

Zeitschrift: Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

Band: 80 (2023)

Heft: 1

Artikel: Fractured Echoes : Seneca's Virgilian Half-lines

Autor: Cowan, Robert

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1042197>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 20.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Fractured Echoes

Seneca's Virgilian Half-lines

Robert Cowan, Sydney

Abstract: Les quatre trimètres incomplets dans les tragédies de Sénèque font allusion aux hexamètres incomplets dans l'*Énéide* de Virgile. Dans *Thyeste* et *Les Troyennes*, le demi-vers sénèqueen fait allusion à un demi-vers virgilien spécifique. Les deux autres exemples, dans *Phèdre* et *Les Phéniciennes*, peuvent avoir une ressemblance plus éloignée avec des demi-vers virgiliens spécifiques, mais évoquent plus probablement le phénomène de manière plus générale.

Keywords: Sénèque, Virgile, intertextualité, demi-vers, tragédie, épopée, métrique.

It has long been a commonplace in discussions of Virgilian half-lines that they were not imitated by later poets, as might have been expected if they were a deliberate innovation by such an influential writer rather than the (sometimes happy) accidents of an incomplete poem.¹ Despite the special case of Late Antique centos, and Baldwin's suggestion that the hemistich by Nero parodically quoted by Lucan in a latrine might have been an instance, the commonplace holds true for dactylic hexameters.² However, scholars have generally overlooked another poet who engaged closely with Virgil and whose works also contain half-lines: Seneca in his tragedies.³ On four occasions, Seneca ends a speech with an incomplete trimeter,

¹ E.g., R. B. Steele, "Incomplete Verses in the *Aeneid*" *The New York Latin Leaflet* vol. 7 no. 174 (1907) 1–3, at 3; J. Sparrow, *Half-lines and Repetitions in Virgil* (Oxford 1931) 25–26, though he does note that imitators might have thought the half-lines deliberate but chosen not to replicate them, just as Silius does not replicate Virgilian practice with elision; F. W. Lenz, "The Incomplete Verses in Virgil's *Eneid*: A Critical Report", in H. Bardon/R. Verdière (eds.) *Vergiliana: Recherches sur Virgile* (Leiden 1971) 158–174, at 160; W. Moskalow, *Formular Language and Poetic Design in the Aeneid* (Leiden 1982) 12 n20; H. Power, "Half-lines" in R. F. Thomas/J. M. Ziolkowski (eds.) *The Virgil Encyclopedia* (Malden 2014). B. Baldwin, "Half-lines in Virgil: Old and New Ideas." *SO* 68 (1993) 144–151, at 144, traces the argument back to Johnson's life of Abraham Cowley. On the half-lines, see, in addition to the standard commentaries, O. Walter, *Die Entstehung der Halbverse in der Aeneis*. (Giessen 1933); W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1969) 128–131; E. Paratore, "Il problema dei versi monchi dell'*Eneide*", *BollClass* 5 (1984) 169–177; T. Berres, *Vergil und die Helenaszene mit einem Exkurs zu den Halbversen* (Heidelberg 1992) 99–208; A. Novara, "Alcune osservazioni su versi incompiuti nell'*Eneide* di Virgilio: Cenni sul lavoro di Virgilio tragico" *Aevum* 67 (1993) 37–53; H.-C. Günther, *Überlegungen zur Entstehung von Vergils Aeneis* (Göttingen 1996).

² Suet. *Vit. Luc.* p. 51 Reifferscheid; Baldwin, *loc. cit.* (n. 1) 144.

³ For Seneca's intertextuality with Virgil, see esp. E. Fantham, "Virgil's Dido and Seneca's Tragic Heroines", *G&R* 22 (1975) 1–10; A. Schiesaro, "Forms of Senecan Intertextuality", *Vergilius* 38 (1992) 56–63, M. C. J. Putnam, "Virgil's Tragic Future: Senecan Drama and the *Aeneid*", in *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence* (Chapel Hill 1995) 246–285; A. Schiesaro, "L'intertestualità e i suoi disagi", *MD* 39 (1997) 75–109; G. G. Biondi, "Virgilio in Seneca tragico: due poeti per due principati", in F. Gasti (ed.), *Seneca e la letteratura greca e latina: per i settant'anni di Giancarlo Mazzoli* (Pavia 2013), 121–141; C. Trinacty, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry* (Oxford 2014), and items in n. 15 below.

breaking off at points between the diaeresis after the first foot and the hept-hemimeral caesura.⁴ Yet few scholars have made any connection between these and the earlier, more famous half-lines in the *Aeneid*. In her note on *Phoenissae* 319, Frank mentions Virgilian half-lines, but only as a parallel, with no suggestion of influence. For her, Virgil's half-lines are signs of the *Aeneid*'s incompleteness while Seneca's are the result of the plays' being "composed with careless speed". Both sets would have been removed or completed had the poets respectively lived or "been concerned to polish his dramas".⁵ Calder, in a passing comment defending the authenticity of *Thyestes* 100, asserts, "Seneca imitates here as elsewhere the Virgilian unfinished line", but he does not expand on this idea.⁶ Keulen offers a more developed, but still tentative suggestion about the relationship: "Vergil [...] in all probability was Seneca's paragon. But since it remains a matter of speculation whether he would have finished all these lines or only some of them if he had been given time to finish his revision of the epic, we cannot be absolutely sure about Seneca's intentions either."⁷

This article will offer a less equivocal argument that Seneca was indeed imitating Virgil. For this to be the case, it is by no means essential, *pace* Keulen, that Virgil's half-lines were deliberate or even that Seneca believed that they were. The important point is that Seneca found Virgil's half-lines poetically effective at the point of reception and imitated this feature of the published *Aeneid*, as edited by Tucca and Varius, in his tragedies. The argument that supports this claim and addresses Keulen's uncertainty about Seneca's intentions is that at least two of the half-lines in the tragedies do not merely imitate the formal peculiarity in general but allude to specific half-lines from the *Aeneid*. For the scholar wishing to establish Seneca's engagement with the phenomenon of the Virgilian half-line, it is the intertextual relationship that provides the extra evidence in support of their case. For the audience (or reader),⁸ however, the metrical peculiarity plays a significant role in activating the allusion in her mind and may encourage her to see a connec-

4 First foot: *sequor* (*Thy.* 100); trihemimeral caesura: *me nolle* (*Phaed.* 605); hepthemimeral caesura: *iubente te, uel uiuet* (*Phoe.* 319), *in media Priami regna.* (*Tro.* 1103), taking the lines as they stand, scanning closed syllables long and open ones unelided.

5 M. Frank (ed.), *Seneca's Phoenissae: Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden 1995) 164.

6 W. M. Calder III, "Seneca *Thyestes* 101–6" *CPh* 79 (1984) 225–226, at 226. Despite Calder's n. 10 ("So Thomann, *Sämtliche Tragödien*, 2: 453"), T. Thomann (ed.), *Seneca: Sämtliche Tragödien*, vol. 2 (Zurich/Stuttgart 1969) 453 makes no mention of Virgil, and only supports Calder's implicit point about the half-line's emotional effect: "Affektiv-demonstrativ abgebrochener Vers wie Tr 1103, Pha 60, Phoe 319."

7 A. J. Keulen (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca: Troades* (Leiden 2001) 508.

8 The current argument is not dependent on whether the tragedies were composed for private reading, as *Rezitationsdramen*, or to be fully staged, and it will not enter into this controversial issue. Half-lines would be more immediately obvious to a reader (though only if reading for themselves rather than using a slave) but would also be very evident to an auditor's metrically attuned ear. To avoid tedious repetition, I shall refer throughout to "the audience", but this should not be taken as presupposing that mode of reception.

tion with a passage even where there are fewer allusive markers than in other instances. Even if Seneca's half-lines do, by their metrical anomalousness, encourage the audience to think of Virgilian half-lines, there are still around fifty-eight of the latter to choose from, and so some further cues to recall a specific instance are required.⁹ Although there is an inevitable degree of subjectivity involved in such a designation, it is more probable that striking and memorable half-lines will come to the audience's mind than more colourless placeholders, such as *haec effata* (5.653), *tum sic effatur* (9.295), or *cui Liger* (10.580). Contextual similarity, whether of subject-matter or theme, and direct verbal echo (or, failing that, semantic equivalence) will also, as with all instances of intertextuality, encourage the audience to link the two passages.

Two Little Boys in Two Little Troys

The Senecan half-line that has probably met with the greatest approval among critics for its intrinsic poetic and dramatic effect is that which concludes the Messenger's narration of the death of Astyanax in *Troades* (1098–1103):¹⁰

*non flet e turba omnium
qui fletur; ac, dum uerba fatidici et preces
concipit Vlixes uatis et saeuos ciet
ad sacra superos, sponte desiluit sua
in media Priami regna. –*

Out of the crowd of everyone the only one not weeping was
he who was being wept for; and, while Ulysses pronounces
the prophetic seer's words and prayers and summons cruel
gods to the rites, he, of his own volition, leapt down
into the middle of Priam's kingdom. –

On a purely formal level, Geiger has noted how Astyanax's final leap into the middle of his grandfather's kingdom ends mimetically in the middle of the line.¹¹ Schmidt takes the silence that follows the speech's abrupt cessation as reproducing

⁹ The precise number of Virgilian half-lines is disputed owing to the uncertainty whether some apparently complete lines were left incomplete by Virgil but supplemented by later interpolators, a practice attested at Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 41: [*Varius*] ... *uersus etiam imperfectos sicut erant reliquerit; quos multi mox supplere conati non perinde ualuerunt ob difficultatem, quod omnia fere apud eum hemistichia absoluto perfectoque sunt sensu.* ("[Varius] also left the incomplete lines as they were; these many soon tried to complete but were not able to because of the difficulty that almost all the half-lines in his works are of complete and finished sense.")

¹⁰ The text of Seneca throughout is Zwiernlein's OCT and of Virgil the second edition of Conte's Teubner. All translations are my own.

¹¹ J. Geiger, "Strictness, Freedom, and Experimentation in Horatian and Senecan Metrics" in M. Stöckinger/K. Winter/A. T. Zanker (eds.) *Horace and Seneca: Interactions, Intertexts, Interpretations* (Berlin 2017) 159–181, at 179.

Andromache's horrified reaction of speechlessness.¹² Others have emphasized the more dramatically significant mimesis by which the child's action brutally cuts short the due completion of both the trimeter and the religious rite.¹³ Littlewood goes a step further by demonstrating how the metrical anomaly dramatizes Astyanax's autonomy and ability to exert a degree of disruptive influence simultaneously over the orthopraxy of the sacrifice, the *Realpolitik* of the Greeks, and the very form of the play: "By jumping down of his own accord Astyanax shows his self-determination even at the moment of death and also curtails the ritual. [...] The poem itself is stranded part-way through a line."¹⁴ The half-line's metrical peculiarity contributes immensely to the dramatic and thematic impact of the Messenger's narrative, but does it evoke the *Aeneid*'s half-lines and, if so, does it engage intertextually with any specific instance?

Although there is a complex and sophisticated engagement with Virgilian poetry in all of Seneca's tragedies, *Troades* is unquestionably the play that engages most closely with the *Aeneid*; its only rival, *longo sed proximus interuallo*, is *Agamemnon*.¹⁵ This engagement is not limited to the pervasive verbal echoes and the sophisticated refashioning of specific scenes, such as the appearances of Hector's ghost to the Virgilian Aeneas and the Senecan Andromache.¹⁶ Both epic and tragedy deal with the aftermath of the sack of Troy and more specifically with the Trojan experience of that aftermath. Yet their treatment of that aftermath is markedly different. In keeping with each's generic ethos, the epic focuses (however much the further voices murmur in the background) on rebirth, refoundation, and the triumphalist celebration of an imperialist teleology. The tragedy, in contrast, concentrates on defeat, loss, and the frustration of future hopes, leaving it to the audience to decide whether this vision constitutes a foil to the *Aeneid*, throw-

12 E. A. Schmidt, "Zeit und Raum in Senecas Tragödien: Ein Beitrag zu seiner dramatischen Technik", in M. Billerbeck/E. A. Schmidt (eds.), *Sénèque le Tragique*. Entretiens Fondation Hardt 50 (Geneva 2004) 321–368, at 337: "Die Pause nach der Hephthemimeres besagt Stille, vom Boten aus die Stille in der Menge der Gaffer, von Andromacha aus die Stille ihrer Überwältigung durch Schrecken und Schmerz, bevor sie aufschreit".

13 E. Fantham, *Seneca's Troades: A Literary Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary* (Princeton 1982) 373: "a half-line, broken off, as the ritual is broken off, by the child's sudden leap to claim his inheritance"; A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Seneca's Troades* (Leeds 1994) 227: "the death-leap of Ast[yanax] truncates sacrifice and speech".

14 C. A. J. Littlewood, *Self-representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy* (Oxford 2004) 348. *Contra*, J.-A. Shelton, "The Spectacle of Death in Seneca's *Troades*", in G. W. M. Harrison (ed.), *Seneca in Performance* (Swansea 2000) 87–118, at 109, argues that Astyanax's voluntary participation in his own death, like a sacrifice or gladiator, would be welcomed by the Greeks and absolve them of moral responsibility.

15 *Troades*: Schiesaro *op. cit.* (n. 3 [1997]) 77–85; A. Zissos, "Shades of Virgil: Seneca's *Troades*", *MD* 61 (2008) 189–210; G. Petrone, "Il 'luogo' di Andromaca nelle *Troiane* di Seneca", *Dioniso* 6 (2016) 35–55. *Agamemnon*: A. Schiesaro, "Seneca's *Agamemnon*—the Entropy of Tragedy", *Pallas* 95 (2014) 179–191, at 187–90; C. V. Trinacty, "Catastrophe in Dialogue: *Aeneid* 2 and Seneca's *Agamemnon*", *Vergilius* 62 (2016) 99–114. For Seneca's wider engagement with the *Aeneid*, see the items in n. 3.

16 Hector: Verg. *Aen.* 2.268–297; Sen. *Tro.* 438–460.

ing its triumphalism into sharper relief, or a grim commentary on the more sombre notes already struck by the epic.¹⁷

This difference of treatment is reflected in the difference of (literal and figurative) *dramatis personae*. Though Aeneas is, in Zissos' neat formulation, a "present absence" in *Troades*, he remains an absence nonetheless, absent not only from the stage but from the dialogue, which never once refers to him.¹⁸ Seneca's characters are those whom Aeneas sees flash by, suffering or exulting, in *Aeneid* 2: Hecuba, Andromache, and the nameless Chorus of Trojan women, Ulysses, Pyrrhus, Agamemnon, and perhaps Helen.¹⁹ Hecuba and Pyrrhus do have speaking parts in both Virgil and Seneca, replaying obsessively and at greater length their cameos as widow and murderer of Priam, but it is Andromache who inhabits the two texts most completely. Both her Virgilian and Senecan incarnations, in their obsession with the past and in particular with their dead husband, represent the backward-looking, regressive, repetitive attitude that, in the *Aeneid*, is set in antithesis with the need to move forward to new birth, and that, in *Troades*, dominates the play virtually unopposed.²⁰ In addition to her importance throughout the tragedy as a character and as the embodiment of an idea, on a more localized level, it is the death of her son that the half-line 1103 describes and it is she who immediately responds to it. A half-line spoken by or relating to the Virgilian Andromache would thus have excellent contextual grounds for coming to the mind of Seneca's audience.

¹⁷ Zissos, *loc. cit.* (n. 15) favours the former reading ("Seneca's intertextual program invites the reading of his ending as Virgil's beginning", 209) but acknowledges the possibility of the latter ("[Some might say that] Seneca has inflected the ideological forms of Virgilian epic with ironic and deflationary undercurrents that invite the reader to re-examine the myth of divinely-sanctioned national origins in the light of hallucinatory phenomena to which the playwright has attributed disturbing similarities" 200 n. 4).

¹⁸ Zissos, *loc. cit.* (n. 15) 209.

¹⁹ The status of the so-called Helen episode (*Aen.* 2.567–88) remains controversial but there is evidence that Ovid (*Her.* 16.333) and Lucan (10.53–65) alluded to it so that, even if it is not Virgilian, it may have been in Seneca's text of the *Aeneid*. The classic study remains G. P. Goold, "Servius and the Helen Episode", *HSCPh* 74 (1970) 101–168 and, more recently, see Berres, *loc. cit.* (n. 1); I. Peirano, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge 2012) 242–263; G. B. Conte, *Critical Notes on Virgil: Editing the Teubner Text of the Georgics and the Aeneid* (Berlin 2016) 69–87.

²⁰ On the regressive quality of Andromache in the *Aeneid*, see D. Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton 1993) 53–65; M. Bettini, "Ghosts of Exile: Doubles and Nostalgia in Vergil's *parva Troia* (*Aeneid* 3.294 ff.)", *ClAnt* 16 (1997) 8–33; V. Panoussi, *Greek Tragedy in Vergil's Aeneid: Ritual, Empire, and Intertext* (Cambridge 2009) 146–154; in *Troades*: K. Volk, "Putting Andromacha on Stage: A Performer's Perspective", in Harrison, *loc. cit.* (n. 14) 197–208; A. Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama* (Cambridge 2003) 194–200; Zissos, *loc. cit.* (n. 15) 199–209; M. McAuley, *Reproducing Rome: Motherhood in Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, and Statius* (Oxford 2015) 257–294.

It will come as little surprise that there exists just such a half-line, delivered by Andromache to Aeneas when the latter unexpectedly arrives in the replica Troy that she and Helenus had built at Buthrotum (3.339–341):

*quid puer Ascanius? superatne et uescitur aura,
quem tibi iam Troia ... ?
ecqua tamen puero est amissae cura parentis?*

What of the boy Ascanius? Does he live and breathe the air,
he whom, for you, (in?) Troy already ... ?
But does the boy have any care for his lost mother?

Leaving to one side for now its contextual relationship to *Tro.* 1103, this half-line unquestionably satisfies the requirement that the source text be one of the more notable and memorable among its fifty-seven brethren. The Suetonian-Donatan *Vita* of Virgil already noted, as commentators and critics have noted ever since, that this is the only half-line that, in addition to being metrically incomplete, leaves a grammatically incomplete sentence.²¹ Whether this is accident or design, the net effect is undeniably powerful as the metrical truncation combines with the syntactic truncation of aposiopesis, and further, as Rogerson notes, with genuine aporia about how the line and the thought might have been completed, a feature not shared by most instances of that figure.²² Sceptics such as Horsfall may well be correct about the half-line's genesis as "a marginal scrap which has crept into the text" that should be "relegate[d] [...] to honourable retirement in the apparatus as Virgilian, but misplaced."²³ However, this does not affect its reception as the transmitted text or its impact on readers, scholars, and imitators. Whether or not the unknowable mind of Virgil intended it, it can be empirically demonstrated that this half-line can generate and has generated responses such as that of Witton: "The question brings back to her mind the terrible fate of her own son, Astyanax, and her emotion chokes her. Virgil could not complete the line, because its speaker could not."²⁴ Whatever one's feelings about Witton's interpretation, it clearly shows how Andromache's half-line can be received as memorable and effective, not just in general, but as a half-line. If Witton can receive the transmitted text in this way, why not Seneca?

Although there is no direct verbal echo in the Senecan half-line, it is the tragedian's frequent practice to imitate a Virgilian phrase very closely using synonyms, without source and target texts' having a single word in common. Andromache's

21 *omnia fere apud eum hemistichia absoluto perfectoque sunt sensu praeter illud "quem tibi iam Troia"* ("almost all the half-lines in his work are of complete and finished sense except that famous 'He whom for you Troy already'") Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 4; S. J. Heyworth/J. H. W. Morwood, *A Commentary on Vergil, Aeneid 3* (Oxford 2017) 173 ad loc.

22 A. Rogerson, *Virgil's Ascanius: Imagining the Future in the Aeneid* (Cambridge 2017) 63–64.

23 N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3: A Commentary* (Leiden 2006) 514.

24 W. F. Witton, "Two Passages in the Third Book of the *Aeneid*", *G&R* 7 (1960) 171–172, at 171.

earlier description of how Hector's ghost did not resemble his former self includes a memory of when he attacked the Greek ships with Trojans torches: *Graias petebat facibus Idaeis rates* (445). The echo of Aeneas' words at *Aen.* 2.276, *uel Danaum Phrygios iaculatus puppibus ignis*, is clear even though not one word is shared by the two passages. Though our half-lines are not quite so closely matched in every detail, there is a clear similarity between a young boy leaping into the kingdom of Priam (*in media Priami regna*) and one doing something in Troy (or Troy doing something to him – even the case of *Troia* is indeterminate). It is certainly a sufficient one for there to be an echo of sense, if not of lexeme, that adds a further, cumulative reason for the audience to connect the two passages.

However, it is the contextual relationship that is most important for linking Seneca's half-line with this particular instance from the *Aeneid*. The general association with Andromache has already been noted (even though one half-line is spoken *by*, the other *to* her), as has the slightly more specific link that both passages deal with the fate of sons. The survival of Ascanius and the death of Astyanax map neatly onto the epic and tragic worldviews of the two texts, as discussed above, the former stressing continuity, celebration, and the future, the latter rupture, lament, and the past. Yet the relationship is more complex than that, for the Senecan Andromache is already present as a further voice within the *Aeneid* and, crucially, Astyanax is already inscribed in the Virgilian Ascanius. Even if we stop short of endorsing Witton's choking emotion, he is surely right that Andromache's mention of Ascanius brings to her mind – and that of the reader – Astyanax. The reader need not look very hard to see behind her subsequent question about Ascanius' feelings for his dead mother, Creusa, an expression of her own feelings for her dead son. Nor is the relationship purely a contrastive one. Rogerson traces subtle echoes in the half-line of the ghosts of Hector and Polydorus that “underline the suggestion both that Ascanius should survive, like the Penates, and that he might not have, like Polydorus and so many other princes of Troy including Hector and Andromache's own son, Astyanax.”²⁵ Astyanax represents the fate that Ascanius escaped but also serves as a means of expressing the anxiety that he might yet suffer it. The half-line on his death embodies the lamenting spirit of the *Troades* in contrast to that of the *Aeneid*, but it also claims the Virgilian half-line as the voice of that spirit *within* the *Aeneid*. And, of course, the metrical anomaly is not merely a mechanical cue to bring the passages together in the audience's mind, but mimetic of the curtailment of hopes they express, “the interrupted lineage as opposed to the lineage of Aeneas that is allegedly continuous, but is en-

²⁵ Rogerson, *loc. cit.* (n. 22) 64. Cf. G. Scafoglio, “Astianatte nell'Eneide”, *Latomus* 68 (2009) 631–643, at 642: “Ascanio non è puramente *Astyanactis imago*, per la somiglianza e per le qualità morali: egli costituisce un *alter Astyanax*, pari al bambino morto [...], ma più fortunato, destinato cioè a sopravvivere e a riscattare i fallimenti e i dolori degli sconfitti e dei defunti.”

trusted to a broken line *quem tibi iam Troia*.”²⁶ All of this Seneca creatively annotates by his imitation.

There remains one final twist in the intertextual relationship between *Tro.* 1103 and *Aen.* 3.340. Although it has been discussed as a dynamic, bidirectional intertextual dialogue between the two texts, much of that dialogue has tended to move in one direction, as the Senecan target text belatedly annotates and illuminates the Virgilian source text. Nevertheless, in terms of mythological chronology, Andromache hears the Messenger’s report of Astyanax’s death in the days immediately following the sack of Troy, some years before she asks Aeneas about Ascanius at Buthrotum. Zissos has shown how Barchiesi’s notion of “future reflexive”, whereby a text is made to foreshadow another text which was written earlier but depicts later events, applies to Seneca’s engagement with the Virgilian Andromache: “he ingeniously ‘prepares’ and ‘explicates’ her dysfunction, tracing out its origins in the wrenching and traumatic events of Troy’s demise.”²⁷ The half-lines take this notion a step further, as we witness not only the general psychological aetiology of Andromache’s behaviour but the specific phrase with its specific metrical form that told her of her son’s death and that she recalled all those years later in Buthrotum. Indeed, it is tempting to see this in terms of the extreme self-consciousness of Seneca’s characters. This self-consciousness extends to an almost metatextual level where they are aware of their own earlier literary instantiations, as in Wilamowitz’s famous *bon mot* that Seneca’s Medea had read Euripides.²⁸ Here, Seneca pushes the notion even further. He does not merely suggest that Andromache remembers the Messenger’s words from her notional lived experience, as constructed by a continuum of the two texts. He would have us believe that Virgil’s Andromache had read Seneca.

Following One’s Destiny with Aeneas and Tantalus

The second example of Seneca’s engagement with a Virgilian half-line forms a marked contrast with the first. The mechanics of the allusion are different and its ramifications less multifaceted, but its thematic implications are no less complex and profound. Towards the end of the prologue of *Thyestes*, the Fury overcomes

²⁶ A. Hui, “The Textual City: Epic Walks in Virgil, Lucan, and Petrarch”, *CRJ* 3 (2011) 148–165, at 154.

²⁷ Zissos, *loc. cit.* (n. 14) 201, citing A. Barchiesi, “Future Reflexive: Two Modes of Allusion and Ovid’s *Heroides*”, *HSCPh* 95 (1993) 333–365.

²⁸ U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, (ed.), *Griechische Tragödien*, vol. 3 (Berlin 1919) 162: “diese Medea hat Euripides gelesen”. Cf. Trinacty, *loc. cit.* (n. 3) 20: “Seneca’s characters often seem aware of their own intertextual life, and this leads to a bifurcation of their roles, in which they appear to remember their past literary feelings and actions, and even attempt to model their behavior according to these past accounts.”

the reluctance of Tantalus' ghost to inspire *furor* in his grandchildren by a combination of external and internal torture (*Thy.* 96–100):

*Quid ora terres uerbere et tortos ferox
minaris angues? quid famem infixam intimis
agitas medullis? flagrat incensum siti
cor et perustis flamma uisceribus micat.
sequor.*

Why do you frighten my face with the lash and fiercely
threaten twisted snakes? Why do you stir up the hunger fixed
in my inmost marrow? Enflamed by thirst, my heart
burns and a flame darts at my scorched entrails.
I follow.

Critics have had less to say about this half-line as a half-line, though Geiger again notes a mimetic effect, this time of its following the longer speech that precedes it.²⁹ Boyle argues that the “truncation” of the trimeter “augments the line’s rhetorical force” and “increases the line’s memorability”, adding parenthetically “as well as being in itself thematically significant”, though it is not entirely clear what he means by this, unless it refers to Tantalus’ dismemberment of Pelops and Atreus’ of Thyestes’ sons.³⁰ Equally enigmatic but perhaps slightly more suggestive is Tarrant’s comment that “the isolated *sequor* [...] depicts Tantalus’ complete subservience to the Fury.”³¹ Certainly the solitary iamb, both visually on the page and echoing around the theatre or recitation-hall in the subsequent silence, is strongly evocative of physical smallness and interpersonal humility. Where the half-line in *Troades* drew attention to its own curtailment and lack of fulfilment, that in *Thyestes* focuses, not on what is lacking, but on the diminutive and subordinated quality of what little is there. Combined with Geiger’s mimesis – though treating it as less “amusing” – we have Tantalus’s half-line symbolizing his self-abasement as a humble follower of the Fury’s commands.

So much for the intrinsic effects of the half-line’s truncation, but what of its intertextuality with Virgil? It is worth noting that *sequor* may also serve as a self-conscious signal of its own intertextuality, “following” its literary predecessor, as Trinacty suggests Cassandra does in *Agamemnon*.³² Yet, while the half-line in

²⁹ Geiger, *loc. cit.* (n. 11) 179: “it is an amusing idea of Seneca’s to have the half-line *sequor* ‘follow’ a longer utterance by Tantalus right before the Fury becomes the speaker; it is as if it were the line itself that spoke.”

³⁰ A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Seneca: Thyestes* (Oxford 2017) 140 ad loc.

³¹ R. J. Tarrant (ed.), *Seneca: Thyestes* (Atlanta 1985) 103 ad loc.

³² Trinacty, *loc. cit.* (n. 3), 207 (original emphasis): “she repeats the injunction *te sequor* (‘I follow you’ *Ag.* 742, 747) before mentioning members of her family (Priam, Hector, Troilus, and Deiphobus), but one must also understand that Seneca is *following* Vergil’s *Aeneid*.” He cites I. Peirano, “*Non subripendi causa sed palam mutuandi*: Intertextuality and Literary Deviancy between Law, Rhe-

Troades (and indeed Cassandra's speech in *Agamemnon*) has a direct link with the *Aeneid* through its shared characters and mythological subject-matter, there is no such content-based common ground between *Thyestes* and Virgil's epic. The connection here is forged by the memorability of the source text (again), a close verbal echo, and – if we may be permitted the virtuous circle which is fundamental to intertextuality – the thematic correlation which is both generated by and in turn reinforces the allusion. The Virgilian half-line to which Seneca is alluding comes at the conclusion of Aeneas' defence of his decision to abandon Dido (4.351–361):

*“me patris Anchisae, quotiens umentibus umbris
nox operit terras, quotiens astra ignea surgunt,
admonet in somnis et turbida terret imago;
me puer Ascanius capitisque iniuria cari,
quem regno Hesperiae fraudo et fatalibus aruis.
nunc etiam interpres diuum Ioue missus ab ipso
(testor utrumque caput) celeris mandata per auras
detulit: ipse deum manifesto in lumine uidi
intransem muros uocemque his auribus hausi.
desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis:
Italiam non sponte sequor.”*

“The ghost of my father Anchises, whenever with damp shadows
night covers the earth, whenever fiery stars rise,
warns me in my sleep and agitatedly frightens me;
the boy Ascanius and the injustice to his dear self trouble me,
whom I am cheating of a kingdom in Hesperia and the fields that are his destiny.
Now the messenger of the gods too, sent by Jupiter himself,
(I swear by both our heads) has brought down commands through the swift
breezes: I myself saw the god in clear light
entering the walls and I drank in his words with these ears.
Cease to inflame me and yourself with your complaints:
Not of my own will do I follow Italy.”

This half-line does not possess the absolute uniqueness of 3.340 as the only grammatically incomplete instance, but it shares its status as a subjectively effective and objectively oft-quoted and admired one. In antiquity, Servius Danielis went so far as to consider its incompleteness as a deliberate rhetorical choice and some modern critics have concurred.³³ Whether considered deliberate or accidental, its

toric, and Literature in Roman Imperial Culture”, *ALPh* 134 (2013) 83–100, at 85, for this connotation of *sequi*.

³³ Serv. Dan. *ad Verg. Aen.* 4.361: *et oratorie ibi finiuit, ubi uis argumenti constitit*. (“and he finished there rhetorically, where the force of the argument came to an end.”) Lenz, *loc. cit.* (n. 1) 167: “he could have added very easily something like *sed fata requirunt* or *sed numina cogunt*, but at the same time, when writing it, he would have destroyed the strong effect of the four concise words and would have unnecessarily enlarged the implications of *non sponte*. In such a case it was next to impossible to find a way out”.

effectiveness as it stands has been widely recognized. Austin quotes Irvine saying “This unfinished line nobody, I suppose, would wish to see completed.” while Pease cites a range of laudatory comments.³⁴ More recently Fratantuono endorsed Irvine’s opinion and added, “Virgil certainly wanted it noticed, and it is probably one of the ‘deliberate’ hemstichs in the poem.”³⁵ As with Witton’s notion of Andromache’s choking emotion, it does not matter whether or not we accept the interpretations of Servius, Irvine, or Fratantuono. Their importance lies in their being empirical evidence of how the half-line could be and has been received. If the incompleteness of Seneca’s trimeter prompted his audience to think of Virgilian half-lines, this would surely be one of the most likely to come to mind.

Aen. 4.361 is, then, at least as memorable as 3.340 – arguably more so – and while *Tro.* 1103 evoked the latter semantically by means of synonyms, *Thy.* 100 contains a direct, if brief, verbal echo of the former. Tantalus’ *sequor* precisely replicates Aeneas’ *sequor*. Of course, it is only a single word, lacking the distinctiveness furnished by a collocation of several words. It is also a relatively common word, though, in this first person singular present indicative form, it only occurs on four other occasions in the *Aeneid* (three of them concentrated within just over fifty lines of book 2) and eleven in Senecan tragedy (including one significant intratext from *Thyestes* itself).³⁶ Nevertheless, when Seneca’s audience is prompted by his half-line to think of Virgilian half-lines and 4.361 is among the memorable instances that come to mind, the exact echo produces a strong intertextual effect. That effect is compounded by the fact that each stands as the last word before the truncation of its respective line. Virgil’s *non sponte* is not evoked by a directly equivalent adverbial phrase. Instead, Seneca expands the concise expression of unwillingness into over thirty lines conveying Tantalus’ non-volition: he is fleeing back to his Underworld torments as preferable to inspiring *furor* in his descendants (68–83), he should suffer rather than serve as a punishment and plans to prevent rather than cause new crimes (86–95), and it is only the Fury’s torture of him with whip, snakes, hunger, and thirst that suddenly compel him to comply (96–99). Tantalus does not need to say *non sponte*. His unwillingness has been made totally clear at length and, when Seneca’s audience hear *sequor* and think of Virgil’s half-line, they can supply *non sponte* for themselves.

Although Tantalus’ ghost does not share mythological common ground with Aeneas in the same way as Astyanax does with Ascanius, and Andromache with her later (but textually earlier) self, there remains a close similarity between the situational and thematic contexts of *Thy.* 100 and *Aen.* 4.361. As we have just seen,

³⁴ R. G. Austin (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Oxford 1955) 113, quoting A. L. Irvine (ed.), *The Fourth Book of Virgil’s Aeneid: On the Loves of Dido and Aeneas* (Oxford 1924); A. S. Pease (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Oxford 1935) 313.

³⁵ L. Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained: A Reading of Virgil’s Aeneid* (Lanham 2007) 112–113.

³⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 2.701, 737, 754, 9.21; Sen. *Tro.* 993, *Med.* 953, *Phaed.* 1240, *Oed.* 698, *Ag.* 742, 747, *Thy.* 489, *Phoen.* 40 (*bis*), 76.

Tantalus is compelled against his will by the supernatural intervention of the divine Fury. In the verses preceding his half-line, Aeneas enumerates the forces acting upon him and compelling him to follow Italy against his will. The ghost of Anchises terrifies (*terret*, 4.353) him, as the Fury does Tantalus (*terres*, 96). The fact that a goddess acts upon the Senecan ghost as the Virgilian ghost acts upon a live mortal articulates the way in which the tragedy parallels the impact of the Fury on Tantalus with that of Tantalus on Atreus and Thyestes. Aeneas is also compelled by the visitation of Mercury, a messenger sent from above by Jupiter himself, the quintessence of masculine, Olympian rationality, a quality of which the Fury's feminine, chthonic *furor* stands as a grotesque parody.³⁷ Just as Aeneas' immediate (irrational) reaction to Mercury's first epiphany is to burn to run away in flight (*ardet abire fuga*, 4.281), so Tantalus's first reaction to the Fury's commands is to seek flight (*fugas*, 69) and run away (*abire*, 70).³⁸ In the complex interplay of similarity and difference, parallelism and perversion, Aeneas' impulse is to run away from Carthage in accordance with Mercury's warning, while Tantalus' is to run away from the deity giving the command. Yet both are acting in accordance with a fundamental sense of *pietas*, Aeneas obeying the gods and preserving his son's patrimony, Tantalus refusing to infect his grandsons with fratricidal frenzy. The Fury's torture of inflaming (*incensum*, 98) Tantalus's heart and burning (*perustis*, 99) his entrails with physical and psychological thirst combines the sensation of burning (*ardet*, 4.281) that Aeneas feels after encountering Mercury with the inflammation (*incendere*, 4.360) that he begs Dido to cease inflicting on him and on herself with her complaints. The narrative, thematic, and even verbal connections between Tantalus' and Aeneas' determination to follow are manifold, but far from straightforward, not only complicating the ghost's reaction to the Fury, but problematizing Aeneas' own reaction to the various forces, human and supernatural, that act upon him.

Aeneas' compliance with the will of Jupiter, as conveyed to him by Mercury, is not merely an act of conventional religious piety. As Gill puts it, "the relationship between the orthodox Stoic conception of Fate and that of the *Aeneid* is, famously, complex".³⁹ Yet there is a strong and recurrent sense that the will of the Virgilian Jupiter, the providential plan of the Stoic Zeus, and the nebulous concept of Fate that overlaps with both, are intimately interrelated and sometimes identical. This wider notion that Aeneas is – or believes he is – following not merely divine will but the Stoic conception of Fate is implied more specifically by his use of the word *sequor*. Edwards notes that "the use of *sequi*, *uiam*, or *iter* suggest the

37 On the gendering of *furor*, submission, and appetite in the play, see C. Littlewood, "Seneca's *Thyestes*: The Tragedy with no Women?", *MD* 38 (1997) 57–86.

38 On the irrationality of Aeneas' response to Mercury's rational warning, see G. Zanker, "*Paremus ouantes*: Stoicism and Human Responsibility in *Aeneid* 4", *CQ* 66 (2016) 580–597, at 587.

39 C. Gill, "Reactive and Objective Attitudes: Anger in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hellenistic Philosophy", *YCS* 32 (2003) 208–228, at 220.

same underlying insinuation of compliance with Fate, even though the obvious reference is to something else” and, with respect to 4.361, adds that “the sense includes a feeling akin to that of Cleanthes’s οὐδὲν ἤττον ἔψομαι.”⁴⁰ Although it is Italy that Aeneas is following, in doing so he is following the will of Fate. When Tantalus complies with the will of the Fury, his use of the same word carries the same associations: “*sequor* is what the sage should say when facing destiny, since it is better to follow willingly than be dragged.”⁴¹ The unwilling submission to compulsion is repeated in act three, in a scene which replicates this supernatural minidrama on the human level. Despite all his (Stoic) professions of indifference to wealth and power, Thyestes submits to the (innocent) temptations of his son, another Tantalus, to accept Atreus’ invitation to return to the Argive palace: *ego uos sequor, non duco*.⁴² Both Tantalus’ ghost and Thyestes profess a very Stoic submission to follow a very unStoic path, and that paradox is intensified by the fractured echo of Aeneas’ Stoic submission at *Aen.* 4.361. But, beyond simple intensification, what further implications might the intertextuality have for Seneca’s audience?

The simplest approach is to treat the *Aeneid* as the “straight”, normative model – or at least to allow Seneca tendentiously to oversimplify it as such, as his nephew Lucan and many other Imperial poets did – in relation to which *Thyestes* stands as a grotesque or parodic perversion. Aeneas’ following of Fate by following Italy could then be read as a normative and positive Stoic action that is warped in a distorting mirror into Tantalus’ agreement to sow bloodlust among his descendants.⁴³ The principle of reading *Thyestes* as a perversion of the *Aeneid* can easily be extended from the interpretation of the single moment of Tantalus’ submission to that of the tragedy’s entire *Weltanschauung*. Perhaps Tantalus is not using the language of Stoic submission to Fate ironically and antiphrastically to indicate his submission to something radically different from Fate. Perhaps, in the Stoic nightmare of Senecan tragedy, Fate itself is something radically different from what it is in the providential dream of Virgilian epic.⁴⁴ As Schiesaro contin-

40 M. W. Edwards, “The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the *Aeneid*”, *Phoenix* 14 (1960) 151–165, at 152. Cf. Zanker, *loc. cit.* (n. 38) 588–590.

41 Schiesaro, *loc. cit.* (n. 20) 29.

42 *Thy.* 489. On the parallelism of the two scenes, see A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (Abingdon 1997) 50–51; G. Mader, “*Hoc quod uolo / me nolle*: Counter-Volition and Identity Management in Senecan Tragedy”, *Pallas* 95 (2014) 125–161, at 153; D. Konstan, “When Reason Surrenders its Authority: Thyestes’ Approach to Atreus’ Palace”, in S. Frangoulidis/S. Harrison/G. Manuwald (eds.), *Roman Drama and its Contexts* (Berlin 2016) 411–416.

43 Though with no reference to the intertext, cf. Boyle, *loc. cit.* (n. 30) 141 ad loc.: “The Ghost’s *sequor* seems to be a parodic inversion of Stoic behaviour, as he follows the very aspects of human nature which Stoicism condemned: appetite, lust, desire.”

44 For a new approach to Stoicism in Senecan tragedy, treating it as a sort of ‘meta-Stoicism’ that dramatizes the failures of philosophising figures and encourages the audience to take philosophy more seriously, see J. Stevens, “Senecan ‘Meta-Stoicality’: In the Cognitive Grasp of Atreus”, *CQ* 68 (2018) 573–590, esp. 576–581 on *Thyestes*.

ues his discussion of Tantalus' *sequor*, "[n]aturam sequi – 'following Nature' – is the paramount principle of a truly Stoic life: Tantalus does after all respect this intimation, his true nature being germane, rather unsurprisingly, to that of the Fury. The Fury's power is the power of unavoidable destiny."⁴⁵ Certainly the malign predetermination that seems to doom both Tantalus and Thyestes to bring about the horrific destruction of their offspring, despite their best intentions to the contrary, raises difficult questions about the nature and morality of Fate in the world of the play.⁴⁶ From here, it is but a small step to ask the same questions about Virgil's Fate as about Seneca's. Aeneas' submission to Fate leads directly and rapidly to the death of Dido (even though that death was against *her* fate), and when he finally reaches the Italy that he is following, a bloody proto-civil war will ensue, in which many others will die before their time: Euryalus, Pallas, Lausus, Camilla, Turnus, to name only a few. Tantalus' following of Fate may well be inextricable, as Schiesaro suggests, from following his own appetitive, impious, murderous nature, despite his struggles against it. Yet Aeneas' own fulfilment of his manifest destiny is troublingly bound up with uncontrolled outbursts of passion, from burning to leave Carthage to being inflamed by frenzy to kill Turnus. This is not the place to engage in any detail at all with well-worn questions of optimism and pessimism in the *Aeneid*. However, Tantalus' *sequor* need not have simply prompted a sense of contrast in Seneca's audience, "how different from the home-life of our own dear Aeneas!" Seneca's fractured echo of *Aen.* 4.361, with the silent ellipse that its truncated metre conjures in the reader's and the audience's minds, leaves a space for speculation for what will follow in turn from Tantalus' and Aeneas' following of Fate.

Echoless Fractures?

Two of the four half-lines in Senecan tragedy can therefore be seen to engage intertextually – in strikingly different ways – with two of the most memorable and renowned half-lines from the *Aeneid*, and moreover to engage with them *as* half-lines. What of the other two? It must be acknowledged that their relationship to specific Virgilian half-lines is not remotely as clear and may well be so faint that it is implausible that any member of Seneca's audience would have made the connection.

⁴⁵ Schiesaro, *loc. cit.* (n. 20) 29.

⁴⁶ On Stoic determinism in *Thyestes*, see esp. C. Wiener, "Stoic Tragedy: A Contradiction in Terms?", in M. Garani/D. Konstan (eds.), *The Philosophizing Muse: The Influence of Greek Philosophy on Roman Poetry* (Newcastle 2014) 187–217, at 210–213.

Phaedra's classic expression of the paradox of unwilling volition in her involuntary desire for her stepson Hippolytus climaxes powerfully in a half-line (*Phaed.* 602–605):⁴⁷

*Sed ora coeptis transitum uerbis negant;
uis magna uocem mittit et maior tenet.
uos testor omnis, caelites, hoc quod uolo
me nolle.*

But my mouth denies passage to the words that have been begun;
a great force sends out my voice and a greater one holds it back.
I call you all to witness, gods above, that this thing that I want
I do not want.

In addition to the general augmentation of “rhetorical force” that Boyle again notes here, the truncated line produces an effective mimesis of Phaedra's struggle between speech and silence, as the great force thrusts three syllables out of her mouth but the greater prevents the escape of more.⁴⁸ The half-line in *Phaedra* is thus at least as expressive and effective in itself as those in *Troades* and *Thyestes*, and this can plausibly be taken as inspired by or even serving as a generalized homage to the expressive and effective half-lines in the *Aeneid*. Does it also allude directly to any specific Virgilian example?

The notion of a conflict between will and duty perhaps recalls again Aeneas' *Italiam non sponte sequor*. There would be a certain piquancy to the conflict's being articulated by a figure so close intertextually, not to Aeneas, but to Dido.⁴⁹ Moreover, there would be a characteristic Senecan perversion in the deployment of the half-line, not as an expression of the subordination of will to duty, but as a step on the path to sacrificing everything to desire. Some case could even be made for an echo of Aeneas' swearing by his and Dido's lives (*testor utrumque caput*, 4.357) in Phaedra's swearing by all the gods above (*uos testor omnis, caelites*), though *testor* does occur on eight other occasions in Virgil and nine in Senecan tragedy, and Phaedra's words more closely recall Sinon's false oath to justify his “betrayal” of the Greeks (*uos, aeterni ignes, et non uiolabile uestrum | testor numen*, 2.154–155).

⁴⁷ On volition in this speech, see T. Fuhrer, “Wollen oder Nicht(-)Wollen: Zum Willenskonzept bei Seneca”, in J. Müller/R. Hofmeister Pich (eds.), *Wille und Handlung in der Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin 2010) 69–84, at 78–80; Mader, *loc. cit.* (n. 42) 138–140.

⁴⁸ A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Seneca: Phaedra* (Leeds 1987) 172. Cf. Schmidt, *loc. cit.* (n. 12) 337: “In der *Phaedra* endet die Aussage der Königin [...] über ihren inneren Zwiespalt mit dem Versanfang *me nolle* und Abbruch in der Trihemimeres. Die restlichen zwei Drittel des Verses, bevor Hippolytus wieder das Wort ergreift [...], sind Pause im Sinn der Wortlosigkeit, des Nicht-weiter-sprechen-könnens, des Ringens, können aber auch in stummem Spiel ausgefüllt werden.” T. D. Kohn, *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy* (Ann Arbor 2013) 72 unnecessarily banalizes the effect: “Phaedra [...] is so flustered that she leaves line 605 incomplete”.

⁴⁹ Dido and Phaedra: Fantham, *loc. cit.* (n. 3) 1–8.

However, the connections between the two passages are far more tenuous than in the cases of *Tro.* 1103 and *Thy.* 100, and, apart from a fairly broad thematic similarity, the (already established) memorability of the source text, and a faint verbal echo, the allusion satisfies none of the criteria that we have set. There is neither the commonality of characters and events that Astyanax' death and Andromache's enquiry about Ascanius possess, nor the close correspondence of situation between Tantalus' and Aeneas' unwilling response to an explicit supernatural intervention. Phaedra does earlier blame her unnatural passion, like that of Pasiphae and Ariadne, on Venus' revenge upon the descendants of Sol for his revelation of her affair with Mars (124–128). However, this vengeance is cast more in the mould of an ongoing hereditary curse than of an epiphanic intervention and, in marked contrast to the Aphrodite of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the goddess appears neither onstage nor in a character's narration.⁵⁰ The status of *testor* as a recognizable verbal echo is, as has been observed, dubious at best and, more importantly, is not in the half-line itself. It could be argued that *me nolle* offers a reasonably close equivalence to *non sponte*, inevitably less close than the verbatim repetition of *sequor*, but comparable to that between *Troia* and *in media Priami regna*. However, with the paucity of other cues, it is doubtful whether the audience's mind would turn to 4.361 in the first place and hence be prompted to look for that equivalence. On balance, while the possibility of an allusion to *Aen.* 4.361 in *Phaed.* 605 cannot be ruled out, it is far less plausible that Seneca's audience would make the connection with this of all the fifty-eight Virgilian half-lines.

The final half-line in Senecan tragedy – not only in the arbitrary sequence of this argument but in the most probable relative dating of the plays themselves – comes at the end of the first act of *Phoenissae*, when the hitherto-suicidal Oedipus finally succumbs to his daughter Antigone's entreaties to live (*Phoen.* 308–319):

*unum hoc habet fortuna quo possim capi,
inuictus aliis: sola tu affectus potes
mollire duos, sola pietatem in domo
docere nostra. nil graue aut miserum est mihi
quod te sciam uoluisse; tu tantum impera:
hic Oedipus Aegaea transnabit freta
iubente te, flammisque quas Siculo uomit
de monte tellus igneos uoluens globos
excipiet ore seque serpenti offeret,
quae saeua furto nemoris Herculeo furit;
iubente te praebebit alitibus iecur,
iubente te uel uiuet.*

⁵⁰ See, however, R. Armstrong, *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry* (Oxford 2006) 294–298, for an argument that “divine presence and intervention continue to be manifest in a form which goes beyond a simple nod to convention, coming closer to the more traditional construct of the gods as powerful personalities exerting their influence.” (quoting from 295).

Fortune has this one thing by which I can be ensnared,
 invincible by the rest: you alone can soften my
 hard emotions, you alone can teach dutifulness in our
 household. Nothing is burdensome or wretched to me
 which I know that you have wanted; you only have to give the order:
 This Oedipus will swim across Aegean straits
 at your command, and the flames which the earth vomits
 from the Sicilian mountain, rolling fiery balls
 he will take in his mouth and offer himself to the serpent,
 which rages wildly at Hercules' theft from the grove;
 at your command he will offer his liver to birds,
 at your command he will even live.

This is an undeniably powerful and moving conclusion to the act, whether one reads it as straightforwardly positive or detects in the elegiac language of both Oedipus and earlier Antigone troubling intimations of the father–daughter incest that he himself fears.⁵¹ The half-line forms the climax, not only of the speech as in the other three cases, but of the entire act, since, although the *Phoenissae* famously lacks a chorus to provide punctuating odes, the entrance of the messenger marks a clear point of disjuncture. As such, it undeniably carries the rhetorical force that Boyle finds in all four examples. The brief simplicity of the solitary spondee *uiuet*, in parallel but also in contrast with the other immense – and elaborately described – labours that Oedipus would undertake at Antigone's bidding, reinforces the paradoxical, *para prosdokian* effect of this greatest and slightest of labours. However, it is harder to see any more developed mimetic effect comparable to Astyanax's truncation of his own sacrifice, Tantalus' humble submission, or Phaedra's (self-)silencing.

What of Virgil? The notion of yielding to another's will against one's own is once more present, but there are surely insufficient other cues here for the audience to think yet again of *Italiam non sponte sequor*. The underlying ideas of living and commanding, and the more specific language of *uiuo* and *iubeo*, all are signally absent from the fifty-eight known Virgilian half-lines, nor are there any obvious candidates elsewhere in the *Aeneid* where a post-Neronian interpolator may have completed a line left incomplete in the text Seneca read. The presence of Eriphyle

51 *nullum facere iam possum scelus? | possum miser, praedico – discede a patre, | discede, uirgo. timeo post matrem omnia.* ("Can I no longer commit any crime? I can, wretch that I am, I proclaim it – go away from your father, go away, maiden. After my/your mother, I fear everything." 48–50), with Frank, *loc. cit.* (n. 5) 161; L. D. Ginsberg, "Don't Stand so Close to Me: The *Pietas* of Antigone in Seneca's *Phoenissae*", *TAPhA* 145 (2015) 199–230, esp. 222–226 on Oedipus' final speech. G. Mader, "*Regno pectus attonitum furit*: Power, Rhetoric and Self-division in Seneca's *Phoenissae*", in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XV* (Bruxelles 2010), 287–310, at 303–307, also notes the implication of incest (306) but focuses on the troubling continuity of Oedipus' character, despite his ostensible capitulation. T. Hirschberg (ed.), *Senecas Phoenissen* (Berlin 1989) 91, notes the "Topoi der antiken Liebeslegie" but not the incestuous overtones.

and Evadne in the *Lugentes Campi* (6.445–447) is the closest the *Aeneid* comes to an overlap in characters with the Theban cycle. We are left then with a more general contextual and thematic association, probably the weakest grounds for establishing an allusion without further support. Nevertheless, there is one possible candidate in the form of Aeneas' description of Polyphemus (3.655–661):

*Vix ea fatus erat, summo cum monte uidemus
ipsum inter pecudes uasta se mole mouentem
pastorem Polyphemum et litora nota petentem,
monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.
trunca manum pinus regit et uestigia firmat;
lanigerae comitantur oues, ea sola uoluptas
solamenque mali.*

[Achaemenides] had scarcely spoken, when we saw on the top of the mountain himself moving among the flocks with his immense bulk, the shepherd Polyphemus, and making for the familiar shores, a monster to be shuddered at, shapeless, huge, the light taken away from him. A lopped pine guides his hand and steadies his steps; wool-bearing sheep accompany him, that sole pleasure and solace for his misfortune.

The image – whether in the reader's mind or before the eyes of the theatre audience – of a blind figure stumbling across the landscape could conceivably forge a connection between Oedipus and Polyphemus. Both are monsters. Aeneas calls the cyclops one shortly before the half-line, in a line whose own metrical peculiarities render it mimetic of its subject's deformity.⁵² Oedipus, echoing his description by Laius' ghost in *Oedipus* and combining it with the quintessentially Senecan *maius*-motif, declares earlier in *Phoenissae* itself that he should take the place of the Sphinx on her rock, since he is a "greater monster".⁵³ The unexpected pathos with which these monstrous characters are depicted rests in large measure on their being almost entirely destitute and having only one remaining companion or solace. Oedipus declares, with anaphora, that Antigone alone (*sola* [...] *sola*, 309–310) can soften hardened emotions and teach piety to his household. Polyphemus' woolly sheep are alone (*sola*, 3.660) a source of pleasure for him and

52 Ll. Morgan, *Musa Pedestris: Metre and Meaning in Roman Verse* (Oxford 2010) 330–331: "a line lacking definition illustrates a creature whose monstrous ugliness fundamentally consists in being misshapen – a lack of that *forma*, 'shape', 'arrangement', 'beauty', which is equally a quality of a passage of metrical language."

53 *implicitum malum magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua. Oed.* 640–641; *hic siste patrem. dira ne sedes uacet, | monstrum repone maius. Phoen.* 120–121. On the *maius*-motif, see B. Seidensticker, "Maius solito: Senecas *Thyestes* und die *tragoedia rhetorica*", *AA* 31 (1985) 116–136; Schiesaro, *loc. cit.* (n. 20) esp. 34–35; R. Cowan, "Bloated Buskins: Seneca and the Satiric Idea of Tragedy", *Ramus* 46 (2017) 75–117, at 94–97.

there is surely an element of wordplay in *solamen*, the sole consolation.⁵⁴ More tenuously, one could even note that Etna (*Siculo [...] monte*, 314–315) is both one of the terrors that Oedipus would face at Antigone's command and the prominent backdrop of Virgil's Polyphemus episode.⁵⁵

Against these possible connections stand a number of objections. There is an inconcinnity even in the apparent similarities between the passages that feels less like the creative friction of *aemulatio* than a series of mismatches and near-misses. Polyphemus, though wretched, is not suicidal, whereas ending his life is Oedipus' monomaniacal obsession throughout the first act of *Phoenissae* and especially in this speech. Unlike Polyphemus' relationship with his sheep, Oedipus, perhaps surprisingly, does not find Antigone a source of pleasure or consolation. Even if the audience could interpret Oedipus' disturbingly eroticized words as somehow expressing an underlying idea that it is *uoluptas* and *solamen* that she offers him, the half-line itself does not refer to that notion in any way. Even with the half-line from *Phaedra*, it was (just) possible to see *me nolle* as echoing *non sponte*. Not only does *iubente te uel uiuet* not express the same concept as *solamenque mali*, but the two ideas are in conflict. If Antigone were a consolation to Oedipus for his misfortune, then her very existence and companionship would spontaneously reconcile him to continue living, with no explicit intervention on her part. If she has to command him to live, then it is not the consolation he derives from her but the devotion he feels towards her that compels him to go on living despite his (disconsolate) desire to die. Finally, it would be surprising if as sensitive a reader of Virgil as Seneca should make the *sermo amatorius* of elegy the keynote of Oedipus' speech if he were encouraging his audience to think of the partly epic, partly bucolic (*pastorem*, 3.657), but in no way elegiac Virgilian Polyphemus. As with *Phaedra* and *Aeneas*, the allusion is not impossible, but there are many arguments against it and, crucially, few strong cues that would encourage the audience to make the initial connection and then scaffold the other elements upon it.

It cannot convincingly be argued that either *Phaed.* 605 or *Phoen.* 319 satisfies the criteria that we have set for a plausible Senecan allusion to one of the fifty-eight half-lines in the *Aeneid*. There remain some tempting parallels and it may be felt that those criteria set the bar too high. However, if we accept that neither alludes to a specific Virgilian half-line, we must consider the implications for Seneca's broader allusive practice regarding these metrical oddities in the *Aeneid*. The case for specific allusions in *Tro.* 1103 and *Thy.* 100 has been made in detail and is by no means undermined by their absence in *Phaed.* 605 or *Phoen.* 319. Indeed, the great difference between the means and ends employed in those two instances demonstrates the variety of ways in which Seneca could engage with Virgilian

⁵⁴ Already at *Isid.* 10.38 and see J. J. O'Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor 1996) 147.

⁵⁵ 3.570–587, 674, 678. Note esp. *globos flammaram* (3.574) ~ *flammasque [...] igneos [...] globos* (314–315).

half-lines. This in itself makes it less surprising that one of those ways is to engage, not with a specific half-line, but with the phenomenon more generally. It might be felt that the lack of intertextual connection with a specific half-line makes it less clear that Seneca thought or wanted his audience to think of Virgilian half-lines at all when hearing *Phaed.* 605 nor *Phoen.* 319, as opposed to treating their truncation as an audacious metrical effect with no intertextual associations. However, the close and meaningful engagement with specific Virgilian half-lines in *Tro.* 1103 and *Thy.* 100 combines with the absence of any comparable examples in other poets to make it far more likely that, even in *Phaedra* and *Phoenissae*, Seneca thought – and expected his audience to think – of half-lines as a distinctively Virgilian formal feature.

Correspondence: Robert Cowan, The University of Sydney, School of Humanities, Brennan MacCallum Building A18, NSW 2006, Australia, bob.cowan@sydney.edu.au