

Cyborg Sovereignty in the Ancient Mediterranean:  
On the Mechanization of Stoic and Early Christian Thought

Seneca's philosophy is perhaps best suited for a pandemic: Don't get too happy, don't get too sad, and whatever you do, stay away from crowds (*Letters on Ethics* 7:1). Seneca's *Oedipus* is a fitting story for analysis in our present moment, a king unfit for the job is the cause of infecting a community with disease (Davis 156). Although at first it may be odd to consider Donna Haraway's ironic political myth of the cyborg in relation to Seneca but with the intersection of theology and technology being relevant in our increasingly digital, seemingly apocalyptic circumstance, Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* becomes an interlocutor with Seneca's *Oedipus*. With Haraway's self-described "blasphemous" approach in mind (Haraway 1), I want to import the eschatology of James Cone and the angelology of Marika Rose from the study of religion in order to produce a properly "blasphemous" read of Oedipus as a divine figure to assess the blurring of binary identities. By mapping the boundary of human, cyborg, and god I seek to demonstrate the relevance of Stoic and early Christian thought about sovereignty and family amidst our current Biopolitical crisis.

Oedipus is a proto-cyborg in one sense, because of his adaptation by Seneca from Sophocles and the tradition of Greek theatre as a metaphorical resurrecting of the character and supplying him with the technology of a different language. Narratively, Oedipus is broken down by the truth, made to learn like an artificial intelligence learns a language, confusing words and mangling meanings all until his choice of the final word *libet* in which he employs both meanings "to choose" and "to be pleased." (*Oedipus* 1051-1061). Oedipus at the end of it all, transcends his mortality and achieves a divinity, resurrecting and redeeming his character. In this way, Oedipus is a viable substitute for Jesus, who like Oedipus has a father who is not who he seems to be.

Using an approach of constructive theology, I seek to explain Oedipus as a character the reader reflects upon in order to find “a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves.” (Haraway, 67). *Oedipus* provides a path to seeing beyond the dualisms of mind and body, father and son, religion and secularism, man and woman, god and man, woman and machine, and offers an avenue to think in a contemporary way about the politics of accepting the waste, the agony, and the plague.

### Bibliography

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