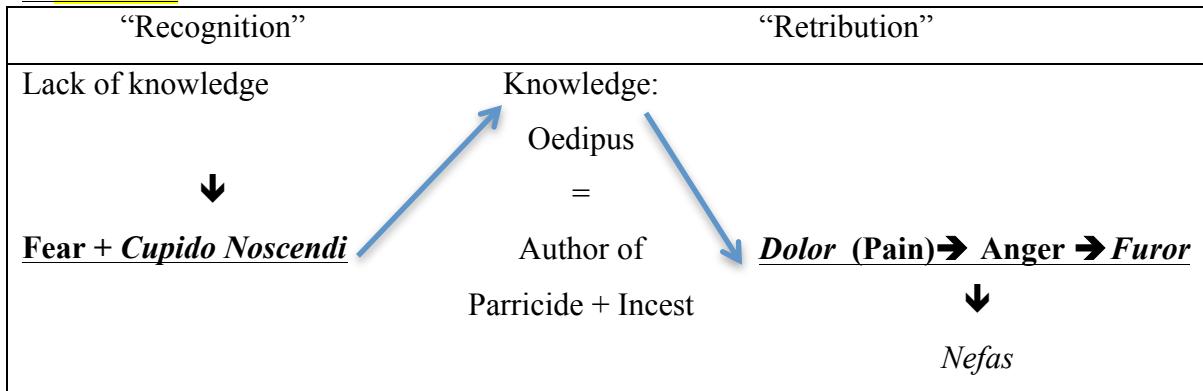


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Oedipus' Metamorphoses: Reflections on the Authorial Role of Seneca's Oedipus.

1. Passions.



2. Fear

- a. **Sen. Oed. 22.**
Hic me paternis expulit regnis timor.
- b. **Sen. Oed. 77-81.**
[...] Sperne letali manu/contacta regna, linquere lacrimas, funera, / tabifica caeli vitia, quae tecum invehis/inaustus hospes, profuge iamdudum ocius- vel ad parentes.
- c. **Sen. Med 42.**
[...] Pelle femineos metus.
- d. **Sen. Thy. 283-284.**
[...] Anime, quid rursus times/ et ante rem subsidis? Audendum est, age.
- e. **Sen. Thy. 421.**
Pigro-quid hoc est? –Genitor incessu stupet.
- f. **Sen. Thy. 435-6.**
Nihil timendum video, sed timeo tamen;/placet ire, pigris membra sed
- a. **Sen. Oed. 22.**
 This fear banished me from my father's kingdom.
- b. **Sen. Oed. 77-81.**
 Reject the realm infected by your death-hand, leave the tears, the corpses, the corrupted sky imported by you, the cursed alien. It's late, but flee now, run – even to your parents.
- c. **Sen. Med. 42.**
 [...] Away with womanish fears
- d. **Sen. Thy. 283-284.**
 Oh, soul, why dost shrink back in fear, and halt before the deed? Come, thou must dare it!
- e. **Sen. Thy. 421.**
 My father, what can it mean? With faltering pace goes as if dazed.
- f. **Sen. Thy. 435-6.**
 Naught to be feared I see, but still I fear. Fain would I go but my limbs totter with faltering

- genibus labant.* knees.
g. **Sen. Thy. 489.**
Ego vos sequor, non duco. I follow you, not lead.

3. Cupido Noscendi = Desire for Knowing the Truth.

Sen. Oed. 206-9.

*Horrore quatior, fata quo uergant timens,
trepidumque gemino pectus affectu labat:
ubi laeta duris mixta in ambiguo iacent,
incertus animus scire cum cupiat timet.*

I quiver in fear of where fate now points:
My trembling heart now falters with split
feelings. When good and bad mix ambiguously,
the unsure mind **fears the knowledge it craves.**

4. Different story patterns.

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Medea</i> | Retribution <i>Medea's planned action:</i> A. Murder of Creusa + Creon B. Murder of children | → | Recognition Jason' s, the chorus', others'. |
| <i>Thyestes</i> | Retribution <i>Atreus's planned action:</i> A. Murder of Thyestes' children B. Feeding Thyestes' children to Thyestes | → | Recognition The chorus' + Thyestes' |
| <i>Oedipus</i>* | Recognition The chorus + Oedipus' recognition: A. Oedipus' parricide B. Oedipus' incest | → | Retribution <i>Oedipus' planned action</i> (+ Jocasta's) A. Oedipus' blinding. B. Oedipus' matricide. |

5. Tragic Stages in a Retribution Pattern.

Victims of injustice > Resentful pain > Hatred, anger, *furor* > Daring something great >
Temporary reluctance > Yield to *Furor!* > Asking for the gods' assistance > What path?
> Let's proceed! > *Nefas* accomplished! > Victory and triumph.

6. Seneca on Poets.

Sen. Tranq. 9.17.10-11.

*Nam siue Graeco poetae credimus
“aliquando et insanire iucundum est,” siue
Platoni “frustra poeticas fores
compos sui pepulit,” siue Aristoteli
“nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura
dementiae fuit:” non potest grande
aliquid et super ceteros loqui nisi mota
mens. Cum uulgaria et solita contempsit
instinctuque sacro surrexit excelsior, tunc
demum aliquid cecinit grandius ore
mortali. Non potest sublime quicquam et in
arduo positum contingere quam diu apud
se est: desciscat oportet a solito et
efferatur et mordeat frenos et rectorem
rapiat suum eoque ferat quo per se
timuisset escendere.*

For whether we believe with the Greek poet that "sometimes it is a pleasure also to rave," or with Plato that "the sane mind knocks in vain at the door of poetry," or with Aristotle that "**no great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness**" — be that as it may, **the lofty utterance** that rises above the attempts of others is impossible unless the **mind is excited**. When it has scorned the vulgar and the commonplace, and has soared far aloft fired by divine inspiration, then alone it **chants a strain too lofty for mortal lips**. So long as it is left to itself, it is impossible for it to reach any sublime and difficult height; it **must forsake the common track and be driven to frenzy and champ the bit and run away with its rider and rush to a height that it would have feared to climb by itself**.

(J.W. Basore, LOEB, 1928-1935)

7. Ovid on Tragic Poetry.

Ov. Rem. 375.

*Grande sonant tragici; tragicos decet ira
cothurnos.*

Ov. Rem. 375.

Tragedians sound sublimely: rage suits the tragic heights (A. S. Kline © 2001)

8. Ingenium.

a. Sen. Med. 910.

*Medea nunc sum: crevit **ingenium** malis.*

a. Sen. Med. 910.

Now I am Medea; my **wit** has grown through suffering

b. Sen. Oed. 946.

*Utere **ingenio**, miser.*

b. Sen. Oed. 946.

Use your **wits**, you wretch.

9. Oedipus' metamorphoses.

Sen. *Oed.* 878-879+919-987.

a. 926 *Quid poenas moror?*

b. 933 *Nunc redde Agauen. "Anime, quid mortem times?"*

c. 878-9 *Redde nunc animos pares,
Nunc aliquid **aude** sceleribus **dignum** tui.*

d. 952 *Cunctaris, anime?*

e. 919 *Qualis per arva Libycus insanit leo,
fulvam minaci fronte concutiens iubam;
vultus furore torvus atque oculi truces.*

f. 922-4 *Gemitus et altum murmur, et gelidus fluit
sudor per artus, spumat et volvit minas
ac mersus alte magnus exundat dolor.*

g. 925 *Secum ipse saevus grande nescio quid parat
suisque fatis simile.*

h. 957-
9 *Fodiantur oculi!" dixit atque **ira furit**
ardent minaces igne truculento genae
oculique vix se sedibus retinent suis.*

i. 960 *Violentus audax vultus, iratus ferox,
tantum furentis; [...]*

j. 970 *Saevitque frustra plusque quam satis est furit.*

k. 948 *Quod saepe fieri non potest fiat diu.*

l. 949-
51 *Mors eligatur longa, quaeratur via
qua nec sepultis mixtus et vivis tamen
exemptus erres: morere, sed citra patrem.*

m. 942-
7 *Solvendo non es: illa quae leges ratas
Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda, novos
commenta partus, supplices eadem meis
novetur. iterum vivere atque iterum mori
liceat, renasci semper ut totiens nova
supplicia pendas— utere ingenio, miser.*

Why put off punishment?

He asks. "Now make Agave return. **Why
fear death, my soul?"**

Now make your valor match,
Now **dare a deed worthy of** your crimes.
You're slow, my soul.

As a Libyan lion **rages** through the fields
Tossing tawny mane from scowling brow
Fury scours his grim face, his eyes are wild.
Groans come and low murmurs, icy sweat
Glides over his flesh, curses roll and foam
Pain erupts from deep within and flows.

He **rages with himself and plans something**
Huge to match his fate.

I shall dig out now This husband eyes!" He
spoke and **rages wrath,**
A wild fire blazes across his grim face
And his eyes scarcely stay in their sockets.
His gaze violent, ruthless, angry, fierce.

With pointless fury and excessive rage.
What cannot happen often must be slow.
Choose a long death. **Find a way not to
mingle**

With the dead, and yet wander quite removed
From the Living. Die, this side of your
father.

**Let Nature not be annulled, whose fixed
laws Change only for Oedipus. Let that
inventor**

**Of new births find new punishments for
me.** You must live again,
You must die again, And be eternally reborn
— to be punished each time anew. Use your
wits, you wretch.

- n. 973- *Quidquid effossis male*
6 *dependet oculis rumpit, et uictor deos*
 conclamat omnis: 'parcite en patriae, precor:
 iam iusta feci, debitas poenas tuli.
- o. 977 ***Inventa thalamis digna nox tandem meis.***
- He snaps off the shreds
From his mauled, uprooted eyes and
triumphantly
Invokes all gods: Spare, I beg, my fatherland:
Justice is now done: I've paid due penalty.
Now I've found night fit for my marriage bed

10. The play is over (?)

Sen. Oed. 998. *Bene habet, peractum est:*
Sen. Med. 1019. *Bene est, peractum est.*
Sen. Thy. 889. *Bene est, abunde est*

Sen. Oed. 998. All is well, it is done.
Sen. Med. 1019. All is well, it is done.
Sen. Thy. 889. ‘Tis well, ‘tis more than well.

11. Atreus on the nature of the tragic *nefas*.

Sen. Thy. 1050 ff.

THY. [...] *Genitor en natos premo*
Premorque natis—sceleris est aliquis modus.
AT. Sceleri modus debetur ubi facias scelus,
Non ubi reponas.

Sen. Thy. 1050 ff.

THY [...] Lo, I the father overwhelm the sons, and by
my sons I am overwhelmed – **of crime is there no limit?**
AT. Crime should have *limit* when the crime is
wrought, not when repaid.

12. A *maiis nefas*.

A. Sen. Med.

a. 674. *maiis his, maius parat/Medea monstrum.*
b. 933-4. *scelus est Iason genitor et maius*
scelus/Medea mater—occident, non sunt mei.

B. Sen. Thy.

a. 267-8. *Nescioquid animus maius et solito amplius/*
supraque fines moris humani tumet.
b. 270-5. *hoc, anime, occupa/(dignum est Thyeste*
facinus et dignum Atreo,/quod uterque faciat): uidit
infandas domus/Odrysia mensas—fateor, immane est
scelus,/sed occupatum: maius hoc aliquid
dolor/inueniat.

A. Sen. Med.

a. 674. But **greater** than such deeds, **greater** is
the monstrous thing Medea is preparing.
b. 933-4. Their sin is that Jason is their father,
and, **greater** sin, that Medea is their mother.

B. Sen. Thy.

a. 267-8. Some **greater** thing, larger than the
common and beyond the bounds of human use
is swelling in my soul.
b. 270-5. Haste, thou, my soul, and do it. ‘This a
deed worthy of Thyestes and of Atreus worthy;
let each perform it: the Odrysian house once
saw a feast unspeakable – ‘tis a monstrous
crime, I grant, but it has been done before: let
my smart **find something worse** than this.

13. Being drawn by Anger and Frenzy.

a. Sen. *Med.*

123. *incerta uecors mente non sana/feror partes in omnes .*

953: “*ira, qua ducis, sequor.*”

b. Sen. *Thy.* 260-2

“*Fateor. Tumultus pectora attonitus quatit/ penitusque uoluit; rapior et quo nescio, /sed rapior [...].*”

c. Hor. *Odes*.3.25. 1 ff.

*Quo me, Bacche, rapis tui
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in
specus velox mente nova?*

[...]

*nil parvum aut humili modo,
nil mortale loquar. dulce periculum est,
o Lenaee, sequi deum
cingentem viridi tempora pampino.*

a. Sen. *Med.*

123. Perplexed, witless, with mind scarce sane, I am tossed to every side.

953: O wrath, where thou dost lead I follow.

b. Sen. *Thy.* 260-2.

I do confess it. I frantic tumult shakes and heaves deep my heart. **I am hurried**, I know not whither, but **I am hurried** on.

c. Hor. *Odes*. 3.25. 1 ff.

Where are you taking me, Bacchus,
now I’m full of you? To what caves or groves,
driven, swiftly, by new inspiration?

[...]

I’ll sing **nothing trivial**, no
humble measure, nothing that dies.

O, Lenaeus, the danger of **following a god**
is sweet, wreathing my brow with green leaves of
the vine. (A. S. Kline 2003)

14. Oedipus’ bitter victory.

Sen. *Oed.* 1044ff.

bis parricida plusque quam timui nocens
matrem peremi: scelere confecta est meo.
o **Phoebe mendax**, fata **superauis impia**.

Sen. *Oed.* 1044ff.

I’m a **double parricide**, and guiltier than I feared: my crime destroyed my mother.
Oh **lying Phoebus!** I’ve surpassed the sinful fates!

*Translations of *Medea* and *Thyestes* are by F. J. Miller, of *Oedipus* are by A.J. Boyle.

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