fact that it is syntactically separated from both what precedes and what follows. Moreover, the metrical quality of this quasi-Phalaecian is all the more noticable precisely because it constitutes an exclamation. Both exclamations and declamations are utterances that distinguish themselves from normal linguistic expression because of a more forceful tonal emphasis. Here, as in the previous case (*laudo Ganymedem*), Eumolpus 'exclaims' in the same way as if he were 'declaiming' – that is, metrically.

Importantly, only half page later[627] Eumolpus does indeed declaim a ten-line poem in the same meter (93.2 *Ales Phasiacis petita Colchis / atque Afrae volucres placent palato*, etc.). Thus Eumolpus' mind is already (as it were) 'on Phalaecian mode' even before he starts to recite a

[627] The lacuna at 92.13 cannot be of long extension. It probably contained a few remarks by Eumolpus concerning the menu announced by Encolpius, before Eumolpus himself comments in meter.

poem in this meter – or maybe it has been precisely this occasional exclamation, reminiscent of Catullus, that offered Eumolpus the inspiration to adopt this meter for his next declamation.