

## Effects of Place in Senecan Tragedy

From the geographical boundary points of the Roman empire (Grant 2000) to the mythical palaces of Greece, imbued with the memory of crime, and perhaps even to the theatrical contexts of performance (e.g., as is argued by Unruh 2014), it is clear that places seem significant in Senecan tragedy. Beyond the symmetry or resonance between character action and the natural world (as is explored by, e.g., Segal 1983 and Rosenmeyer 1989), where nature is said to be affected by human action, and beyond instances of emotional “*contagio*” from one character to another (Dodson-Robinson 2010), there are moments in Senecan tragedy where places themselves seem to have agency. One could point to the *loci horridi* of Tiresias’ necromancy in *Oedipus* or of Atreus’ sacrifice in *Thyestes* (as Segal 1983 and others have done), but scholarship has tended to focus on these places as *reflections* of character/human states and not as agents with influence over the emotions and decisions of characters. This paper looks in particular at scenes from *Hercules Furens* and *Agamemnon*, as just two examples that show how the places presented within Seneca’s tragedies (for *HF*, Theseus’ description of Tartarus and Hercules’ spatial confusion; for *Agamemnon*, the city of Troy and the palace at Mycenae) seem to carry meaning such that characters respond with emotions and decisions affected by the place they occupy.

A new attention to the seeming agency of place in Senecan tragedy provides a promising opportunity to reconsider the corpus’ relationship to the ideas of Stoic materialism. Indeed, this paper uses the places mentioned above to explore how place in Senecan tragedy might be used to answer questions about *topoi* in Stoic physics: to what extent they should be understood as active or passive (and in what sense), possessing causality (and of what type), and/or eliciting responses, memories, or judgments from the characters in their proximity (Boeri 2001, de

Harven 2012). Boeri's approach to *lekta* ("sayables," which, like *topoi*, constitute a type of Stoic incorporeal) has already complicated the interpretation of incorporeals and their relationship to bodies, arguing for an understanding of bodies as having dependency on incorporeals. Building on this suggestive work, this paper explores *topoi* along similar lines, by focusing on the ways in which bodies are dependent on, and therefore affected by, place.

Showing that places contribute meaning in Senecan tragedy has wide-reaching consequences: in addition to any new observations one might make about *topoi* and/or incorporeals in ancient Stoicism, pursuing a nuanced approach to *how* places in Seneca might be active can illuminate more precisely the Stoic aspects of Seneca's dramatic works. Furthermore, accepting that place might carry some degree of agency in Seneca's worldview, one can then interrogate the role of potential performance places (following, e.g., Mitchell-Boyask 2007 in the case of Greek tragedy) in shaping the meaning of Senecan tragedy as drama that was intended for performance (Kohn 2013). This paper thus concludes with a new interpretation of Seneca's *Agamemnon* based on a reading of the tragedy as affected by the location and semantics of the theatre of Pompey (building on Russell's [2015] analysis of Pompey's theatre complex).

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