Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama

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We now recognize that Seneca's plays must be judged not as poor "Greek" tragedy but as a different type of ancient drama. Shaped by the Greek tradition, his drama nevertheless has its own orientation and points of strength and weakness coming essentially from the fusion of rhetoric and Stoicism.[1]   Much more work must be done to analyze the fusion of these and other elements, and to show the relationship between form and thought.   One aspect concerns us here: what is the relationship between Seneca's figurative language and the system of his dramaturgy?

Study of dramatic imagery has provided fresh insights into the inner workings of meaning and feeling in such tragedies as *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Bacchae*, and *King Lear*.[2]   When this analysis is applied to Senecan melodrama, pitfalls abound; for the heavily figured, intense style throws off a welter of figurative effects like clouds of sparks.   We can easily fall into over-subtle analysis or confusion.   So we must observe the criteria that data, to be considered significant, should be extensive and clearly related to demonstrable dramatic ideas.   Despite this difficulty, systems of figurative language are clearly present in Seneca. They greatly illuminate the themes of his drama.[3]

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[1] For the growing recognition that Stoicism shaped the nature of the plays fundamentally, see: T. S. Eliot, two essays (London 1927) *Seneca in Elizabethan Translation*, and *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca*; Berthe M. Marti, "Seneca's Tragedies: A New Interpretation," *TAPA* 76 (1945) 216–45; M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, Vol. 1 (Göttingen 1948) 324–27; N. T. Pratt, "The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama," *TAPA* 79 (1948) 1–11; also "Tragedy and Moralism: Euripides and Seneca," in Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz, *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective* (Carbondale [Illinois] 1961) 189–203; Kurt von Fritz, *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* (Berlin 1962) especially 21–32; Denis Henry and B. Walker, "Seneca and the *Agamemnon*: Some Thoughts on Tragic Doom," *CP* 58 (1963) 1–10.

[2] Robert F. Goheen, *The Imagery of Sophocles'* Antigone (Princeton 1951); Bernard M. W. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven 1957) 110–58; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Euripides and Dionysus* (Cambridge 1948); R. B. Heilman, *This Great Stage* (Baton Rouge 1948).

[3] I am grateful to Professor Berthe M. Marti, University of North Carolina and to

The *Hercules Furens* is a good starting point because it contains clear evidence of the dramatist's technique and its purposes. One prominent feature is massive systems of words expressing abstract ideas. These ideas appear in pairs of opposites, like the notion of "control" coupled with "non-control" or "un-restraint," and the concept of "security" opposed to various forms of "insecurity." Such categories are not images in the usual sense, for they are not specific figures of concrete implications. Nor are they merely poetic atmosphere or decoration, being functionally related to other, concrete images and to the dramatic themes. Verbal systems of this abstract type will here be considered an extended form of image and will be termed "conceptual image" and "abstract idea" interchangeably.

In the *Hercules Furens* the conceptual image of control-unrestraint is very thick, averaging, if statistics are wanted, one occurrence in about every eight lines.[4] The high frequency is partially due, of course, to the theme of Hercules' madness, but

President Robert F. Goheen and Professor Robert D. Murray, Jr., Princeton University, for their constructive criticism in the early stages of working out some of the material presented here.

[4] We have tried to make the categories and items consistent, but some of the systems are too massive and generalized for exact recording. For simplicity, positive and negative uses of items are not usually distinguished. The text used is Peiper-Richter (Teubner [Leipzig 1902]).

Language of control includes *abstineo, arbiter, compesco, devinco, dominator, dominor, domitor, domo, guberno, indomitus, lenio, moderor, modus, mulceo, obtineo, parco, perdomo, potens, premo, rector, regno, rego, reprimo, sanus, tempero, teneo, terminus*; found in lines 5, 22, 33, 39, 51, 62, 68, 74, 120, 157, 177, 205–6, 267, 274–75, 290, 299–300, 304–5, 326, 332, 342–43, 352, 364, 384, 395, 400, 403–4, 411, 424–25, 435–36, 444, 459, 471, 515, 517, 519, 526, 575, 582, 592, 597, 599, 610, 616, 619, 623, 642, 658, 663, 690, 707–8, 730, 736, 739, 741–42, 745–47, 749, 768, 774, 802, 872, 884, 888, 903, 930, 937, 955, 974–75, 1015, 1018–19, 1066, 1078–79, 1119b, 1141, 1161, 1181, 1238, 1243, 1249, 1292, 1310, 1313–14, 1336. Unrestraint: *amens, demens, furo, furor, impetus, impotens, insanio, insanus, laxo, nimis, nimius, nimium, rabidus, rabiosus, rumpo, saevio, saevus, solvo, tumeo, tumesco, tumidus, tumultus, vesanus, violentus*; 8, 28, 35, 43, 57, 68, 79–80, 88, 98, 108–9, 120, 142, 171–72, 186, 202, 221, 237, 272, 285, 287, 290, 295, 313, 329, 350, 363, 384, 397, 416, 429, 454, 476, 551, 566, 579, 664, 673, 714, 738, 749, 758, 783, 797, 815, 820, 932, 936, 951, 955–56, 962, 966, 968, 975, 981, 984, 991, 993, 1000, 1005, 1009, 1021, 1026, 1033, 1049, 1053, 1063–64, 1082, 1091–92, 1095, 1098, 1123, 1134, 1166, 1180, 1219–21, 1226, 1232, 1240, 1244, 1254–55, 1261, 1274, 1280, 1324, 1342.

Opposites are often paired: 68 (*regno; tumeo*), 120 (*rego; furo*), 290 (*erumpo; terminus*), 363–64 (*furor; teneo*), 384 (*dominor; tumidus*), 663–64 (*premo; solvo*), 738–39 (*impotens; potens*), 749 (*saevus; domo*), 936–37 (*saevus; regno*), 955–56 (*perdomo; tumidus, impetus*), 974–75 (*sanus, compesco; demens, impetus*), 1180–81 (*impotens; dominator*), 1243–44 (*sanus; furor*).

examination of the same category in the other plays will show that the differences among the dramas are only a matter of degree.

The pattern signifies various aspects of control and its opposite, broadly defined. Many of the expressions have to do with physical possession or mastery and the like.[5] Others express release from restraint or force.[6] In a few instances, abstention from force[7] and the application of restraint[8] are involved. The notions of excess and limit appear in simple form now and again.[9] Of more immediate dramatic significance is the heavy use of terms describing physical violence and uncontrolled passion: *violentus, saevus, tumeo, tumidus, rabiosus, impetus, impotens, rabidus, demens, tumultus, saevio, amens, insanus, vesanus*;[10] and, above all, *furo* and *furor* denote the paroxysms of rage and insanity that give the title to the drama.[11] In contrast with all the wild violence, the dramatist reminds us that justice and controlling order exist in the universe:[12]

> O magne Olympi rector et mundi arbiter,
> iam statue tandem gravibus aerumnis modum
> finemque cladi.

Later we shall return to the point that the abstract idea is found in a variety of contexts: physical, mental, emotional, and cosmic. The apparent implication is that the forces of control and unrestraint operate in a whole world.

Many occurrences of the pattern might be considered commonplace language or mannerisms of Seneca's descriptive style, but they are embedded in the expression of an abstract idea that does

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[5] 5, 22, 33, 51, 62, 68, 74, 120, 157, 177, 267, 274–75, 299, 300, 304–5, 332, 342–43, 364, 384, 395, 400, 411, 424–25, 435–36, 444, 471, 515, 526, 582, 599, 610, 616, 619, 623, 658, 663, 690, 707–8, 736, 739, 741, 746–47, 768, 774, 802, 844, 884, 888, 903, 930, 937, 955, 1018–19, 1065, 1078–79, 1119b, 1161, 1181, 1232, 1238, 1292, 1310, 1336.

[6] 8, 57, 79–80, 142, 202, 237, 287, 416, 476, 566, 664, 673, 797, 962, 1000, 1063–64, 1342.

[7] 326, 404, 742, 745, 872, 1015, 1249, 1314.

[8] 352, 519, 642, 975, 1065.

[9] 35, 186, 295, 313, 579, 1026, 1226; 206, 290, 403, 1141.

[10] 28, 35, 43, 68, 88, 171–72, 221, 272, 285, 329, 350, 384, 397, 429, 454, 551, 714, 738, 749, 783, 932, 936, 951, 955–56, 966, 975, 981, 984, 993, 1021, 1033, 1082, 1092, 1095, 1123, 1166, 1180, 1219, 1221, 1255, 1274, 1280, 1324.

[11] 98, 108–9, 120, 363, 758, 815, 820, 968, 991, 1005, 1009, 1049, 1053, 1098, 1134, 1220, 1240, 1244, 1254, 1261.

[12] 205–7; see also 459, 516–17, 592–94, 597–98, 730.

have clear dramatic significance. Fully two-thirds of the word-groups used for ordinary or descriptive purposes are used also to define the nature of the violence and passionate emotion within the action of the play.[13] Non-dramatic and dramatic uses are joined inseparably.

We have called the language of violence and emotion "dramatic" because it helps to express the meaning of the action. Yet it performs this function very simply and indeed superficially. For the language occurs in self-exhortations to passion, or when a character describes his own action, or refers to the action of others or to some external condition. Equally simple in function are the few instances where characters of the play mention some aspect of cosmic order: in the passage given above Amphitryon appeals to Jupiter in Stoic terms as the *rector* and *arbiter* of the *mundus* who may limit and end pain; or Hercules asks pardon for having brought the impurity of the underworld (Cerberus) before the eyes of Apollo who as *lucis almae rector* directs the system of sunlight (592–94).

This conceptual image is, then, a simple verbal system diffusing the idea of control-unrestraint throughout the text. The whole system is dramatic in effect, for it creates a context where the action takes place. As a result, the action—the vengefulness of Juno, the tyranny of Lycus, Hercules' madness—is given the status of a destructive and negative force, contrasted with the positive force of control.

Of equal importance is the conceptual image "security-insecurity." The idea is conveyed by a highly varied terminology of fear, flight, uncertainty, change, wandering and related ideas, and their opposites.[14] Practically everybody and everything

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[13] Insofar as this distinction can be made: *teneo, obtineo,* "non-dramatic," 5, 22, 177, 305, 342, 364, 616, 623, 690, 747, 844, 884, 930, 1018, 1161, 1238; "dramatic," 274–75, 343, 1310. *domo, perdomo, indomitus, domitor,* 33, 39, 51, 299, 435, 444, 619, 749, 774, 802, 888, 903, 955; 1066, 1079. *devinco,* 62; 1078. *rumpo,* 79, 142, 287, 416, 1232; 57, 5,66, 1000. *premo, reprimo,* 157, 404, 424–25, 436, 471, 663, 736, 1019; 74, 267, 352, 642, 1078, 1292. *tumeo, tumidus,* 171, 221, 551, 955, 1092; 68, 384. *rabidus, rabiosus,* 172; 397. *solvo,* 202, 664, 1342; 237, 797, 1063–64. *saevio, saevus,* 272, 454, 783, 936, 1123, 1166; 28, 35, 88, 329, 981, 984, 1082, 1221, 1255, 1280. *potens, impotens,* 300, 738–39, 966, 1119b, 1180; 350. *parco,* 326, 742, 872; 1015, 1249, 1314. *furo, furor,* 363, 758, 815, 820; 108–9, 120, 968, 991, 1005, 1009, 1049, 1053, 1098, 1134, 1220, 1240, 1244, 1254, 1261. *dominor, dominator,* 658, 1181; 395. *tumultus,* 714, 1091; 1219. *violentus,* 932, 1324; 28, 43. *impetus,* 993; 285, 951, 956, 975, 1274.

[14] Security: *certus, firmamen, intrepidus, pax, quies, salus, securus, serenus, sospes, spero,*

shiver and shake. A young goat wanders about on unsteady legs (144–45); the frightful monsters subdued by Hercules (30–32, 224, etc.) were feared by him (45) and *not* feared by him (248). Lycus, an exile (274), is conscious of his insecure position as tyrant (341–42). Megara quakes before the return of Hercules (414–15, 418, etc.); Amphitryon trembles after his return (1298–1299). The memory of Hades shakes Theseus (650–51). He and Amphitryon turn away from Hercules when he returns to sanity (1173–74). Figures of fable—Cadmus (393), his daughters (758), Orpheus (573)—flee or wander about or hinder nature. The trees of Hades shudder (689).

Nor do the gods escape the turmoil. Juno, the very spirit of wild revenge and irrationality in the play, is terrified by Cerberus brought from Hades (61–63) and shifts her plans to destroy Hercules (112). Apollo has suffered exile and fear (452–55). In the combat between Hercules and Pluto, the god of death fears death (565). Even Jupiter, usually the serene source of order in the Stoic version of traditional mythology, had anxiety—if only in childhood (459–62)!

The idea is applied even more widely. In the world of physical nature, constellations wander, terrify, and flee (10–12, 126–27, 136). Change and fear affect islands, cities, rivers: Delos (15), Sicily (81), Thebes (259), the Euripus (377–78). The northern sea is at one season a passage for ships, at another a road for horsemen (540–41). The sun recoils from the sight of Cerberus (60–61), even as Cerberus shrinks from the sunlight (821–25);

spes, stabilis, tutus; 29, 118, 160b, 162, 175, 188, 197b, 199, 208, 220, 250, 277, 307, 326, 342, 345, 368, 375, 416–17, 438, 547, 622, 650–51, 747, 882, 926, 929, 1013, 1051, 1071, 1128–29, 1251, 1302. Insecurity: *anceps, cesso, dubito, dubius, effugio, erro, error, exilium, exterreo, extimesco, exul, fuga, fugax, fugio, fugo, horreo, horresco, horridus, incertus, labo, metuo, metus, mobilis, mora, moror, muto, oberro, pavefacio, paveo, pavidus, pavor, pertimeo, profugio, profugus, refugio, sollicitus, terreo, terribilis, terrificus, territo, terror, timeo, timidus, timor, tremesco, tremo, tremor, trepido, trepidus, vagor, vagus*; 10–12, 15, 30, 32, 45, 60–61, 63–64, 81–82, 91, 98, 101, 112, 126, 136, 144, 152, 163, 170, 184, 189, 224, 230, 248, 253, 259, 269, 274, 293, 314, 316, 341, 377, 393, 400, 414–15, 418, 435, 452–54, 461, 468, 502, 517, 533, 540, 553, 564–65, 573, 588, 601, 603, 615, 617, 640, 651, 655, 657, 670, 683, 685, 689, 693–94, 705, 726–27, 732, 758–59, 764–65, 773, 778, 783, 786, 792–95, 797, 804, 810, 836, 855, 868, 880, 891, 935, 941, 965, 977, 979, 981, 994, 996, 1000, 1004, 1009–10, 1012, 1022–23, 1033, 1042, 1044–45, 1056, 1059, 1075, 1092, 1096, 1129, 1146–47, 1155, 1171, 1173, 1189–90, 1193, 1215, 1220, 1223, 1237–38, 1241, 1253–54, 1256, 1259, 1283–84, 1298–99, 1304, 1307, 1311, 1319, 1321, 1331–32.

Opposites paired, 29–30 (*pax; horridus*), 188–89 (*certus; cesso*), 341–42 (*trepidus; salus*), 414–17 (*tremor, horreo; pax, intrepidus*), 650–51 (*securus, certus; horreo*), 1012–13 (*fuga; salus*), 1128–29 (*certus, tutus; fuga*).

the upper part of Hades is dimly lighted by the wavering glow of the sun in eclipse (670). The thunderbolts of Jupiter make men quake (517–18).

Human affairs and conditions are subject to many insecurities. The mariner is *dubius . . . vitae* (152–53). Inordinate hope and restless fear move aimlessly in cities (162–63). Public opinion is changeful (170). Men go to their fate in uncertainty (183–84). The whole anxious human throng wanders on the great earth (868) and is taught by Sleep to learn the long night of death (1075–76). Fear subdues law (253).

In the face of all this chaos, security has little place. True, tranquillity can be achieved by men who are pure and humble (160–61, 199–200), by the few who know how to use fleeting time (175–77); and Hercules has brought peace to the earth (250, 882). But peace has been rejected by Juno (29) and cynically defined by Lycus (342, 368). Hercules, welcomed by his father as the deliverer of the city (622), soon becomes the enemy of deliverance (1013). In the end, only pain is sure (1302).

From among the many other occurrences of the idea, one more will show the connection between the main action, the insane fit of Hercules, and our verbal pattern, or rather both of the patterns brought out so far. When Juno in the prologue decides to turn the invincible hero against himself, she marshals the forces of destruction (96–98): *Scelus* and *Impietas*—

> Errorque et in se semper armatus Furor—

Error and *Furor*: the abstractions of wandering Delusion and uncontrolled Passion.[15] We can now see that both of these forces are manifestations of abstract ideas spread through the text by language in systems. The ideas are applied to the whole scene of existence and thought: animals, gods, physical nature, the realm of fable, and man's emotional, intellectual, and social conditions. Seneca uses for his dramatic purposes a kind of metaphysical view of control and license, stability and chaos, particularly the negative conditions of license and chaos. Their destructive effect is so elemental that it can be expressed adequately only by analogy with great natural forces affecting existence pervasively.

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[15] Coupled again in 1096–98.

The analogy with natural forces becomes true metaphor in images of a second type. These use forces of nature concretely to represent action and character. "Fire" is the most significant one. Its function in the *Hercules Furens* is less fully developed than in some of the dramas, but the image is clear here and carries meanings characteristic of Seneca's manner.[16] Figurative use of the fiery element is of course particularly notable because of the role of the element in Stoicism, and raises interesting questions to be considered later.

The figure is well organized. Among the instances that appear purely descriptive at first glance, fire is associated with processes and conditions of nature and therefore with the gods: Juno is enraged because Hercules' fame spreads as far as the circuit of the sun's "torch" over the whole world (37–38); the light moves regularly from one African nation at dawn to the other African nation at sunset. Again, the chariot of Phoebus carries its fire to regions in sequence (593). Night, yielding to the rebirth of day, gathers in the fiery stars (126–27). The natural antagonism between snow and fire is used rhetorically by Megara to state her revulsion from marriage with Lycus (375). Jupiter's role as Thunderer is prominent (457–58, 598, 724–25). All these associations involve the notion of natural order, part of the Stoic orientation of the dramas. Thus the image of fire suggests the conception of rational order in the universe.

However, as in the conceptual images just seen, the negative meaning is by far the stronger: fire describes the nature and action of destructive passion. In a conventional way, the heated exchanges between Lycus and Megara refer to the marriage torch (346, 493, 496). The Lapiths were kindled to war by wine (779). The violence of Lycus is shown by his threats of burning (366–67, 507–8, 514).

Most significant is the relationship between fire and the madness of Hercules. It is constructed effectively, in stages. First comes the external motivation when Juno calls upon the Furies to inspire the crime. With their flaming hair scattering fire (87),

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[16] *aduro, ardeo, caminus, cremo, excoquo, fax, ferveo, fervidus, flagro, flamma, flammeus, flammifer, fulmen, fulmino, igneus, ignis, rogus, rutilus, succendo, taeda, torreo, vapor*; 38, 87, 100, 103, 105–6, 127, 218, 236, 242, 302, 346, 366, 375, 389, 457–58, 493, 496, 507–8, 514, 593, 598, 725, 779, 856, 911, 918, 933, 946, 948, 982–83, 986, 1022, 1060, 1205, 1217, 1233–34, 1236, 1287.

they are to brandish the fiery torch (100–1) and seize a great brand from a burning pyre (103). We are then prepared for the fact that the blazing violence of the Furies will become a force active within Hercules—transformed to psychotic state, so to speak—for the creatures are ordered to sear his mind with fire fiercer than the one raging in the forges of Aetna (105–6).

As the action begins, the conflagration subsides, but the linking of Hercules and fire is built up gradually, starting with apparently artless references to the fiery eyes of the snakes killed by him in infancy (218–19), to the sun-scorched regions where he went (236), and his use of fire in destroying Hydra (242). In the fourth act—Lycus has now been dispatched—Hercules prepares his sacrifice to Jupiter, and fire is involved conventionally here (911, 918). Irony now appears clearly as the hero, making prayers "worthy of Jupiter and himself," asks for an end of violence; one hope is that no fire will come from Jupiter in anger (932–33). Hercules, becoming insane, imagines chaos in the sky. The constellation of the Nemean lion glows, is boiling hot with rage (946), emits fire and tosses its mane on fiery-red neck (948–949), preparing to attack. All this is badly over-done in Seneca's manner, but it has the strong effect of equating what the lion is imagined as doing and what Hercules is about to do. Seneca apparently expects us here to identify the lion and the hero, who have been linked in the familiar legend (46, 224–25, 465). The details of this passage are carefully done, and it is tempting to find added significance in the fact that the lion of the constellation is about to attack a star (947): the stars are usually connected with supernal order in Seneca, and certainly Hercules' insane passion, now to break loose, destroys order.

At the climax, just before the children are killed, the force of insanity made ready in the prologue is applied to Hercules who "sees" the Furies bringing their fire upon him (982–84, 986); this scene and the prologue are linked consciously by reference to the brand from the funeral pyre (983; 103). In the following horrible action, the insanity of Hercules is shown by his flaming face (1022).

The image continues in the final stage of reaction to the crimes. Let all nature mourn, the chorus prays, especially the hot sun spreading its rays on land and sea (1057–60). Hercules in wild grief calls upon Jupiter and the starry universe to send down

flames of punishment (1202, 1204–5) and threatens to burn himself (1217, 1235–36) and his weapons (1233–34, 1284–87).

What a melodramatic holocaust! Even so, the pattern is constructed with care to express two implications. The dominant idea is that the inhuman nature of Lycus and the crazed state of Hercules are manifestations of violence and irrationality as consuming as the force of fire. A subordinate, but essential, point is the relationship between fire and manifestations of order in the sky, such as the regular movement of light-bearing bodies and the possible punitive reaction of Jupiter and the starry universe to crime. The two implications are interlocked. Thus the total effect of the image is to contrast the conditions of order *versus* chaos, peace-destruction, rationality-irrationality and, more pointedly, to show the dominance of irrational force.

The concrete figure overlaps in meaning the conceptual images of control-unrestraint and security-insecurity. However, its function is not that of an abstract idea forming a context. Rather, it represents active forces causing good and evil. The negative implication, emphasizing the destructive nature of passion, is the stronger because passion is the cause of catastrophe in Seneca's Stoic drama.

Similar meaning is to be found in the image of "sea-storm," although the figure is less important in the *Hercules Furens* than in other plays.[17] Among many references to the sea and other bodies of water, a number expresses ideas that are commonplace, but essential to the meanings conveyed by the figure: the sea is one source of the wild monsters overcome by Hercules (31); it is violent (171, 320, 551, 676) and mutable (170, 540, 1056, 1253). Obviously these ideas also are fused with the conceptual images already examined. In fact the language of sea-storm overlaps the language used for the ideas of unrestraint and insecurity: *tumidus* (171, 551), *mobilis* (170, 540, 1056), *vagus* (1056) and *dubius* (1253).[18]

Other occurrences are integral to the action. Three are ironic: Hercules prays, just before his outburst, that the sea will

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[17] *aequor, aestus, altum, fluctuo, fluctus, fretum, gurges, mare, pelagus, pontus, profundum, tempestas, turbo* (verb), *unda*; 9, 10, 31, 170, 271, 320, 324, 515, 535–37, 540, 551, 554, 599, 663, 676, 715, 903, 928, 931–32, 955, 1047, 1056, 1058, 1089–93, 1109, 1140, 1164, 1210, 1212, 1214, 1253, 1327.

[18] See notes 4 and 14. More overlapping appears in 932 (*violentus*), 955 (*tumidus*), 1091 (*tumultus*), 1092–93 (*tumeo, insanus*).

remain in its place (927–28), undisturbed by wild storm (931–32); the swollen seas have subsided (955). The waning effects of the madness are described elaborately as surging waves showing the after-effects of storm (1089–93).

Here, too, Seneca creates a pair of opposites, for the idea of refuge from storm is suggested. The sleep of the exhausted Hercules, bringing peace after the storm, is a harbor of life (1072), and for the dead sons the underworld is a haven (1131). The thought emerging from these paired figures is that cessation of consciousness is the only recourse from such extreme, turbulent passion.

All these patterns meet the criteria of validity set at the beginning of our analysis: they are extensive and clearly related to dramatic ideas characteristic of Seneca's Stoic approach to tragic drama. Additional proof is found when images appear at crucial dramatic moments, and the *Hercules Furens* contains a particularly convincing instance of such confirmation. Just before the beginning of the catastrophe, Hercules prays (927–33):

> stet suo caelum loco
> tellusque et aequor; astra inoffensos agant
> aeterna cursus. alta pax gentes alat;
> ferrum omne teneat ruris innocui labor
> ensesque lateant. nulla tempestas fretum
> violenta turbet, nullus irato Jove
> exiliat ignis . . .

The sky, earth, and sea in their proper places, the stars unhindered in their courses: that is, order in the universe . . . peace for men . . . no storm to disturb the sea . . . no fire from Jupiter in rage—the abstract ideas of order and security and the metaphors of storm and fire are all gathered here, in a positive statement of hope about to be shattered in the wild chaos figured by the negative aspect of these patterns. Analysis of figurative language inevitably raises the question whether the effects found are the product of conscious artistry or unconscious orientation or a combination of the two. The matter is complex, and the question itself may be irrelevant or unimportant. However, the prayer of Hercules brings us as close as we can be to certainty that the patterns are deliberate.

Two more abstract sets are to be found, both of them obvious and ordinary, but meaningful. One comprises terms of "bright"

and "dark" with implications of aesthetic quality as well as of color.[19] The associations are clear, and interesting. Practically all of the brightness has to do with heavenly bodies or sky or daylight, and the light of the upper world vis-à-vis the dark of Hades. Human beauty and Hercules as the light of his house are also involved. The darkness is mostly of the underworld including the abstract figures of Discord, Fright, and Pain, but it is connected also with the plain absence of light and the effect of Hercules' insanity (940–42). We can see the significance of the pattern distinctly where the opposites appear together: Hercules drags the black hound Cerberus to the upperworld, and the sun recoils from the sight (59–61); conversely, Cerberus is confused and covered with darkness when he sees "the pure regions of the bright sky" (821–24). Madness coming upon Hercules is night banishing day (939–42). The sun in its beauty routs darkness (1058–59). The contrast between supernal and infernal color is still another way of setting order against chaos, rationality against insanity, with the inference that order and rationality are bright and fair.

A second set, also sensuous in nature, contrasts "clean" and "foul."[20] The pattern is difficult to identify precisely because it merges with the mass of moral terms used by Seneca. In this play only the negative side is substantial enough to warrant detail about the associations. Foulness is attributed to the objects of Hercules' exploits, to Lycus, fields neglected in war and the dependents of Hercules, but more often the connection is with aspects of the underworld and the fit of madness. Thus both of these groups, bright-dark and clean-foul, couple the underworld and the insanity of Hercules as if they were comparable

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[19] Bright: *aureus, claresco, clarus, croceus, decorus, dies, effulgeo, fulgeo, fulgor, inlustris, iubar, lucidus, lumen, lux, mico, niteo, nitidus, nitor, niveus, pingo, radius, refulgeo, rubeo*; 9, 13–14, 25–26, 37, 60, 123–25, 127–28, 131, 135, 151, 208, 243, 293, 374, 467, 545, 567, 586, 592, 594,.596, 653, 669–70, 672, 813–14, 821–22, 824, 859, 939, 941, 945, 1058–59, 1251, 1258. Dark: *ater, caligo, furvus, niger, nigro, nox, obscurus, opacus, tenebrae*; 50, 59, 92, 126, 280, 282, 436, 608, 610–11, 668, 671, 689, 694, 705, 707, 709–10, 809, 823, 836, 856–57, 861–62, 940, 942, 1059, 1076, 1105.

Opposites paired, 59–60 (*ater; dies*), 123–28 (*claresco, dies, lucidus, croceus, mico, lux, nitidus; nox*), 668–72 (*tenebrae, nox; lux, nitor, fulgor, lumen, dies*), 821–24 (*clarus, dies, nitidus, dies; nox*), 939–42 (*dies, dies; tenebrae, obscurus, nox, ater*), 1058–59 (*radius, decorus; nox*).

[20] Clean: *castus, purgo, purus*; 309, 822, 1098, 1279. Foul: *foedus, lues, pestifer, pestilens, pestis, polluo, sordidus, squaleo, squalidus, squalor, turpis*; 32, 248, 358, 366, 562, 601, 626–27, 686, 701–2, 765, 785, 861, 976, 1019, 1030, 1084, 1261.

forms of unreason.   The material is completely conventional, but it does serve to record simple emotional responses to conditions that attract or repel the senses.

"Fortune" is a mixed type of figure, for it is used variously in the plays as abstract idea, as personification and in the metaphor of the wheel.   We shall see cases where it is fused effectively with the more major patterns.   Here it is rather insignificant.   Megara fears that Fortune will not continue to spare her husband (325–28), and Hercules in despair wants to end his bad fortune by violence (1271–72).   The chorus complains to personified Fortune for her injustice in commanding the hero's exploits (524–25). Related ideas are conveyed by the swift wheel of time (180) and the urn of the Fates (191).   To a small extent the conception of Fortune reinforces the idea of insecurity so prevalent in the drama.

These are the main images used in the *Hercules Furens* to convey ideas related to the theme of irrationality pitted against the ideal of reason.   Seneca's exuberant style scatters many other smaller effects, but these do not concern us here.   He uses figurative patterns of three types: abstract idea, metaphor, and mixed abstraction-metaphor.   However, we are using the term "figurative" in a sense which can only be described as gross.   The word-groups, especially of the abstract ideas, saturate the text and appear in almost any kind of connection.   If all the occurrences of all the patterns are put together, on the average every second or third line contains an instance of some pattern.

.Is there evidence of systematic relationship in placement and meaning among the images?   The complete tabulation in our notes shows that within a pattern opposites are often paired; this explicit polarity is probably due both to rhetorical mannerism and to the penchant for philosophical oxymoron so common in Stoic argumentation.   The destructive aspect of fire and the idea of unrestraint correspond roughly, as do the image of sea-storm and the idea of insecurity, yet close inspection shows only random connection among the occurrences of these groups.   Fire and sea-storm are both used to describe insane passion; their meanings can be distinguished only in the obvious physical sense that fire consumes substance and sea-storm is turbulent.   Language of sea-storm overlaps about equally with language of unrestraint and of insecurity.   As we have seen, in one brief passage (927–33) order, security, fire, and sea-storm are interlocked.

Two very different explanations of such fusion are possible, and both of them probably contain some truth. Obviously Seneca uses images indiscriminately. Sheer bulk of reference makes everything coalesce. It is also true that his drama contains much Stoicism, and that in Stoic thought reason and the perversion of reason comprehend all existence. Order, security, virtue; chaos, insecurity, passion—these are all aspects of a unity, reason or its absence. Perhaps this monolithic way of thinking is reflected in the poetic material when the ideas of order and peace merge, or when a metaphor gives both a negative and a positive implication. At any rate, the *Hercules Furens* contains a fused mass of figurative language depicting irrationality as destructive, chaotic, dark, foul, and deathly, the negation of order, security, brightness, and life.

Questions are raised by the use of fire to figure passion and insanity in drama of Stoic orientation. Can this image be reconciled with the Stoic conception of creative fire composing "spirit" and identical with reason?[21] Is poetic usage in conflict with philosophy?

The answer lies in the distinction, as old as Zeno and Cleanthes, between primal creative fire and the all-consuming fire known in daily life. Cicero's version of the differentiation is well-known:[22]

> Atqui hic noster ignis quem usus vitae requirit confector est et consumptor omnium, idemque quocumque invasit cuncta disturbat ac dissipat; contra ille corporeus vitalis et salutaris omnia conservat alit auget sustinet sensuque adficit.

The linking of creative fire with the sky and sun is traditional in Stoicism. Here we have a direct and complete tie between Stoicism and the poetic practice of the dramatist who uses both kinds of fire figuratively: the creative kind is implied in references to celestial fire,[23] connoting order in nature; and the destructive kind is a major poetic device. The same distinction is explicit in the *Hercules Oetaeus* where the voice of Hercules informs Alcmena

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[21] For the philosophical points in this paragraph see E. Vernold Arnold, *Roman Stoicism* (London 1911 [1958]) 71, 89, 180–81 and S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London 1959) 2–7, 34.

[22] *ND* 2.15.41.

[23] 37–38, 126–27, 457–58, 593, 598, 724–25, 932–33, 1202, 1204–5. The two kinds seem to merge when Jupiter's bolt is described as violent (see especially 1204–5, *stelliger mundus . . . flammas*), but the context shows that this punitive fire is an aspect of order.

that his mortal part has been consumed on the pyre, but his divine part goes to the sky and the stars (1966-71). Philosophical idea and poetic practice agree, and the correspondence confirms the interpretation of the image.

Since we have examined the *Hercules Furens* in some detail, treatment of the other plays will be confined to showing the persistence of the patterns, variations among them and any special features.[24] Although the *Troades* contains the same verbal systems, they are comparatively sparse; and the effect of the figurative language is somewhat different, reflecting a somewhat different theme. The relationship between plot and imagery in the *Hercules* is essentially single, in that both facets of the irrationality expressed by the images, license, and insecurity, are equally significant aspects of the central events, the return and madness of the hero. In the *Troades* attention is divided between the Trojans and the Greeks, and the ideas conveyed by the figurative language are a little more subtle. For example, the conceptions of security and insecurity[25] are tied up in the conflict between Greek interests and Trojan concerns. For the Trojans the only resorts are the peace of death or sleep and wan hope for the survival of Astyanax and Polyxena. Their insecurity is complete: they are agonized for the city, uncertain concerning the future, full of anguish for Astyanax and Polyxena, and nihilistic about the hereafter. The position of the Greeks is unstable also. Not only must they make their future secure against the threat of Troy revived under Astyanax, and satisfy the demand of Achilles' ghost for the sacrifice of Polyxena. Also, Agamemnon is aware (259-63) that Fortune and the gods may turn hostile if the successful Greeks commit extreme violence. Seneca is here turning to dramatic use the basic concern of Stoicism for security. What the Greeks are driven to do by their own fears completes

[24] From here on, some of the less significant occurrences of the patterns are omitted.

[25] Security: selected references, 159, 399, 425, 440, 453, 462, 490, 497, 499, 511, 574, 606, 656, 741, 768, 875, 961, 994, 1165, 1167. Insecurity: additional terms, *anxius, formido, horror, intremo, varius, vereor, vito*; selected references, 24, 62-63, 168, 176, 205-6, 229, 246, 262, 270, 302, 309, 315, 317-18, 323, 371, 379, 399, 406, 423, 425, 431, 435-36, 457-58, 475, 477, 488, 496, 499, 503, 505, 513, 515, 522, 529-30, 535, 548, 551, 563-64, 576, 586, 588, 592-93, 609-10, 612, 616-18, 623, 625-26, 631-32, 640, 642, 658-59, 662, 707, 742, 760, 764, 767, 787, 790, 795, 813, 869-70, 891, 898, 913, 915, 939, 954, 993, 1000, 1046, 1056, 1104, 1130, 1136, 1145, 1147, 1160, 1169, 1173-75.

the devastation of Trojan affairs.   Even more interesting is the
suggestion that both the Trojans and Greeks in war suffer in-
security.   Another   dramatist   might   have   exploited   this
interpretation effectively, but at least the idea is present.

Such an interpretation can have little place in Seneca because
he applies as fully as possible the idea that evil is caused by active
irrationality.   In the *Troades* the language of control and un-
restraint [26] relates mostly to the emotional outbursts of the Trojan
victims and to the active violence of the Greeks.   The latter is, of
course, the primary cause of suffering.   Agamemnon himself
strongly condemns uncontrolled violence (279–85):

> sed regi frenis nequit
> et ira et ardens hostis et victoria
> commissa nocti.   quicquid indignum aut ferum
> cuiquam videri potuit, hoc fecit dolor
> tenebraeque, per quas ipse se irritat furor,
> gladiusque felix, cuius infecti semel
> vecors libido est.

Regi frenis nequit . . . se irritat furor . . . vecors libido—the pattern is
clear.   Also, the language *ardens hostis, victoria commissa nocti,
tenebrae* points to other connotations seen in the *Hercules*.   Of the
references to fire,[27] some are commonplace in a drama about
Troy in flames, but fire is linked with the fury of the Greeks often
enough to show that the image of *ignis . . . consumptor omnium* is
present, as in the passage just given.   So also is the pairing
bright-dark, though its volume is slight.[28]   It contrasts the
brightness and beauty of youth meeting death with the actions of
the conquerors in the darkness and the ugliness of the fumes of
Troy soiling the sky.   At the dramatic moment when Polyxena is
to be sacrificed she is described as having the radiance of the hour

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[26] Control: *coerceo, cohibeo, deprimo, domitrix, flecto, frenum, habena, impero, opprimo,
prohibeo, ratio, retineo, supprimo*; 18, 250, 259, 261, 279, 345, 349–51, 359, 375, 396,
419–20, 517, 528, 540, 682, 695, 792, 812, 884, 903, 926, 1033.   Unrestraint: *abrumpo,
effundo, entheus, expers, furibundus, lymphatus, vecors*; 34, 94, 113b, 185, 215, 243, 250,
253, 258, 263–66, 283, 285, 301, 312, 410, 446, 565, 583, 601, 621, 670, 674–75, 679,
681, 768, 796, 914, 939–40, 977, 981, 991, 995, 1042, 1056, 1095–96, 1101, 1106, 1127,
1164, 1172–73.

[27] *fervor, fumo, uro*; 16–21, 40, 55–56, 102, 251, 280, 303, 480, 544–45, 561, 564,
578, 582, 684, 889, 899–900, 1174, 1176.

[28] Bright: *decor, decus, splendeo*; 184, 603, 939, 1112, 1138–42, 1144.   Dark:
nocturnus; 21, 39, 281, 283, 430, 755.

when the sun gives way to the stars (1138–42). As obvious as the comparison is, Seneca achieves simple strength in describing the moment as a transition between two manifestations of beneficent light in the sky, and in combining this pictorial effect with the sense of security shared by Polyxena and Astyanax.[29] The significance of this little scene should be emphasized: Seneca rarely has an occasion to link, as he does here, rationality in supernal nature and in the psychological state of his characters; such linking of positive conditions at the two levels expresses a major theme only in the *Hercules Oetaeus*.

Although the sea and its movement are part of the turbulence of the play,[30] the figure sea-storm does not appear significantly. Nor does the contrast clean-foul; only expressions of foulness are used, primarily about smoking Troy and the condition of its people. The abstract idea and personification of Fortune, as well as related terms, conspicuously mark the changeability of both Trojan and Greek affairs.[31]

In comparison with the relatively subdued *Troades*, the *Medea* is an explosion. Here our images can be seen in full effect and unified in the major character. Medea's rage is pictured very graphically through a mixture of the metaphors fire[32] and sea-storm.[33] In the first place, these two elements appear prominently in the legend, and the figurative use of them cannot be separated from many mythical details: the flaming chariot of the Sun available to Medea, the boiling of Pelias, the fire-breathing bull of Aeëtes, the Argonauts whose deaths are connected with fire (Hercules, Nauplius, Ajax), the burning of king, princess, and palace; the victory of the Argo as the first ship, the murder of Absyrtus on the deep, Medea's magical control of the sea, and the revenge of the ocean upon the Argonauts—extending even to the most un-nautical death of Pelias (667–68)! These cases are

[29] 1093, 1098, 1102, 1146, 1152.

[30] See 20, 657, 837, 851, 880, 991, 994–95, 1105.

[31] *casus, fors, fortuna, sors, sortior, sortitor, urna*; 5, 58, 62, 83, 259, 262, 269, 273, 275, 506, 524, 563, 697, 711, 735, 886, 916–17, 972, 974, 976–77, 982, 998, 1016.

[32] *accendo, calor, decoquo, flammo, fulgur, ignifer, peruro*; 15, 33–34, 36, 67, 84, 111–12, 121, 134, 148, 167, 241, 387, 410, 412, 466, 468, 532, 537, 547, 558, 578–79, 582, 591, 601, 639–40, 658, 661, 666–67, 672, 681, 735, 777, 779, 793, 800, 819–20, 825–26, 829, 835, 837–39, 842, 858, 886–87, 889–90, 942, 952, 959–60, 962, 965–66, 996–97.

[33] *aestuo, exundo, procellosus, ventus*; 2, 4, 36, 121, 133, 166, 301, 305, 319, 337, 339, 342, 356, 362, 364, 368, 390, 392, 408, 411, 481, 579, 583, 587, 596–97, 611, 614, 616–17, 637, 650, 659, 661, 667–68, 755, 758, 765, 939–43.

non-figurative and external but obviously imply violence and
conflict.   Other instances involve the means to Medea's fiery
and stormy ends, like the assistance invoked from Neptune and
the Furies or, just before the catastrophe, the flaming magical
rites.

These external and intermediary aspects are inseparable from
the core of the two metaphors figuring the appearance and nature
of Medea.   As she is associated with fire and sea-storm, so she *is*
fire and sea-storm.   Physically, her flaming face struggles for air
(387), she seethes like an ocean wave about to break (391–92).
Her mind is glowing hot (558), the fire of love is fanned by anger
(591), her pain ignites itself (671–72), hatred boils (952). Quite
clearly the mixing of the metaphors is a conscious effect; in
Medea's own words (408–14):

> quae Scylla, quae Charybdis Ausonium mare
> Siculumque sorbens quaeve anhelantem premens
> Titana tantis Aetna fervebit minis?
> non rapidus amnis, non procellosum mare
> Pontusve coro saevus aut vis ignium
> adiuta flatu possit inhibere impetum
> irasque nostras.

Mare . . . fervebit . . . procellosum mare . . . vis ignium: the pair of
metaphors is repeated.   The second stasimon begins (579–82):

> Nulla vis flammae tumidive venti
> tanta, nec teli metuenda torti,
> quanta cum coniunx viduata taedis
>   ardet et odit.

This is Seneca's Medea: a flaming storm of passion.   The
effect, a composite of legendary background, poetic decoration,
dramatic fact, and imagery, is gross, and no more analysis is
needed.   But one aspect of sea-storm is interesting as an idea that
might have changed the drama substantially if Seneca's premises
had allowed him to use it more functionally.   The first and
second stasima express the idea that the Argo has broken the
natural bounds set by the sea; in return the sea exacts punishment
from the Argonauts for their violation of nature.   With this con-
ception, clearly of Stoic orientation, Medea is closely linked, for
she was the prize of the expedition and "a greater evil than the
sea" (362); and the chorus, having described her rage, prays that

Jason may be spared the fate of the other Argonauts. The implication is that Medea's revenge symbolizes the vengeance of the sea. Seneca is headed toward intellectual difficulty, for Medea is thus aligned with natural order and stability, as well as against them through her destructive passion. Grandiosity seems to cause confusion here. However, the chorus' interpretation is not carried over into the action, and the prevailing meaning is Seneca's usual one, that the catastrophe is caused by irrationality as wild and primitive as fire and the sea.

Fire is so much identified with Medea that there is no place for what was seen in *Hercules Furens*, the association of fire with natural order.[34] But similar linking is found in the contrasts bright-dark[35] and clean-foul.[36] In these groups, the positive "pole" of bright-clean is connected with Jason, the Argonauts and the princess, and with the Olympians and other beneficent gods or aspects of nature: the sun, stars, moon, dawn, aether, the universe. Particularly interesting is such language as *stellisque quibus pingitur aether* (310) and (401–4):

> dum terra caelum media libratum feret
> nitidusque certas mundus evolvet vices
> numerusque harenis derit et solem dies,
> noctem sequentur astra . . .

These are clear references to the brightness and stability of supernal order. Also, the second quotation shows the consciousness of Seneca's figurative technique, for in ironic contrast he has Medea go on to say that the universe will be matched in durability by her—*furor* (406), the very negation of order.

On the other hand, the group dark-foul is coupled mostly with Chaos, the Furies, Dis, Hecate, and Medea.[37] The contrast between the two sets of associations is explicit at the beginning of the prologue where Medea invokes *noctis aeternae chaos, | aversa superis regna manesque impios* (9–10). Here, too, Seneca uses figurative contrast artfully: in 28–36 Medea cannot believe that

[34] Possible exceptions are 67 and 111–12.

[35] Bright: *candidus, praeniteo, purpureus, rubesco, rubor*; 5, 28, 60–61, 74–75, 94–95, 97–98, 100, 110, 130, 209–10, 217–18, 226, 243, 298, 310, 329, 402–4, 788. Dark: 9, 15, 68, 114, 148, 464, 741, 750, 800, 821.

[36] Clean: 30, 265, 269, 901. Foul: *contamino, inquino, obscenus*; 14, 183, 264, 355, 511, 523, 681, 732, 742.

[37] Bright-clean terms are used of Medea four times, always by herself and either ironically (901) or in reference to the past (130, 209–10, 217–18).

the sun still follows its "pure" course, then asks to use the sun-chariot to burn Corinth.   The parodos, full of the bright colors of the epithalamium, ends with the barb aimed at Medea, *tacitis eat illa tenebris* (114).   The chorus means "oblivion," but other connotations of darkness plainly follow from Medea's words in the prologue.

It is predictable that the abstract ideas of unrestraint [38] and insecurity [39] are massive and centered in Medea.   As we have seen in the *Hercules Furens*, these verbal systems are a highly generalized aspect of style.   They are not restricted to dramatic purposes, but apply the ideas broadly to forces, conditions, personalities, and things—supernatural, natural, human, physical. Fire rages uncontrolled (885).   The ocean sets limits broken through by man (369).   Rivers check their courses (723).   Mars is restrained (63).   Fortune itself fears (159).   The Clashing Rocks are "wandering reefs" (610).   The fountain of Hylas, once safe (649), is now fearful (651), and so on.   Presumably such extended patterns reflect a deep-set habit of mind shaped by Stoicism and rhetoric.   At any rate, the effect is a pervasive atmosphere of wild chaos as the scene of the action.

However, most of the violence and instability is connected with Medea, of course.   Seneca's portrayal of her is saturated with language expressing the absence of control, for example (849-52):

> Quonam cruenta maenas
> praeceps amore saevo
> rapitur? quod impotenti
> facinus parat furore?

Her savagery, the fruitless attempts to restrain it, the chaos caused by her actions in the past and present, and her own

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[38] Control: *arbitrium, comprimo, evinco, freno, mitigo, patiens, sisto*; 2–4, 63, 137–38, 152, 157, 174–75, 369, 376, 381, 397, 413, 426, 506, 537, 558–59, 592, 617, 723, 764, 866, 887, 889.   Unrestraint: *effrenus, furialis, furiosus, maenas, praeceps*; 14, 52, 103, 123, 140, 143, 178, 191, 220, 252, 301–2, 308, 326, 377, 382–83, 386, 392, 396, 406, 412–13, 432, 442, 445, 554, 579, 597, 640, 673, 677, 698, 738, 762, 765, 806, 849–52, 864, 885, 895, 897, 903–4, 909, 930, 940, 958.

[39] Security: 158, 162–63, 182, 286, 402, 478, 559, 596, 604, 649.   Insecurity: *despero, fugitiva, horribilis, titubo*; 16, 20–21, 42, 45–47, 54, 104, 115, 123, 159, 168–70, 172, 185, 190–92, 220, 255–56, 270, 272–74, 277, 287–88, 291, 294–95, 305, 338, 341, 353, 382, 396, 415–16, 419–20, 429, 437–38, 447–50, 459, 480, 486, 489, 491–93, 509, 516, 519, 522, 524, 529, 539, 541, 554, 565–66, 569, 580, 586, 593, 610, 651, 667, 670, 678, 738–39, 782, 794, 859–60, 872, 877, 893, 895, 926–27, 937–39, 942–43, 948, 964, 988, 1022.

turbulent passion make a picture of irrationality in absolute
degree. Fortune, too, figures mostly as an aspect of Medea's
purpose to overcome insecurity by violence.[40]

From these three plays, several conclusions may be anticipated.
Figurative language used by Seneca to convey ideas of dramatic
significance is essentially uniform throughout the dramas. The
sameness is revealing because it means that the imagery comes
not from an individual conception of an individual play, but from
a theory of drama imposed upon the traditional subject matter,
reducing it to a well-defined pattern. In this pattern the
dramatic scene is viewed generally as a battleground where non-
reason prevails over reason, because for the Stoic Seneca perver-
sion of reason is the only possible explanation of the kind of
catastrophe found in the established dramatic legends. The
imagery, in serving this design, is a constant feature highlighting
the destructive forces at work.

The minor variations among the individual plays are also
meaningful. In the *Troades* figurative language is subdued in
comparison with the *Hercules Furens* where in turn the imagery is
less pervasive than in the *Medea*. The reason for this is simple.
In the Trojan play the dramatist treats not merely the active fury
of the victors but rather more the passive condition of the victims
of this fury. The insanity of Hercules is, to be sure, an absolute
loss of rationality, but it is a condition imposed externally, not an
action coming from within irrational personality. Only in the
Medea have we seen Seneca fully concentrated on showing
destructive personality in action. Since the dramatist apparently
felt restricted by the versions of the legends settled in the dramatic
tradition, his use of imagery to figure irrationality reaches various
degrees of intensity according to the potentiality of the material.

In the *Phaedra* the potentiality is great, and fully exploited in the
most high-wrought concentration of imagery in any of the plays
of normal length. Even the positive aspect of the patterns
receives some emphasis, as is shown, for example, in Hippolytus'
vehement reaction to Phaedra's confession of love (671–83):

> Magne regnator deum,
> tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides?
> et quando saeva fulmen emittes manu,

[40] 159, 176, 219, 222, 242, 287, 431, 519–20, 569.

si nunc serenum est? omnis impulsus ruat
aether et atris nubibus condat diem,
ac versa retro sidera obliquos agant
retorta cursus. tuque sidereum caput,
radiate Titan, tu nefas stirpis tuae
speculare? lucem merge et in tenebras fuge.
cur dextra, divum rector atque hominum, vacat
tua nec trisulca mundus ardescit face?
in me tona, me fige, me velox cremet
transactus ignis—

The passage is a good instance, also, of the fusion of various figures
in the text. Moral blackness has been revealed. In response
two of the sky-dwellers, Jupiter and the Sun, are expected to act
violently: Jupiter as the master of gods and men and the god of
punishing fire, ruling the *aether*, the succession of light and dark-
ness, the regular courses of the stars; the Sun as the source of light
and a god shamed by the evil of his descendants. The shock of
evil upon moral order must cause a reversal of physical nature
comparable to Phaedra's overthrow of natural morality: the stars
must go backward and off course, the sun must flee to darkness.
As grandiose as these ideas and language are, they serve well
Seneca's melodramatic purpose of opposing darkness and chaos
to light and order.

Various affirmative meanings appear within the abstract ideas
of control,[41] security,[42] brightness,[43] and cleanness.[44] Jupiter is

[41] Control: *compos, contineo, dominatrix, domito, gubernator, ligo, medius, modicus, sano, substringo*; 141, 165, 180, 184–85, 208, 212–13, 248–49, 251, 253, 255–56, 263, 265, 334, 359–60, 413–14, 439, 454, 574, 680, 903, 960, 1055, 1068, 1072, 1075–77. Un-restraint: *erumpo, impatiens, relaxo, tumor*; 96, 112, 117–18, 137, 178–79, 184, 186–87, 197, 202, 227, 262, 268, 276, 279, 284, 331, 343b, 350–51, 359, 361, 363–64, 367, 372, 386, 444, 449–50, 486, 540–41, 567, 583–84, 640, 699, 702, 711, 824, 1012, 1016, 1070, 1083, 1089, 1155–56, 1180, 1193.

[42] Security: *tutor*; 100, 131, 133, 164, 492, 520–21, 634, 822, 1112, 1126–27. Insecurity: *ambiguus, confugio, cunctor, deerro, diffugio, effugium, horrifer, perplexus*; 91, 146–47, 162–63, 169–70, 217, 219, 230, 232, 241, 243, 283, 308, 341–42, 345, 365–66, 368, 373–74, 377, 425, 427–28, 435, 495, 518, 566, 587, 593, 630, 669, 722, 734, 761, 773, 835, 840, 847, 849, 858, 874, 929, 938, 1013, 1031, 1033, 1050, 1053–54, 1056, 1105, 1257, 1278.

[43] Bright: *coruscus, flavus, formosus, luceo, lucifer, perluceo, pulcher, radio, reluceo, rubicundus, splendidus, stellifer*; 154, 156, 246, 301, 309–10, 333, 376, 378, 380, 410–11, 418, 507, 524, 651–52, 657, 659, 678, 743–44, 747, 752, 787–88, 797, 800, 889, 1111–12, 1144–45, 1173, 1269. Dark: 94, 221, 477, 492, 522, 675, 679, 835.

[44] Clean: *castificus, castitas*; 108, 130, 169, 237, 419, 507, 648, 704, 714, 1195. Foul: *deformis, incestus, maculo, teter*; 195, 210, 489, 560, 690, 823, 833, 905, 911, 1017, 1185, 1246, 1266.

regarded as a god of order in the phrases *Pro sancta Pietas, pro gubernator poli* (903) and *igniferi rector Olympi* (960). Phaedra's desperate cry, *quid ratio possit? vicit ac regnat furor* (184)—incidentally, a good subtitle for Senecan drama—introduces the Stoic term for reason, and it is used later by her in justifying suicide (253, 265) and by Hippolytus to express his elemental hatred of women (567): *sit ratio, sit natura, sit dirus furor*; his words show the mixture of figurative and philosophical language prominent in this play. The effort of Hippolytus to control his horses panic-struck by the sea-monster is a miniature of human struggle to master sub-human force.

Security may be found in the idealized life of humility and simplicity tuned with nature, totally removed from the dramatic scene. The qualities of bright and clean are applied to celestial bodies and other aspects of nature, to the original beauty and purity of Phaedra, the youth of Theseus, and the physical and moral excellence of Hippolytus.

The metaphor of fire [45] also has positive meaning, as we have seen in Hippolytus' outburst, but this pales before the incandescence of Phaedra's passion. In one of the nurse's repeated attempts to control her, Phaedra is warned about the abnormal love of Pasiphaë, and despairingly told (173): *perge et nefandis verte naturam ignibus*. Here and elsewhere the conventional equation love = fire is enlarged to the idea of ardent force so violent that it masters the universe. Phaedra feels helpless in the face of an intemperate god who inflames Jupiter, burns Mars, and scorches even the god of fire (187–91). The first choral song is devoted entirely to the theme that fiery love dominates all nature, men, gods, animal life (352–53): *vindicat omnes | natura*. Throughout this lyric the mythological and other material shows the dominance of the element fire over the other three elements. For example, Cupid rules where earth is surrounded by water and where the stars run through the sky. The depths of the sea feel the effect of his fire, and water cannot cure it (331–37). In other words, the metaphor is extended so far as to become philosophical idea. Intense, violent love takes on the role of a

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[45] *aestus, ardesco, caleo, calidus, concremo, coquo, inflammo*; 102, 120, 131, 156, 165, 173, 187–91, 276, 280, 287, 290–93, 309, 330b, 337–38, 355, 359, 361–64, 379, 415, 486, 541, 561, 568, 589, 640–44, 673, 681–83, 738–40, 745, 765, 960, 970, 1040, 1113, 1227, 1269.

cosmic force comparable to the Stoic element of fire dominant in
nature.   The effect of the figure is forceful.   But here again, if
our analysis is correct, bombast blurs logic, for the destructive
emotion of love is made analogous to the creative element
of fire.

More specifically, language of fire is used heavily to describe
Phaedra's love and its effects.   It is very concentrated in her own
words (640–44), appearing in each line:

> Pectus insanum vapor
> amorque torret. intimis fervet ferus
> visceribus ignis mersus et venas latens
> ut agilis altas flamma percurrit trabes.

The nurse uses similar language of her (361–64) and then de-
scribes her actions as restless as fitful flame (365–73).

Because this metaphor is central in the *Phaedra*, various con-
sequences follow.   Sea-storm [46] is relatively unimportant, merely
reinforcing the picture of turbulent emotion.   Expressions of
unrestraint often appear with the language of fire; thus the text
is saturated with emphasis upon the wild license surrounding
Phaedra's love.   This wildness is virtually everywhere in the play.
As the main characteristic of Phaedra, it is observed repeatedly
by Phaedra herself, the nurse, the chorus, and Theseus.   It also
characterizes Theseus, the Cretan bull, Hippolytus' team, the sea
monster.

Much of the language of unrestraint is concentrated, of course,
upon the nature of love as an emotion.   A clear example of
Seneca's preoccupation with the notions of control and un-
restraint, and the relationship between them, is found in Phaedra's
reply (177–94) to the nurse's first attempt to restrain her.   She
recognizes the truth of what has been said to check her, but
passion drives her headlong, unable to recover rational thoughts,
just as a mariner loses control of his ship to stormy waters.
Reason can do nothing.   Passion is now in control and dominates
her completely.   The god of love, unrestrained himself, rules on
earth and masters other gods with his fire, even ungovernable
Jupiter and Vulcan who works the raging-hot forge of Aetna.
Even our paraphrase shows how thick the terminology of control

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[46] *nubes, procella, spuma, spumo*; 103, 181–83, 274, 351, 476, 581, 700, 736–37, 954–
55, 957–58, 1010–16, 1020, 1025, 1031, 1033, 1072, 1159–63, 1204–6.

and unrestraint is, and how tightly it is woven into Seneca's erotic language.

The connection between Phaedra's passion and various forms of insecurity is also strong, though less organic than the linking of fire and unrestraint. Phaedra's condition is chaotic, and her scruples and fears are felt even more strongly by the nurse. Hippolytus' abhorrence of women is violent, his death a shambles. But the figure of Fortune [47] expresses insecurity most significantly. Immediately before and after the catastrophe reported by the messenger, the chorus refers the chaos of human affairs to Fortune (959–89, 1123–53). The first statement is particularly noteworthy for its comprehensive question: why are Nature and Jupiter so indifferent to the disorder of the human world, while they carefully preserve order in the universe at large? Seneca's wording of this explicit contrast supports our analysis of his imagery. To convey the ideas of control and order, he uses the figurative material now familiar: *igniferi rector Olympi* (960), *sidera mundo* (961), *cursus . . . astrorum* (962), *polos cardine versas* (963), *qui tanta regis* (972); and for human chaos, *ordine nullo | Fortuna regit* (978–79). Obviously, too, the whole passage makes explicit the opposition between rational order and chaos noted throughout the figurative patterns.

The *Phaedra*, then, belongs with the *Medea* in the company of plays where the full battery of imagery is concentrated to express the anarchy and violence of irrational personality. In the *Oedipus* Seneca is restricted by the subject matter, and the limitations of his invariable imagery appear clearly. If he is to follow the traditional conception of Oedipus as an essentially good king trapped by circumstance, as he does, and at the same time apply the idea that violent catastrophe stems from some kind of irrationality, the theme and the effect of the figurative language will be curtailed radically. That is, Oedipus cannot be like Medea and Phaedra, blazing with destructive emotion. Oedipus' irrationality must be shown, not in the causation of the circumstances leading to catastrophe, but in the response to these circumstances. [48] If Seneca were writing a strictly Stoic commentary upon the situation of Oedipus and a rational reaction to

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[47] *roto*; 138, 436, 584, 840, 979, 1120, 1123–24, 1143.

[48] von Fritz, (see note 1) 27, well emphasizes Oedipus' fear of fate as the dominant emotion in the play.

it, he would resort to the distinction between things in man's control and things not, and conclude that Oedipus must endure or preserve dignity by suicide. It is interesting that this Stoic thinking is found in the text. Before blinding himself, Oedipus considers suicide (934): *mors innocentem sola Fortunae eripit*. Immediately after, the chorus urges resignation to fate as a force beyond human control (980–94): *quicquid patimur . . . quicquid facimus venit ex alto*. So the Stoic answer is inserted in this wild scene, but it cannot serve the dramatist's purpose of following the traditional themes and interpreting them according to Stoic values. Rather, the interpretation and the figurative expression of it are used as fully as possible within the limits set by the dramatic legend. As a result, the stereotyped imagery cannot have its full effect as in the *Medea* or the *Phaedra*.

Since the irrationality of this play is primarily a matter of condition rather than of action, the images normally used for active force are rather insignificant. Unrestraint [49] is attributed mostly to forces against Oedipus, like the plague, the Sphinx, Fortune; or to various characters more or less related to his condition: Cerberus, Pentheus, the ghost of Laius, the priest of the necromancy, Agave, the warriors of Cadmus, Icarus. Only at the catastrophe does he, with Jocasta, become an agent of uncontrolled passion. The metaphors of action also are very limited. Fire [50] relates mostly not to the inner nature of Oedipus, but to outer circumstances: the incest, plague, Furies, the ominous sacrifice, the dreadful necromancy. Only at the close does the heat of passion appear when Oedipus calls fire down on himself and flares in self-violence (958): *ardent minaces igne truculento genae*. Sea-storm [51] figures only the turbulence of Fortune and the final outburst of Oedipus.

As the theme and Seneca's method lead us to expect, the idea of insecurity [52] loads the text with a welter of fear, hesitation,

[49] Control: 301, 694, 884, 887, 890, 899, 901, 909. Unrestraint: 60, 75, 97, 99, 103, 125, 172, 348, 450, 561, 580, 586, 590, 616, 618, 624, 626, 628, 634, 705, 786, 865, 893, 919, 921, 925, 957, 960–61, 970, 1004–5, 1050.

[50] *aestifer*; 21, 38–39, 55, 60–61, 64–65, 67, 161, 184b–85, 187b, 307, 309, 314, 321, 383, 550–51, 557–58, 564, 862, 875, 928, 958.

[51] 8–10, 923–24.

[52] Security: 13, 24, 35, 85, 108–9, 271, 673, 692. Insecurity: *ambages, expavesco, instabilis, pavito, permuto*; 1, 12–13, 15, 22–27, 80, 83–84, 98, 149, 162, 173–74, 176, 206–9, 212–17, 223, 228, 234, 244–45, 259, 263, 293, 312–14, 318–19, 323–24, 329, 338–39, 343, 351, 354, 366, 380, 383–85, 451, 474, 511, 558, 576, 591, 594, 604–5,·

doubt, change, flight, and the like.   Seneca interprets his material
this way: the moral chaos and instability of Oedipus' condition
are a form of irrationality that causes anguish and finally self-
mutilation, and indeed infects the whole environment.   For not
only are we confronted constantly with Oedipus' fears and un-
certainties, but practically every aspect of the play involves either
causing   or   suffering   insecure   effects: the   Sphinx,   Cadmus,
Actaeon, the Sun, the old Theban shepherd, the oracle of Apollo,
the sacrifice to find out the meaning of the oracle, the necromancy
evoking the ghost of Laius, kingship, the attendants of Laius—and
so on at great length.   All this turmoil, reinforced by the role of
Fortune,[53]   allows   little   room   for   brightness[54]   and   purity.[55]
They exist only elsewhere, among beneficent deities, and in other
conditions, when nature is purified of the dark corruption in
Thebes.   *Non ante caelo lucidus curret dies | haustusque tutos aetheris
puri dabit* (219–20).   In the divination-scene, where the crimes of
Oedipus   are   revealed   in   the   allegorical   sacrifice,[56]   the   bull,
representing Oedipus, shrinks in terror from the rays of the sun
(338–39).   This opposition is basic in Seneca's interpretation.

The higher quality of the *Agamemnon* is reflected in the fact that
the patterns are more organic in the structure and more effectively
blended than in any other play.   Thyestes, who delivers the
prologue, is usually considered the spirit of revenge upon the line
of Atreus, but more accurately he is a spirit of distraction.
Hesitant about coming (3) and fearful (5), he refers to the
frustrating punishment of Sisyphus (16–17) and Tantalus (19–20).
Completely aware of his own guilt (28–36), he describes Aegisthus'
fear and hesitation about new crime (49–52).   This initial frenzy
is   just   a   bit   of   the   massive   insecurity[57]   permeating   the

609, 623–24, 641, 648, 655–56, 659–60, 674–75, 699–700, 702–4, 706, 717, 723, 743–44,
755, 757–59, 764, 773, 778, 791–98, 800–1, 828, 847, 849–50, 875, 892, 904, 926, 933,
951–52, 981, 993–94, 1003, 1007–8, 1010, 1044, 1047, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1059.

[53] 11, 86, 681, 786, 934.

[54] Bright: 219, 250, 317, 338–39, 405, 445, 495, 504, 509, 651.   Dark: *lividus*;
44–47, 164, 189, 320, 327, 358, 377, 393, 530, 545, 549, 556, 585, 592, 868, 973, 977,
999–1000, 1012.

[55] Clean: 220, 650.   Foul: 21, 29, 55, 107, 140–41, 238, 327, 378, 389, 554, 625,
645, 978, 1026.

[56] For an analysis of the allegory, see N. T. Pratt, *Dramatic Suspense in Seneca and in
His Greek Precursors* (Princeton 1939) 93–99.

[57] Security: *securitas*; 105, 115, 147, 244, 283, 355, 591–92, 596, 638, 797, 969.
Insecurity: *inhorresco, pervagor*; 3–5, 38, 50, 59–61, 72–74, 122–23, 133, 138, 140, 144,
146, 151, 167, 195, 198, 226, 237, 246, 282, 291, 302, 352, 410a, 417–18, 508, 510,

drama.[58]	Apprehensive expressions are used by every speaking character and group.	The wild indecision of Clytemnestra is the major feature of the action.	As usual, the language is extended to many non-human connections: virtue flees from royal courts (79–81), nesting halcyons fear for their young (684–85), a sacrificial victim receives a *vulnus incertum* (777), the tree of the Hesperides shrinks from Hercules and after being plucked "flees" into the air (852–54), Cerberus fears the light (862), Titan is *dubius* (908).

The opposite concept is developed by the two choruses. According to the Greek chorus, security may be attained by the commoner (102–7), not by kings (60–1).	They pray that stable peace (326–27, 354–55) will follow Agamemnon's victory.	But the Trojan women are led by their sorrows to believe that real peace, *alta pax* (596), comes only with death (589–611).	The desire for security appears also in the psychology of dramatic characters: Clytemnestra wildly seeks *tuta consilia* (108), and the nurse reassures her in these terms (147).	Electra considers Strophius a safe refuge for frightened Orestes (916–17) and feels secure after his escape (945, 969).

So far the sequence is quite ordinary—and, to be sure, the thought does not reach any great height.	However, considerable skill goes into fusing the abstract idea security-insecurity with the personification Fortune[59] and the metaphor sea-storm.[60]	Fortune appears eight times as an abstraction and twice more as a common noun.	The shifting movement connected with it is expressed in the minor image of "wheel" explicitly (72) and also by language of undulating or repeated action: *alia ex aliis cura* (62), *scelus alternum* (77), *quas in planum quaelibet hora / tulit ex alto* (85–86), *ruitura levat* (102).

Wave-like motion leads naturally to the figure sea-storm, developed in close relationship with Fortune.	In the very first choral passage Seneca writes that Fortune allows kingship no peace (60), but buffets it with repeated storms; the specific term

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575, 685, 711–12, 714, 724, 726, 775, 786–87, 796, 853–54, 862, 883, 890, 908, 915–16, 923, 932, 952, 986.

[58] This feature is noted by Henry and Walker (above, note 1) 9.	Indeed, their whole analysis of the *Agamemnon* as an example of the uniqueness of Senecan drama is supported by this study of the figurative language in all the plays.

[59] 28, 58, 72, 89, 101, 146, 248, 415, 594, 698.

[60] *flatus, turbo* (noun); 44, 63–68, 88–89, 109, 138–43, 197, 247–48, 415, 594.

tempestas is used (63). These storms are more violent than raging seas (64–68). The same passage shifts the metaphor: Fortune is identified with high station and seems to become a ship sinking under its own weight (88–89); another storm sequence follows right after (90–96). Later, Aegisthus speaks of Agamemnon as one puffed up by the wind-blast of Fortune (247–48). Of the storm which shattered the Greek fleet Clytemnestra uses the phrase *maris fortuna* (415). The second chorus of Trojan women observes that only the dead are protected from Fortune's tempest (593–94). So the metaphor is extended to include the opposite notion of refuge from storm, much as we have seen in the *Hercules Furens*. Death—in Stoic language—is a shelter ready at hand for the wretched, an eternally peaceful harbor (592).[61] Ironically, Agamemnon uses the same term *portus* of his return to life at Argos (790).

Sea-storm carries other implications also. According to Thyestes the house of Agamemnon will swim in waves,[62] as it were, of blood (44). Clytemnestra tosses in tides of conflicting emotions (109, 138–43).[63] Her children, she imagines, are threatened by a tornado of trouble (197). Finally, it is impossible to separate imagery and the graphic description of the actual storm (465–578) for repeated language makes the natural storm parallel to the figurative one.[64]

In these ways, the metaphor interlocks the ideas of insecurity, security and Fortune, and aspects of the action. Thus it becomes a major poetic device conveying the emotional and intellectual chaos of the play, much in the manner of *King Lear*. The interrelationship is the most artistic and sophisticated construction observed so far.

The rest of the imagery requires little comment. Terms of control and unrestraint are used heavily [65] in referring to the loves and pride of Agamemnon, the fury of Clytemnestra, Cassandra's

[61] A similar image is probably present in 74.

[62] This meaning of *alterno* seems indicated by 77 and 561.

[63] Other probable storm-terminology is also used to describe her state in 134 (*pulsat*), 240 (*referamur illuc unde*), 260 (*in praeceps agis*), 288 (*surgit*).

[64] See, for example, the following pairs: 88–89, 501; 139–40, 488–89; 197, 478; 260, 499.

[65] Control: *regimen*; 102–3, 130, 150, 203, 224, 239, 400, 659, 691–92, 803, 982. Unrestraint: *bacchor, impos, tumefacio*; 65, 114, 117, 126–27, 141, 154, 177, 189, 199, 244, 247–48, 450, 469, 484, 499, 530, 535, 540–41, 544, 552, 576, 588, 593, 599, 708, 719–20, 724, 734, 775, 786, 801, 869, 872, 897, 915, 958, 961, 964, 981, 1012.

prophetic madness, Electra's violence, and to the usual in-effectual sources of moderation. Even though the figure sea-storm is so strong that fire[66] is minor by comparison, it serves the usual function of marking wrath and erotic passion. It is interesting that, in the first passage where violent emotion is described as fire (119–20), Clytemnestra is citing Medea as a model to follow.

The parallel between Medea and Clytemnestra helps to show in a larger way the success of the images in the *Agamemnon*. Earlier we noticed that in the *Medea* Seneca comes close to confusion in aligning his Medea with destructive passion and also the stabilizing effect of the sea's punishment of the Argonauts. Sea-storm, as the main image of the *Agamemnon*, creates a similar relationship between Clytemnestra and Fortune because it figures both the queen's psychological condition and the world-condition of chaos. Both conditions are pictured as uncontrollable natural force unleashed. Since Fortune and Clytemnestra both act like tempest, the logic of the imagery indicates that semi-symbolically Clytemnestra is equivalent to Fortune, being the human force that brings about reversal of circumstance in the play. In this case the psychological and the "metaphysical" conditions are analogous. The double dimension is logical as well as forceful.

The patterns in the *Thyestes* contain little of interest to com-pensate for the chamber of horrors. It would be reassuring if we could prove that Seneca did not put his strongest effort into it. In any event, all the usual elements are present, but they do not have the force achieved in the *Medea* or the *Phaedra* or the *Agamemnon*.

Fire[67] is the most substantial metaphor, and expresses both the positive and the negative meaning. The fiery system of the sky— stars (825, 836–37) and sun (839)—is obliterated in the chaos (832) and darkness brought on by the monstrous unr̄tural crimes of Atreus, and Thyestes calls down the flaming vengeance of the universe. In using destructive fire to represent the fury of Atreus and his acts, Seneca makes one large noteworthy effect by convert-

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[66] *ardor, exuro, incendo*; 119, 132, 136, 177, 189, 261, 400–1, 528, 595, 723, 802. Other, small groups may be given here also. Dark: *obscuro*; 1, 14, 459, 487, 607, 726–727, 753, 756, 763. Clean: 111, 241. Foul: 28, 135, 219, 266, 278.

[67] *exardesco, percalesco*; 50, 56, 59, 73, 79–80, 98–99, 109, 165, 170–71, 182, 251, 253, 674–75, 768, 770–72, 825, 836, 839, 1085–87, 1089, 1092.

ing mythological material to figurative effect. In the prologue the frustrated thirst of Tantalus is described in very graphic language of fire (98–99); later the chorus develops the same idea (165, 170–71). Between these passages, the Fury has driven on the ghost of Tantalus to transfer his raging thirst to the house of Atreus so that it will thirst for blood (101–3). By this gruesome device all the passion in the action becomes flaming violence inspired by infernal agents.

Sea-storm, not a strong figure itself,[68] strengthens the role of Fortune.[69] Just before the horrified messenger announces the first stage of the catastrophe, the apparent reconciliation of Atreus and Thyestes is welcomed by the chorus as a victory of love, contrasted with the long strife in Argos. They compare the change to the coming of calm after a wild storm, vividly sketched (577–87): *alta pax urbi revocata laetae est* (576). But, they imply, another storm is brewing, for Fortune does not allow stability (596–622). Rulers, who cause strife, must put aside their arrogance, as a storm lowers its winds: *ponite inflatos tumidosque vultus* (609). Power shifts, the wheel of Fortune turns (618). God, the chorus repeats, turns our affairs in a circle—only this time, we notice, the language of circle is at the same time language of storm (*turbo*): *res deus nostras celeri citatas / turbine versat* (621–22). Here again, as in the *Agamemnon*, the figures storm and Fortune are united by verbal subtlety.

For the most part, unrestraint[70] characterizes the frenzied nature, circumstances, and actions of the villain, and there are also the usual extensions of the idea to non-human subjects. Much stronger, of course, in a play presenting a victim of horror, is the insecurity[71] pervading the topsy-turvy scene. No stability

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[68] *ventosus*; 36, 360–62, 577–87, 609, 622, 959, 997.

[69] 34, 36, 231, 454, 529, 536, 596, 605–6, 618, 621–22, 879, 940.

[70] Control: 558, 569, 607, 1051–52, 1077–78.   Unrestraint: *indocilis, rabies*; 26–28, 33, 44, 85–86, 94, 101, 136, 196, 198, 200, 253–55, 260, 268, 291, 302, 339, 350, 352, 361–62, 496, 503, 519, 547, 556, 560, 573, 577, 609, 636, 682, 692, 715, 726, 737, 739, 743, 934, 960–62, 999, 1019.

[71] Security: *stabilio*; 290–91, 293–95, 365, 393, 450, 452, 456, 468–69, 559, 720, 928.   Insecurity: *exhorreo*; 16–18, 33–34, 40, 67, 69, 72, 76, 79, 83, 89, 96, 104, 111, 120, 142, 154, 168, 172, 217, 237, 240, 266, 283, 292, 297, 327, 335, 351, 405, 418, 422, 424–26, 434–35, 448–49, 460, 473, 482–83, 485–86, 533, 564, 570–72, 580, 582, 587, 590, 595, 610, 634, 638–39, 671, 677, 696–97, 708, 710–11, 714–15, 724, 729, 744, 756, 768, 828–29, 831–32, 851, 874, 882, 922–23, 949, 964–66, 968, 989, 992, 995, 1000, 1021.

is to be found anywhere in the action, except that young Tantalus
is one of the Senecan characters who face death in a Stoic posture,
sui securus (720).   Anguish and disorder affect all, the ghost of
Tantalus, Thyestes, the servant, the messenger, and the chorus in
its fear that primeval foul chaos is about to blot out gods and men
(831–32).   Even Atreus is distracted, being uncertain about the
legitimacy of his sons.   The whole scene is so devoid of order that
the stars and the gods can only flee (995, 1021), their brightness
obliterated by the unnatural darkness around the banquet.[72]

In the *Hercules Oetaeus* our material is very bulky, primarily
because the text is excessively long, containing material that might
have been reduced in a final version.   However, any lingering
doubt about Senecan authorship is eliminated by the un-
mistakably Senecan stamp of the imagery and its uses.   The
effect of subject matter upon figurative language is of the sort
seen in all the plays.   Since the major character is a victim of
irrationality, rather than a perpetrator of it, insecurity looms
larger than unrestraint, and the figures expressing passive condi-
tion are stronger than those describing active force.   One
important exception is that the metaphor of fire is of unique
importance for the subject of Hercules' rise from the funeral pyre
to the stars.

The idea of control [73] appears frequently, in counsels of restraint
exchanged among almost all the characters.   Hyllus and the
nurse try to restrain Deianira.   Alcmena checks Hercules and
Hyllus.   Hercules   and   Alcmena   are   advised   by   Hyllus,
and Hercules, reaching the full status of the traditional Stoic
hero, comforts his mother.   At the opposite pole, more prominent
as usual, language of license occurs in many miscellaneous
connections, and is concentrated upon the fury of Deianira and
the anguish of Hercules and Alcmena.

But the main theme is concern for security in the face of chaos; [74]

[72] Bright: 49–50, 130, 355, 791, 825, 834.   Dark: 10, 70, 624, 654–55, 665, 668, 699, 786, 792, 823–24, 897, 994, 1008, 1071–72, 1094.

[73] Control: *inhibeo*; 276–77, 290, 675, 683, 837, 922, 1030, 1173, 1275, 1374–75, 1427, 1456, 1507, 1674, 1677, 1832, 1945, 1965.   Unrestraint: 167, 226, 233, 240, 244, 250, 254, 273, 275, 285, 309, 311, 314, 383, 420–21, 429, 434, 439, 446, 456, 506, 522, 543, 701, 710, 715, 775, 807, 823–26, 879, 905, 907, 927, 1020, 1026, 1077, 1128, 1211, 1213, 1221, 1282, 1407–8, 1452, 1461, 1535, 1589, 1668, 1770–71, 1783–84, 1869, 1922, 1930, 1958, 1985.

[74] Security: *impavidus*; 3, 63, 91, 217, 283, 327, 645, 652, 654, 676, 697, 1021, 1685, 1693, 1701, 1737, 1820, 1990.   Insecurity: *conterreo, defugio, pererro, tremefacio,*

and chaos is everywhere. A random selection from the miscellaneous references to insecurity meets the following points: Scylla and Charybdis are to be feared no more than a wife enraged by jealousy (235–36). The wheel of Icarus' chariot wanders (681). Deianira anticipates for herself the punishment of Tantalus, from whose lips the shifting water flees (943). The Nemean lion still causes dread as a constellation (1572). At the death of Hercules, Pluto fears for his kingdom (1955). These and many other instances of Seneca's heavy pictorial decoration are as much a part of the image of instability as the more functional instances in the experience of Iole's father or Deianira or Hyllus or Alcmena or Philoctetes. So strong is the threat of disintegration that the death of the hero may throw the universe into darkness and confusion (1132–33, 1147), its laws buried in chaos (1102–3, 1115). All through the turmoil, Fortune[75] in its wheeling course affects the lives of Iole and her fellow captives, Deianira and Hercules, and again is linked with sea-storm.[76] In one interesting passage (697–98) Fortune passes by safe harbors (representing moderation) and attacks ships in the open sea.

On the other hand, the *Hercules Oetaeus* is unique in that a final security is reached. Consequently this abstract figure is prominent. Before the transfiguration of the hero, security is only the freedom from fear brought about by his exploits or the negative security of death or the result of a humble life. At the end, Hercules achieves positive and lasting stability. His composure on the pyre (1685, 1737), *sui securus* (1693), leads to a final freedom from fear: *virtus in astra tendit, in mortem timor* (1971). Foulness[77] and darkness[78] are left behind.

tremibundus; 23, 27, 54, 66, 69, 76, 82, 85, 103, 122, 199, 223, 236, 244, 247, 253, 261, 270, 272, 274, 288, 299, 323, 327, 352, 365, 378, 388, 395–96, 425, 442, 449–50, 469, 476, 541, 543, 585, 600, 675, 681, 700, 706–9, 712, 718, 724, 727, 740, 766, 768, 770, 779, 798, 800, 807, 810–11, 842, 853, 880, 891, 928, 941, 943, 963, 985, 987, 1015, 1020, 1052, 1058–59, 1110, 1133, 1147, 1200, 1291, 1332, 1372–73, 1408, 1572, 1574–1575, 1590, 1593, 1597–99, 1600, 1602, 1632, 1682, 1719–20, 1727–29, 1758, 1781, 1788, 1828, 1892, 1924, 1928–29, 1931, 1944, 1955, 1958, 1961–62, 1971, 1993.

[75] 105, 178, 205, 217, 226–27, 232, 358, 394, 583, 600, 603, 650, 697, 703, 715, 748, 902, 1607, 1904.

[76] *turbidus*; 112–14, 235–36, 455–56, 650–51, 695–96, 698, 710, 1562–63.

[77] Clean: 65, 239, 897. Foul: *macula*; 119–20, 124, 384, 935, 1004, 1177, 1180, 1254, 1454, 1530, 1673, 1702, 1757, 1970.

[78] Bright: *splendesco*; 42–43, 237–39, 291, 391, 393, 555, 626, 749, 783, 792, 1022, 1131, 1438, 1489, 1518, 1567, 1838–39. Dark: 23, 938, 1004, 1133, 1141, 1294, 1370, 1705, 1919, 1964.

Finally, the most expressive and profuse figure in fire.[79]   In
addition to the repeated occurrence of fire in the action—the
effect of the love-poison, Hercules' sacrifice before donning
the robe, the funeral pyre—the metaphor expresses the important
implications of the theme, both negative and positive.   Psycho-
logically, fire describes the erotic fury of Deianira and also the
other loves of Hercules.   But destructive fire meets its master on
the pyre, as Seneca describes very flamboyantly.   Celestial fire,
the property of the Olympians, is turned over to the hero, to
rid the earth of any new threat to its security (1989–96).   His
despairing question in the prologue—why does Jupiter refuse to
admit me to the stars (13)?—is answered (1942–43): *iam virtus
mihi | in astra et ipsos fecit ad superos iter.*   The contrast between
earthly and heavenly fire is summed up in his words to Alcmena
(1966–68):

> quicquid in nobis tui
> mortale fuerat, ignis evictus tulit:
> paterna caelo, pars data est flammis tua.

The fire of earth destroys.   The fire of sky, stars, and spirit
survives and preserves.

So the *Hercules Oetaeus* in its more positive orientation caps the
system of imagery found in all the complete plays[80] and, it seems,
in the fragmentary *Phoenissae.*[81]   Since the meaning of the figures

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. [79] *aestuo, inardesco, incalesco*; 2, 7, 88, 251, 276, 280, 285–86, 310–11, 324–26, 339,
347, 351, 358, 370, 377–78, 435, 471, 542, 556–57, 577, 620, 720, 723, 725, 740, 752,
790, 792, 808, 847, 849, 851, 871, 880, 1005, 1014, 1022, 1143–44, 1218, 1220–23,
1277–78, 1288, 1299, 1301, 1339, 1361–63, 1367, 1396, 1405, 1439, 1484, 1487, 1610,
1613, 1615–17, 1638–40, 1644–45, 1660, 1662, 1664, 1666, 1682, 1692, 1708, 1716–18,
1723–24, 1727–28, 1730–33, 1736–37, 1740, 1743–45, 1747–52, 1754, 1913–15, 1956,
1958–59, 1967–68, 1994, 1996.

[80] The vocabulary of the images may be found in the following footnotes: control-
unrestraint, 4, 26, 38, 41, 65, 70, 73; security-insecurity, 14, 25, 39, 42, 52, 57, 71, 74;
bright-dark, 19, 28, 35, 43, 54, 66, 78; clean-foul, 20, 36, 44, 77; fire, 16, 27, 32, 45,
50, 66, 67, 79; sea-storm, 17, 33, 46, 60, 68, 76; Fortune, 31, 47.

[81] Since the relationship among the fragments is not certain, we can say only that
in the traditional sequence they seem to show Senecan technique.   Antigone controls
Oedipus physically and attempts to restrain him psychologically (1, 62, 78, 149, 307,
310, 347); Antigone, the messenger, Jocasta wish to check the warring brothers (289,
292, 327, 329, 404, 412).   Violence involves Laius, Oedipus, the brothers, and
Jocasta, among other connections (34, 41, 114, 131, 142, 155–56, 290–91, 299, 302,
317, 352–53, 362, 365, 420, 427, 429–30, 484, 527, 557, 574, 583–85, 599–600).
Insecurity, the heaviest theme, affects almost everybody (4, 23, 50, 91, 139, 191, 197,
210–11, 215–18, 236, 247, 252, 259, 265, 321, 372–73, 397, 442, 459, 466, 474, 477–78,

is essentially philosophical, it is no surprise to find that Seneca
uses similar devices in his prose.   The Stoic preoccupation with
nature and its unity leads the writer of philosophical essays to
illustrate his points often from nature, as when the quality
constantia is defined by analogy with the invulnerable hardness
of stones or material impervious to fire or rocks not damaged by
the sea.[82]   More specifically, the prose images often are identical
with the dramatic figures.[83]   Anger is a monster like the fiction
of poets, a creature of fire, noise, and darkness; or a gathering
storm and darkness.   On the other hand, a rational man achieves
calm like that of the upper sky where greater order and nearness
to the stars eliminate storm and whirlwind.   A life devoted to
material things, Seneca writes to Polybius, is like a stormy sea
subject to the shifting tides of Fortune, and the only harbor is
death.   Greed is fire feeding upon itself.   The metaphors of sea
and storm are used to describe the nature of Fortune.   Military
conquerors who shake the world are themselves tossed like un-
controllable whirlwinds.   Even as the sun sends its rays to earth
but remains in the sky, so a great soul on earth retains its heavenly
origin.

These parallels could be multiplied, but they merely confirm
the fact, already clear, that the major systems of imagery in the
dramas are Stoic in purpose.   If the Stoics were indifferent
to literature and the arts for themselves, they could not be in-
different to moral suasion communicated in literature.   The
dramatic imagery serves precisely this end.   It expresses the
absolute contradiction of control, order, rationality *versus* license,
chaos, irrationality, as of white against black; or rather, of black
against white, for the main picture is of the moral disintegration
caused when reason is overwhelmed by unreason, veering in some
plays to violence, in others to distraction.

486, 488, 492, 495, 502, 504, 513, 516, 521–22, 528, 530, 533, 586, 617–18, 625–26,
629, 632, 645, 652, 654, 662).   Only the negative meaning of fire is found, associated
with the passionate emotions of Oedipus, Jocasta, and their sons (110–12, 340–41,
345–47, 352, 411, 431–32, 581, 663).   Sea-storm is used similarly (114, 420–21, 429–
430), and Fortune plays its usual role (82, 123, 194, 212, 214, 239, 452, 629, 632).
The purity of Antigone (222) is contrasted with the foulness of Oedipus, the Sphinx
and Thebes defiled (131, 220, 223, 344, 620).   Roughly, the material resembles the
figurative effects in the *Oedipus*.

    [82] *Const. sap.* 3.5.
    [83] The following parallels are found in *Ira* 2.35.5; 3.10.2; 3.12.4; 3.27.2; 3.6.1;
Cons. Polyb. 9.6–7; *Ben.* 2.27.3; *Ep.* 4.7; 8.4; 94.67; 41.5.

The method is dramatic and poetic, rather than philosophical. In technical Stoic terms, no evil may be attributed to nature itself. Such destructive phenomena as fire, disease, storm are "indifferent" externals beyond human control and morally significant only in terms of human reaction to them. But in drama, prose essays, or any kind of literary expression, the pantheistic writer is irresistibly drawn to the immense variety of nature, now serene, now tumultuous, for illustration of what he observes. In a rhetorical writer like Seneca this tendency is increased by the desire for large graphic effect and vivid animation.

Though the method is non-philosophical and runs into technical inconsistencies, as we have noted, the effect is generally consistent with Stoicism and indeed expresses the core of Stoicism with great force. In instance after instance we have seen that the imagery pictures the antagonism between reason and un-reason in two major dimensions: in the psychological state of the human disposition, the microcosm; and in the cosmos at large. The relationship between the two dimensions is not entirely clear. In fact, Stoic definitions do not allow a complete relationship between them since perversion of reason is found only in the human sphere; the universe at large does not manifest irrationality comparable to human irrationality. (The Greek tragedians were not confined by this kind of limitation.) On the surface, Seneca seems to strain belief when he extends human behavior to the cosmos by attributing insecurity and unrestraint to inanimate nature, making places feel fear and constellations threaten violence. No doubt rhetorical personification is at work here. More fundamentally, the apparent blurring of animate and inanimate dimensions is not a fault of imagery, but reflects the Stoic view of the universe as an animate complex. The use of imagery in the double function of portraying psychological state and world-state at one and the same time is in tune with the Stoic conception of the unified cosmos. Specifically, the large scene signifies that the forces and conditions expressed figuratively are the elements that maintain or pervert the good in the conflict considered universal by the Stoics; all the polarity found in the images reflects this conflict. A second implication is that the destructive effect of irrationality is pervasive.

What are the qualities of the imagery? It is grandiose and artificial, systematic and forceful. In "live" drama like the

Greek, or Shakespeare, images are intrinsic. That is, they are created to be, for the most part, a natural expression of the thoughts and feelings associated with the dynamics of the action as a living phenomenon. Seneca's whole dramaturgy is essentially a system of commentary upon the action, and his imagery is of course part of this conscious system. We are reminded of T. S. Eliot's comment: "In the plays of Seneca, the drama is all in the word . . ." [84] The dramatic characters themselves are poured in molds. A student remarked recently that the *Phaedra* is like an illustrated lecture: the characters are slides shown to illustrate the lecturer's points. Such strictures do not mean that Seneca is "undramatic." His is a philosophical drama of limited scope. Its scope is limited by the main purpose to "comment upon" the traditional themes so as to convey the horror of irrationality felt so intensely by the Stoic. In intensity and force, the imagery of Seneca, like the introspective monologue and other aspects of his drama, was a new departure in the ancient dramatic tradition. It provided the manner and the language for a more conscious probing into the psychology of human action and its relationship to universal condition, an effective instrument for greater artists to come.

[84] *Seneca in Elizabethan Translation* (above, note 1).