

# SENECA'S PHAEDRA



**AJ BOYLE**

**X FRANCIS CAIRNS**

# SENECA'S PHAEDRA

Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes

A. J. BOYLE



FRANCIS CAIRNS

Published by Francis Cairns (Publications) Ltd  
c/o The University, LEEDS, LS2 9JT, Great Britain

First published 1987

Reprinted 1992

Copyright © A. J. Boyle, 1987

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Publisher. The right of performance of the English translation is strictly reserved. Application for permission to perform it, etc., must be made in writing to the Publisher and permission received before rehearsals begin.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0-905205-61-8

ISBN 0-905205-66-9 Pbk

Printed in Great Britain by  
Redwood Press Ltd, Melksham, Wiltshire

---

SENECA'S PHAEDRA

*FOR MY PARENTS THERESA AND ARTHUR*



Sed qualescumque sunt, tu illos [libros] sic lege, tamquam uerum quaeram adhuc, non sciam, et contumaciter quaeram.

Whatever the quality of my works is, read them as if I were still seeking, but were not possessed of, the truth—and seeking it with defiance.

*Seneca Epistle 45*

## PREFACE

This edition and translation of Seneca's *Phaedra* are intended to be of use to students of Senecan drama in translation and to students of Latin. The introduction and the notes have been designed with both kinds of reader in mind. As in my earlier *The Eclogues of Virgil* (Melbourne 1976), I have attempted in the translation to produce a text suitable for serious study. A high level of verbal and stylistic accuracy has been sought, and attention has been given to the changing verse-forms of the play, to significant verbal and imagistic repetition, and to the order of words and phrases in the original Latin line. The Latin text itself, edited and punctuated by me, is based on recent consultation of the main manuscripts, and contains 51 different readings from the Zwierlein Oxford text of 1986 (listed in Appendix III). A selective critical apparatus has been provided for the benefit of more advanced Latin students together with an appendix on Senecan metre. Scholarly readers should also find material of interest in this edition.

Much of the work for this book was done in Cambridge in 1985, when I was a Visiting Fellow of Clare Hall. I am grateful to Clare Hall and its president, Sir Michael Stoker, for the provision of a stimulating and agreeable environment in which to conduct research. Several friends and colleagues have read through parts of this book and offered advice: Marcus Wilson of Sydney University; Saul Bastomsky, William Dominik, John Penwill, Marianne Westbrook and Bronwyn Williams of Monash; Peter Davis of the University of Tasmania, who also generously allowed me to see his own translation of the play; and Guy Lee and Ruth Morse of Cambridge University, who discussed the whole translation with me at an early and crucial stage. To them and to my research assistant, Mrs. Betty Williams, I am much indebted. My thanks are also due to the four libraries which supplied photographs or microfilms of the major Senecan manuscripts and in two cases provided facilities for examining the manuscripts *in situ*: Corpus Christi College Library, Cambridge; Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; Biblioteca Real, Escorial. Help of various kinds was given by Judy, James and Kathryn Boyle. A lifelong debt is acknowledged elsewhere.

Monash University, Melbourne, July 1986

A.J.B.

## CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Introduction	
1. Life and Works	1
2. The Literary Background	7
3. The Myth	15
4. The Play	18
5. The Translation	38
PHAEDRA: TEXT AND TRANSLATION	40
Selective Critical Apparatus	127
Notes	132
Appendix I: Nature	213
Appendix II: Metre	214
Appendix III: Variants from the Oxford Text	216
Select Bibliography	219
Index to the Notes	
i) Passages cited from other Senecan plays	223
ii) General	226

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. LIFE AND WORKS

Quasi in tutte le sue tragedie, egli avanzò (per quanto a me ne paia) nella prudenza, nella gravità, nel decoro, nella maiestà, nelle sentenze, tutti i Greci che scrissero mai.

In almost all his tragedies he surpassed (in my opinion) in prudence, in gravity, in decorum, in majesty, in epigrams, all the Greeks who ever wrote.

Giraldi Cintio, *Discorsi* (1543)

Seneca *tragicus* has received a variable press. Tragic idol of the Renaissance, *bête noire* of a century and a half of British and German classical scholarship, the enigmatic author of the Senecan plays still evokes responses both of approbation and of censure. The tendency to unqualified vilification, so marked in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has however largely disappeared, replaced by a growing attention to the nature of the plays and their intellectual and cultural context. Replaced too by augmented respect for our dramatic forebears. Seneca's attested influence on French and Elizabethan tragedy, on dramatists of the distinction of Corneille, Racine and Shakespeare, is in the latter part of the twentieth century not likely to be dismissed simply as a bizarre historical accident. Important recent studies of the plays reveal not the pseudo-tragedian, hackneyed rhetorician or Stoic propagandist of Seneca's detractors, but a dramatist interested in drama—in the careful shaping of dramatic action, in the interrelationship between chorus and act, in dramatic movement, pace, impetus, in the structuring and unfolding of dramatic language and imagery, in the spectacular and thematic use of "theatre", in human psychology emblematic and imaged. The considerable variation evidenced in such standard matters as prologue composition, choral length and sequence, the number of choruses and actors, the messenger's speech, the five or six act division, discloses in fact a dramatist interested in dramatic experimentation. And interest in form in Seneca is wedded inextricably to interest in what is dramatically efformed, the themes, ideas, problems, issues, which his tragedies realise, which constitute



their world. A world neither simply Stoic nor simple. Neither formal nor ideological simplicity determines Senecan drama. Its hallmarks are intricacy of language, structure, image, thought— and human centrality of theme. As *Phaedra* demonstrates, Seneca's seminal position in European drama is well merited.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca was born in 1 B.C. or shortly before in Corduba (modern Cordova) in southern Spain, the second of three sons to the cultivated equestrian, Annaeus Seneca (c.55 B.C. to c.A.D. 40—*praenomen* probably also Lucius), author of a lost history of Rome and a surviving (but badly mutilated) work on Roman declamation, *Controuersiae* and *Suasoriae*. The youngest son, Mela, was the father of the epic poet Lucan. Brought to Rome as a young child and given the standard education in rhetoric, Seneca had become by the early years of Tiberius' principate (A.D. 14-37), while still in adolescence, a passionate devotee of philosophy. The focus of his ardor was an ascetic, locally taught form of Stoic-Pythagoreanism with a strong commitment to vegetarianism. Before long he had been dissuaded from it by his father (*Ep.* 108. 17-22). During his youth and throughout his life Seneca suffered from a tubercular condition, and was impelled on one occasion to contemplate suicide when he despaired of recovery. He records that only the thought of the suffering he would have caused his father prevented his death (*Ep.* 78.1f.).

Ill health presumably delayed the start of his political career, as did a substantial period of convalescence in Egypt during the twenties under the care of his maternal aunt. He returned to Rome from Egypt in A.D. 31 (surviving a shipwreck in which his uncle died), and entered the senate via the quaestorship shortly afterwards, as did Gallio his elder brother. By the beginning of Claudius' principate (A.D. 41) he had also held the aedileship and the office of tribune of the people (*tribunus plebis*). During the thirties too he married (although whether it was to his wife of later years who survived him, Pompeia Paulina, is uncertain), and he achieved such fame as a public speaker as to arouse the attention and jealousy of the emperor Gaius (Suetonius *Gaius* 53.2, Dio 59.19.7f.), better known as Caligula. By the late thirties Seneca was clearly moving in the circle of princes, among "that tiny group of men on which there bore down, night and day, the concentric pressure of a monstrous weight, the post-Augustan empire" (Herington). His presence in high places was initially short-lived. He survived Caligula's brief principate (A.D. 37-41) only to be exiled to Corsica in the first year of Claudius' reign

(A.D. 41). The charge was adultery with Caligula's sister, Julia Livilla, brought by the new empress, Claudius' young wife, Messalina.

Seneca's exile came at a time of great personal distress (both his father and his son had recently died—*Helv.* 2.4f.), and, despite pleas for imperial clemency (see esp. *Pol.* 13.2ff.), lasted eight tedious years. In A.D. 48 Messalina was executed. In the following year Seneca, through the agency of Agrippina, Claudius' new wife, was recalled to Rome and designated praetor for A.D. 50. His literary and philosophical reputation were now well established (*Tac. Ann.* 12.8.3), and he was appointed tutor to Agrippina's son, Nero. This appointment as Nero's tutor not only placed Seneca again at the centre of the Roman world, but brought him immense power and influence when Agrippina poisoned her emperor-husband and Nero acceded to the throne (A.D. 54). Throughout the early part of Nero's principate Seneca (suffect consul in A.D. 56) and the commander of the praetorian guard, S. Afranius Burrus, acted as the chief ministers and political counsellors of Nero, whom they increasingly became unable to control. Nero's matricide in A.D. 59, to which it is probable that neither Seneca nor Burrus was privy, but for which nevertheless Seneca wrote a *post factum* justification (*Tac. Ann.* 14.11), signalled the weakening of their power. When Burrus died (perhaps poisoned—*Tac. Ann.* 14.15.1) in A.D. 62, Seneca went into semi-retirement. In A.D. 65 he was accused of involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero and was ordered to kill himself. This he did, leaving to his friends "his one remaining possession—and his best—the pattern of his life" (*quod unum iam et tamen pulcherrimum habeat, imaginem uitae suae*, *Tac. Ann.* 15.62.1).

Although Seneca was born only a few years after Horace's death he inhabited a different world. Horace (65-8 B.C.) lived through Rome's momentous and bloody transformation from republic to empire; he fought with Brutus and Cassius at Philippi (42 B.C.). Seneca never knew the republic. Born under Augustus and committing suicide three years before Nero's similar fate, he lived through and was encompassed by the Julio-Claudian principate. Throughout Seneca's lifetime—despite the preservation of Rome's political, legal, moral, social and religious forms—power resided essentially in one man, the *princeps* or emperor, sometimes (as in the case of Caligula) a vicious psychopath. Political and personal freedom were nullities. In Rome and especially at the court itself, on which the pressure of empire bore, nothing and no one seemed

secure, the Roman world's controlling forms used, abused and nullified by the *princeps*' power. Servility, hypocrisy, corrupting power indexed this Julio-Claudian world. Or so at least the ancient historians would have us believe, especially Tacitus, whose *Annales*, written in the first decades of the second century A.D., documents the hatreds, fears, lusts, cowardice, self-interest, self-abasement, abnormal cruelty, extravagant vice, violent death, inversion and perversion of Rome's efforming values and institutions—and, more rarely, the nobility and the heroism—which to his mind constituted the early imperial court. Tacitus' indictment of Nero's principate is as emphatic as it is persuasive. Nero's debauchery (*Ann.* 15.37), fratricide (*Ann.* 13.16-18), matricide (*Ann.* 14.8-10), sororicide (*Ann.* 14.60-64) are emblematically portrayed. Witness the murder of Octavia, ex-wife and step-sister (A.D. 62):

restringitur uinclis uenaeque eius per omnes artus exsoluuntur; et quia pressus pauore sanguis tardius labebatur, praeferuidi balnei uapore enecatur. additurque atrocior saeuitia, quod caput amputatum latumque in urbem Poppaea uidit. dona ob haec templis decreta quem ad finem memorabimus? quicumque casus temporum illorum nobis uel aliis auctoribus noscent, praesumptum habeant, quotiens fugas et caedes iussit princeps, totiens grates deis actas, quaeque rerum secundarum olim, tum publicae cladis insignia fuisse.

She was bound in chains and her veins were opened in every limb; but her blood, congealed by terror, flowed too slowly, so she was suffocated by the steam of a boiling bath. A more appalling cruelty followed: her head was cut off and taken to Rome to be viewed by Poppaea. How long shall I go on recounting the thank-offerings in temples on such occasions? Every reader of the history of that period, in my work or in others', should assume that the gods were thanked each time the emperor ordered an exile or a murder, and that what formerly signalled rejoicing now indicated public disaster.

(*Ann.* 14.64)

Or the black farce of Roman servility (A.D. 65):

sed compleri interim urbs funeribus, Capitolium uictimis; alius filio, fratre alius aut propinquo aut amico interfectis, agere grates deis, ornare lauru domum, genua ipsius aduolui et dextram osculis fatigare.

Funerals abounded in the city, thank-offerings on the Capitol. Men who had lost a son or brother or relative or friend gave thanks to the gods, bedecked their houses with laurel, and fell at the feet of Nero kissing his hand incessantly.

(*Ann.* 15.71)

Tacitus' account of Rome's distemper is prejudicial, in part myopic. The author of the *Annales* had experienced at first hand the human degradation at the centre of the early principate, the paralysing nightmare of a tyrant's (in his case Domitian's) court. As had Seneca. And, as in Tacitus, it shows. The themes of Seneca's tragedies—vengeance, madness, power-lust, passion, irrational hatred, self-contempt, murder, incest, hideous death, fortune's vicissitudes and savagery—were the stuff of his life. Those who think them merely rhetorical commonplaces have never stared into the face of a Caligula (see *Ira* 3.18-19.5).

Omitting a body of epigrams handed down under Seneca's name (most of which are certainly spurious) Seneca's writings can conveniently be divided into the prose works and the tragedies. The prose works comprise a scientific work, *Naturales Quaestiones* ("Natural Questions"), a satire on Claudius' deification, *Apocolocyntosis* ("The Pumpkinification"), and a series of texts more or less philosophical in content: the ten so-called *Dialogi* ("Dialogues"), *De Beneficiis* ("On Benefits"), *De Clementia* ("On Clemency"—addressed to Nero on his accession), and *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* ("Moral Epistles"). These so-called "philosophical" works are infused to a greater or lesser extent with Stoic ethical ideas: the advocacy of virtue, endurance, self-sufficiency, true friendship; the condemnation of evil, emotions and the false values of wealth and power; the praise of reason, wisdom, poverty; contempt for the fear of death. The prose works cover a considerable period of time—from the thirties A.D. to Seneca's death. Among the earliest to be written was *Consolatio ad Marciam*, composed under Caligula (A.D. 37-41); among the last were *Naturales Quaestiones* and *Epistulae Morales*, written during the years of Seneca's retirement (A.D. 62-65).

At least seven complete tragedies can be assigned to Seneca: *Hercules [Furens]*, *Troades*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes*. Such are their titles in the E branch of the ms. tradition. In the A branch *Hercules* is given the augmented title *Hercules Furens*, *Troades* is called *Tros*, and *Phaedra* is called *Hippolytus* (*Phaedra* is also the title used by the sixth century grammarian, Priscian, quoting *Pha.* 710). An eighth play, *Phoenissae* (*Thebais* in A) is also accepted by most modern scholars as Senecan, but it possesses no choral odes and is thought by some to be incomplete. A ninth play, *Hercules Oetaeus*, is almost twice as long as the average Senecan play and is generally agreed to be—at least in its present form—non-Senecan. A tenth play, the *fabula praetexta* or historical

drama, *Octauia*, in which Seneca appears as a character and which seems to refer to events which took place after Seneca's death, is missing from A and is certainly not by Seneca.

The date of the composition of the plays is not known. Most modern commentators accept a *terminus ante quem* of A.D. 54 for *Hercules Furens* on the grounds that the *Apocolocyntosis* (securely dated to A.D. 54) seems to parody it. But the first unambiguous reference to any of Seneca's plays is by Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.2.8), writing a generation after Seneca's death. Seneca in fact makes no mention of his tragedies in his prose works. Many commentators allocate them to the period of exile on Corsica (A.D. 41-49); others regard it as more likely that their composition, like that of the prose works, was spread over a considerable period of time. Recent stylometric studies of the plays seem to support the latter position.

The relationship between the tragedies and the philosophical works continues to be debated. Although the tragedies are not mentioned in the prose works, it is perhaps still conventional to regard them as the product of Stoic convictions and the dramatisation of a Stoic world-view. Certainly they abound in Stoic moral ideas (many traceable to the *Epistulae Morales*) and their preoccupation with emotional pathology and with the destructive consequences of passion, especially anger, is deeply indebted to the Stoic tradition (see especially *De Ira*). But this Stoicism is no outer ideological clothing but part of the dramatic texture of the plays. And to many, including the present editor, the world-view of most of the plays is decidedly unstoic, the Stoic ideology itself being critically exhibited within a larger, more profound, more disturbing vision.

## 2. THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

### Roman Tragedy

Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit et artis  
intulit agresti Latio.

Enslaved Greece enslaved her savage victor and brought  
The arts to rustic Latium.

Horace *Epistle* 2.1.156f.

Product of the Hellenisation of Rome in the third and second centuries B.C., when Rome sought to enhance its own self-image and Greek literary and artistic forms were adopted and adapted by the Roman world, Roman tragedy in the late republic was a vital literary force. The first tragedy known to have been written in Latin was the adaptation of a Greek play by the early translator of Homer's *Odyssey*, the ex-slave, Livius Andronicus; it was performed at the *Ludi Romani* of 240 B.C. Thence until the end of the republic the writing and the performance of Roman tragedies were active industries. Most of such tragedies took their themes and plots from existing Greek plays (but the process was nothing at all like "translation"), and a new kind of tragedy also emerged, the historical drama or *fabula praetexta* (Horace *Ars Poetica* 288), which took its theme from Roman history. Four major figures stand out, whose works, however, survive only in fragments: Naevius (died c. 200 B.C.), Ennius (239-169 B.C.), Pacuvius (220-130 B.C.) and Accius (170-c.85 B.C.). The first of these to devote himself entirely to tragic drama was Pacuvius—erudite, allusive, Alexandrian. But it was "soaring" Accius (Horace *Ep.* 2.1.55), famed for his rhetorical skills, especially the emotive force of his speeches, who dominated the late republic. His output was immense. So too his popularity, nor only in his lifetime. Revivals of Accius' plays—sometimes performed with contemporary political overtones—are attested for the years 57 B.C. (*Eurysaces* and *Brutus*), 55 B.C. (*Clytemnestra*), 54 B.C. (*Astyanax*), and 44 B.C. (*Tereus*). Other second century tragedians too had their work performed at this time, but Accius' popularity seems to have been unmatched. Even Cicero, who judged Pacuvius supreme in tragedy (*Op. Gen.* 1.2), admired him greatly (see, e.g., *Sest.* 119ff.).

Like that of Athens, Roman tragedy was constituent of a social context. During the late third and second centuries B.C. *ludi scaenici*,

“theatrical shows”, including comedies, tragedies, music and dancing, were incorporated into the annual festivals held at Rome in honour of Jupiter, Apollo, Magna Mater, Flora and Ceres. At the same time the practice arose of performing plays at the triumphs or funerals of distinguished citizens and at the consecration of temples. The *ludi scaenici* were organised by Roman magistrates, who used them—among other things—to impress their peers, clients and the citizen body as a whole, and (especially where the *praetexta* was concerned) for specific political goals. Initially it was to the magistrate who commissioned the *ludi* that the bulk of the credit for a performance went. The early playwrights themselves were accorded little social status, being regarded as paid employees of the magistrate, if they were not his actual slaves. This situation began to change during the second century B.C., and by the first century the early writers of Roman tragedy were being regarded as the fathers of an important indigenous literature. They were sometimes even thought to excel their Greek counterparts (see, e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 2.49).

As to how these early Roman tragedies were staged much remains obscure. It is clear that the lyric sections of the plays, which took up a far greater proportion of the drama than in fifth-century Greek tragedy or in Seneca, were musically accompanied (by a piper or flute-player, *tibicen*), and certainly by the first century B.C. actors were wearing the tragic mask (Cic. *De Orat.* 3.221) and buskins. Moreover, at Rome until 55 B.C. all plays were staged on temporary wooden structures, erected for the duration of the *ludi scaenici*. Both the stage and the stage-building with its three doorways would have been of wood. The wealthier Greek cities of southern Italy and Sicily had stone theatres dating from the fifth century (the theatre of Syracuse was dedicated c.460 B.C.) and by the end of the second century several Italian towns had acquired their own permanent stone-built theatre (the large theatre of Pompeii dates from c.200 B.C.). But the conservative moralists at Rome prevented the capital itself from acquiring its first stone-built theatre until the construction of the Theatre of Pompey in 55-52 B.C. The wait was perhaps worthwhile. A revolutionary concrete and marble structure, in which stage-building, semicircular orchestra and tiered concave auditorium were united into a closed, holistic space, the Theatre of Pompey provided the model and the standard for the theatres of the capital and the empire to come. Even in the fourth century A.D. it was still heralded as one of the outstanding monuments of Rome (Ammianus Marcellinus 16.10.14).

But if the physical context of Roman tragedy improved after the death of Accius, the same cannot automatically be said about tragedy itself. Many maintain that Accius was the last great Roman tragedian and that after his death tragedy became the plaything of aristocratic litterateurs, composing tragedies for diversion, not for the stage. Cicero's brother, Quintus, for example, composed four tragedies in sixteen days (Cic. *Q. Fr.* 3.5, 6.7); Julius Caesar wrote an *Oedipus* and Augustus attempted an *Ajax* (Suetonius *Julius* 56.7, *Augustus* 85.2). But although the second half of the first century B.C. seemed to produce no tragedian of the stature of an Accius, notable tragedies were written by Asinius Pollio, praised by Virgil (*Ecl.* 8.9f.) and Horace (*Odes* 2.1.11f.), by Varius Rufus, whose *Thyestes* was performed at the Actian Games of 29 B.C., and by Ovid. Varius' *Thyestes* and Ovid's *Medea* were held in high esteem at least by Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.98—cf. also Tac. *Dial.* 12.5). During the early empire (first century A.D.) the *ludi scaenici* became increasingly dominated by "popular theatre", in the form of mime (coarse and indecent) and pantomime, and by spectacle, but some tragedy continued to be written and publicly performed. There is evidence too of "political" tragedy. Aemilius Scaurus, for example, wrote a tragedy, *Atreus*, which angered Tiberius (Dio 58.24; Tac. *Ann.* 6.29), and in Tacitus' *Dialogus* Curiatius Maternus is credited with a tragedy, *Cato*, which may have offended Vespasian (*princeps* A.D. 69-79), and with another political tragedy, *Thyestes*. Maternus is also described as reciting his tragedies in public (Tac. *Dial.* 2.3, 11.2), but that tragedies were still being written for the stage in the mid-to-late first century A.D. is clear from the example of Seneca's contemporary Pomponius Secundus, a distinguished dramatist (Tac. *Dial.* 13.7) who, according to Quintilian, excelled in "learning", *eruditio*, and "brilliance", *nitor* (*Inst.* 10.1.98), and who definitely wrote for the stage (*is carmina scaenae dabat*, Tac. *Ann.* 11.13; see also Pliny *Ep.* 7.17.11). Pomponius Secundus figured in fact in a celebrated argument with Seneca on tragic diction (Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.31).

The following complex picture emerges of the theatrical conditions of Seneca's day. Throughout Italy and the empire theatres abound (three in Rome itself)—Roman, not Greek. Their concrete structures, marble revetments, socially stratified seating, holistic design, their deep stages, on which all the action takes place (the small orchestra having been given over to senatorial seating), richly decorated stage-curtains (including in Seneca's day the "drop-curtain"), baroque stage-buildings adorned with statues, scene-paintings, masks and



garlands — index their *romanitas*. Mime, pantomime, spectacle predominate, but comedy (Suetonius *Nero* 11) and high tragedy are still regularly performed in the theatre and probably also in private houses (*intra domum*—see Suetonius *Domitian* 7.1; cf. Sen. *NQ* 7.32.3). Tragedies too are often “recited” (by a single speaker). The recitation takes place in a private house or recitation-hall, *auditorium* (both for its own sake and as a preliminary to theatrical performance and/or publication—see Pliny *Ep.* 7.17.11), or in the theatre itself as a virtuoso individual recital of a tragic speech, episode or monody. To the last category belong Nero’s own performances (Suetonius *Nero* 21.3) of “the tragedies of heroes and gods wearing the tragic mask (*personatus*)”. Some have also assigned Senecan tragedy to the category of recitation-drama—generally on the basis of (unjustified) naturalistic assumptions about the conventions of the imperial stage. But Seneca’s exhibited “stage-craft” in the construction of scenes, his thematic use of stage-setting, the stage-directions in the text itself indicate that his plays were designed for dramatic performance—whether the performance envisaged was in the theatre or in a private house to a coterie audience (or both). Senecan tragedy belongs, if anything does, to the category of performance drama.

But while an intricate but clear picture emerges of the continuing existence and developing complexity of Roman tragedy as both social institution and literary form, little is known of its dramaturgical practices and conventions. Contemporary witnesses of republican tragedy mention such matters as the presence of the flute-player, the wearing of tragic masks and the predominance of spectacle (as in the gala performance of Accius’ *Clytemnestra* in 55 B.C. to celebrate the opening of the Theatre of Pompey—Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.2), but provide little detailed dramaturgical information. The Augustan picture is a little clearer. Vitruvius’ comments in *De Architectura* 5.6, although confined essentially to theatre design and construction, include important remarks on stage-scenery and the different functions of the two stage-exits; and Horace in the *Ars Poetica* (189-92) draws attention to the five act rule, the three actor rule and the *deus ex machina*. The evidence however remains largely internal. And what the fragments of the early Roman tragedians suggest is that even in the republic there had been a fusion of classical and Hellenistic techniques. Certainly the tragedies of Seneca, while they reveal and exploit an obvious counterpoint with the plays of the fifth-century Attic triad, especially in respect of divergent treatments of the same myth (see below p. 15), display many dramaturgical