# THE METAMORPHOSES OF SENECA'S MEDEA[1]

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Seneca's Medea is not a rewriting of Euripides' character. At least, Seneca's Medea shares more similarities with Ovidian Medeas (the extant ones, at any rate)[2] than the Euripidean Medea. Rather than focusing on Seneca's departures from the tragic legacy of Euripides (however important they are for an informed reading of the play), I would like to focus on Seneca's Medea as a potentially Ovidian character. Specifically, I would like to posit that the Senecan Medea reads more like a dramatisation of Medea's experience within the ellipsed Corinthian episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (7.394-97). Seneca's Medea (more so than Euripides' Medea) identifies with a specifically transformative project, and, one might initially suspect, supplies a neat explication of the transformation missing from Medea's narrative in the *Metamorphoses*. What we find, however, is that, in dramatising her process of metamorphosis, Seneca irreparably alters our relationship with the transformed Medea.

In the *Metamorphoses*, 'Ovid does not explain the reason for Medea's transformation into a sorceress and semidivine, evil being...', but it is clear in the narration that a metamorphosis does occur: 'Ovid passes abruptly from a sympathetic portrayal of Medea as love-sick maiden to a tragi-comic account of her career as accomplished *pharmaceutria* (witch) and murderess.'[3] But the metamorphosis of Medea's character is signalled just as much by her own retreat into silence. The 'love-sick maiden', who lays her thoughts out in the open, gives way to the 'semidivine, evil being', who speaks only pragmatically (in incantatory language or to the daughters of Pelias) or not at all (e.g., while flying, in Corinth, and in Athens).[4] The loss of Medea's perspective is much of the reason why Ovid's 'transformed' Medea seems so unsympathetic.[5] Seneca provides this missing perspective, and in doing so creates a uniquely sympathetic *and* inhuman result: Seneca's Medea leaves the stage as abruptly as Ovid's Medea leaves Iolcos and Athens (*Met*. 7.350 and 7.424, respectively), having committed the same crimes as Ovid's Medea, and as 'supernatural' as Ovid's Medea (if not more so), yet her newfound system of values is completely comprehensible. In creating a comprehensible account of her motives for transformation, Seneca's Medea, even as the semidivine '*pharmaceutria*', seems more sympathetic even as she maintains similarities to Ovid's character.

## I. Medea's crisis

In Seneca, Medea's metamorphosis seems largely self-motivated, though (as we shall see) Seneca has altered the landscape of Medea's drama such that a renegotiation of identity is the only desirable option available to her. The specific nature of Medea's identity crisis seems to involve a dissonance between her past and present self.[6] On the one hand, Medea uses elements of her past

self as a model for future behaviour (as if she wants to replicate her past self); on the other hand, she frequently discusses how much—and how irreparably—she has changed from her past self. In her scene with Creon, she describes her idyllic life as princess of Colchis (209-19), hinting at the degree to which she has changed since Jason arrived and took her away. With Jason, Medea seems to alternate between the frightened girl of the past, acting as though she is helpless and he has complete control over her actions (e.g., at 449ff.), and the powerful threat of the present, reminding Jason that she was powerful enough to save him from her father and could destroy the entire Greek army without his help (e.g., at 515-28).

The dissonance between past and present is not limited to Medea's interactions with others. When she is alone, Medea seems similarly at a loss as to who she is and what she should do. The development of her revenge is an illustrative example. Jason has abandoned Medea to marry Creusa, at which point Medea seeks to punish him not only for abandoning her, but also for her own betrayal of Aeetes and the murder of Absyrtus—the precise crimes (in which she participated) that prevent Medea from returning home. Medea wants Jason to pay for the irreparable break between her own past and present self. Medea desires vengeance from the outset of the play (invoking the *ultrices deae* at 13ff.), which will involve the death of Creusa and Creon (17f.) and a miserable life for Jason (19ff.), but the precise plan of action remains uncertain. Medea debates at length what manner of punishment best suits not just the situation, but her present self. She seems to view her present self as such a different entity that her former crimes are no longer sufficient as models:

> mens intus agitat: uulnera et caedem et uagum
> funus per artus—leuia memoraui nimis:
> haec uirgo feci; grauior exurguat dolor:
> maiora iam me scelera post partus decent.
> accingere ira teque in exitium para
> furore toto. paria narrentur tua
> repudia thalamis: quo uirum linques modo?
> hoc quo secuta es. rumpe iam segnes moras:
> quae scelere parta est, scelere linquenda est domus.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 47-55)

The mind within stirs up: wounds and death and murder wandering over the limbs—I recall trivial things too much: I did these things while a virgin; let a heavier grief rise out: now greater crimes fit me post-partum. Gird yourself with anger and prepare yourself for destruction with total rage. Let your separation be spoken of as an equal to your marriage: in what way will you leave your husband? In this way, in which you followed him. Now break the slow delays; that which was born in crime, that house must be left in crime.[7]

Medea seeks a balanced punishment; in addition to wishing an unhappy exile for Jason (which Medea herself is presumably experiencing, 20ff.), logic would demand that Medea kill Jason's brother, the lack of which causes much distress:

> incerta uecors mente non sana feror
> partes in omnes; unde me ulcisci queam?
> utinam esset illi frater!
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 123-25)

> Uncertain, unsteady, with a mind not sound I am carried into all parts; whence shall I seek to avenge myself? If only he had a brother!

The Medea character contrasts her present state with that of her past as a way of assigning an appropriate punishment to Jason. But the appropriate punishment seems elusive, perhaps because Medea's present identity is also not easy to pinpoint. Her indecision about identity persists throughout the play (signified, in part, in her moments of hesitation, where she attempts to decide what is the right course of action: see, e.g., 138-40, 398-400, 560-67, 893-910, 916-19, 929ff., 976f., 988-90), and only recedes after she has killed the second child in view of Jason and the citizens of Corinth (1019). At that point, her remaining identity as 'mother' is finally removed; Medea exits having successfully severed all connections to her family and the society of which she was once a part.

## II. Setting the Stage

A comparison to Euripides' tragedy is instructive here, if only because Medea's identity crisis in Seneca's tragedy seems so organic. But it is no accident; the dramatic presentation of the character is designed specifically to maximise isolation[8] and thus to necessitate Medea's self-reliance when planning her next steps. Once Jason is wed to Creusa, Medea has no appropriate gender roles to adopt, no social 'sounding board' among the Corinthians, and no secured place in another kingdom.

In Euripides' tragedy, Medea never loses an appropriate gender role with which to identify. The audience knows that Medea is escaping to Athens, where she will marry Aegeus and (hopefully) provide him an heir (Eur. *Med.* 708-58). In Euripides' tragedy, Medea is successfully transferred from one man's circle of authority to another's; she maintains her social position as wife (and the accompanying gender identity).[9] Seneca's character has no such security: Aegeus and Athens are absent, and Medea leaves the stage having lost all relational markers of her female identity. In joining Jason's flight from Colchis, Medea was no longer daughter, sister, or princess (Sen. *Med.* 488f.); the outset of the tragedy threatens to remove her status as wife (and mother, as Medea learns for certain at 544ff., since she will lose custody of her children to Jason and Creusa); and the killing of her children destroys her remaining title of mother.

The loss of acceptable gender roles does not escape the character's notice. Medea repeatedly points out (to Creon and Jason) the fact that she can no longer identify herself as her father's daughter, her brother's sister, or the princess of Colchis (238-41, 280, 488f., 503, etc., and cf. Ov. *Her.* 12.131f.). Medea's remaining social roles—wife and mother—are the focus of much of the character's self-definition over the course of the tragedy (see, e.g., 23, 25, 283, 289, 418, 501, 845, 928, 934, 948, 951). In her parting lines, Medea calls attention to her lack of legitimate gendered status, ironically identifying herself as a mother (*relinque matres*, 1008) and as Jason's wife (*coniugem agnoscis tuam?*, 1021), despite the death of her children and the dissolution of her marriage.

Prior to killing the children, Medea must contend with the actual threat to her marriage, Jason's 'mistress' Creusa (whom Medea tends most often to call *coniunx*: 17, 125, 279, 999). Earlier in her final monologue, Medea seems to fuse herself with Creusa; they become indistinguishable as mothers of Jason's children:

> ex paelice utinam liberos hostis meus
> aliquos haberet—quidquid ex illo tuum est,
> Creusa peperit.
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 920-22)

> Oh that from his mistress my enemy had some children—whatever is yours by that man, Creusa gave birth [to them].

Facing the loss of her children to Jason's custody,[10] Medea proposes the notion that she and Creusa might be interchangeable, that Creusa has effectively 'become' her, usurping Medea's former maternal and spousal identifiers. With her position having been taken by Creusa, Medea has lost any social recognition of her womanhood.

In addition to the loss of appropriate female roles for Medea to adopt, the Senecan character also lacks much of her former social interaction in general.[11] One of the major differences between Seneca's version of the tragedy and that of Euripides is the degree of interaction between Medea and the other characters in the play,[12] and especially the chorus (which, in Euripides' version, is composed of Corinthian women).[13] Euripides' chorus, in a more typically Greek way,[14] function as a character in the plot of the tragedy. The chorus speak specifically with Medea many times, and Medea addresses them as φίλαι more than once; they, along with Medea's nurse, are a constant sounding board for Medea's thoughts and plans. In this Euripidean passage,[15] the chorus leader responds to Medea's entreaty that they be silent about her plans for revenge against Jason, Creon, and the new wife:

δράσω τάδ'· ἐνδίκως γὰρ ἐκτείσῃ πόσιν,
Μήδεια. πενθεῖν δ' οὔ σε θαυμάζω τύχας.

(Eur. *Med*. 267f.)

I shall do these things; for you exact repayment/punishment from your husband rightly, Medea. I do not admire that you suffer misfortunes.

Here, it is clear that the chorus sympathise with Medea's marital situation, and seem to defend her justification for seeking revenge. Moreover, Euripides' chorus also castigate Jason directly for his behaviour towards Medea:

Ἰᾶσον, εὖ μὲν τούσδ' ἐκόσμησας λόγους·
ὅμως δ' ἔμοιγε, κεἰ παρὰ γνώμην ἐρῶ,
δοκεῖς προδοὺς σὴν ἄλοχον οὐ δίκαια δρᾶν.

(Eur. *Med*. 576-78)

Jason, you have arranged these words well; yet as far as I'm concerned (even if I speak against common sense), in betraying your spouse you seem not to have done the right thing.

With Medea present on stage, the chorus clearly state that they do not approve of Jason's action and are in support of Medea's side of the argument. In Euripides' version of the play, the chorus not only have a high level of interaction with Medea on stage, they even empathise with Medea's marital situation. Moreover, Medea is constantly reminded of the presence of the community and the great degree of support they offer her. In Seneca's version, we find quite the opposite; the chorus have no interaction with the Medea character (and very little interaction with any of the other characters),[16] and they maintain an antipathy towards Medea and her presence in the community (102-04, 114f., 179f., 185f., 190f., 361-63, 870-73).

This antipathy is not, however, without precedent; Seneca may have been influenced by Ennius' version of the tragedy, where the Corinthian women seem to disapprove of Medea's presence in their homeland. As Boyle argues in *Roman Tragedy*, one of the themes of Ennius' *Medea Exul* is Medea's cultural isolation. Specifically, Boyle's fragments 2 and 5 emphasise Medea's foreign identity, first in a possible conversation between the Tutor and Nurse (which, according to Boyle, highlights Medea's 'vulnerable isolation in Corinth', 73), and then in a statement by Medea to the chorus of Corinthian women, where she couches her emigration in positive terms of masculine exploration and state duty:

quae Corinthum arcem altam habetis, matronae opulentae optumates,
ne mihi uitio uos uortatis [exul a patria quod absum].

multi suam rem bene gessere et publicam patria procul;
multi qui domi aetatem agerent propterea sunt improbati.
(Enn. *Med. Ex.* fr. 5)

Wealthy, well-born ladies, who possess the soaring city of Corinth,
Find no fault with me [because I am an exile away from my fatherland].
Many have performed private and state business well, far from the fatherland;
Many who passed their days at home have been despised for this.
(trans. Boyle)

Ennius keeps the direct interaction between Medea and the chorus, in line with Euripides, but he emphasises the cultural divide between them. The Corinthian women do not travel, and they may have already 'found fault' (2) with Medea, either because of Medea's travelling (as Medea states), or for some other reason. Either way, the relationship between Medea and the Corinthian women seems immediately strained and unfriendly—already a departure from what we have seen in Euripides' tragedy.[17]

In Seneca's tragedy the Corinthians remain comparatively isolated from Medea's presence. The dramatist has eliminated any potential for dialogue between Medea and the chorus, who, arguably, are never on stage at the same time.[18] Seneca has also reduced the roles of Jason, the Messenger, and the Nurse (Seneca makes the nurse Medea's main interlocutor, but the dialogues she and her nurse share prove to be largely formulaic).[19] Aegeus and the Tutor are omitted entirely. This is a significant alteration precisely because Seneca sets up a social vacuum in which Medea must make decisions. Where Euripides' Medea has the constant opportunity to discuss her situation and her plans with the community, Seneca sets his Medea in her own world, isolated from the community, where there is no moral check on her thoughts, and her process of decision-making is necessarily altered.[20] Though he exclusively addresses their respective final monologues, Christopher Gill's assessment of the difference between Euripides' and Seneca's Medeas might also fit well as a description of their characters throughout:[21]

> In the Euripidean version, I hope to bring out the connection between the character of Medea's speech as dialogue (that is, as speech addressed to others) and the other-related character of the concerns from which her inner conflict derives. In the Senecan version, by contrast, I aim to bring out the link between the soliloquizing character of Medea's speech and the self-related (even solipsistic) character of her inner conflict.

The Medea of Euripides is a fundamentally social being, interacting with others, rarely on her own. Seneca's Medea, on the other hand, is fundamentally solitary, dramaturgically bereft of social interaction.

We can see that Seneca manipulates the mythical tradition with the intent, on the one hand, of excluding Medea from the roles appropriate to her gender and, on the other hand, of further isolating her from the foreign society of the Corinthians; the dramatic emphasis is on how much Medea and her society believe that she does not fit. While Seneca's Medea does not consider herself to be already in/an exile, she sees it as a probable and near future, one about which Creon and the chorus have no conflicted feelings. The Corinthians are united against her, and she is isolated from their interlocution and their empathy. We shall now explore how Medea responds to Seneca's changed environment.

### III. Medea's Metamorphoses

Medea attempts to adjust her character from the outset of the tragedy in three major ways: by attempting to replicate the past, by altering her gender identity, and by embracing her divine heritage. These are three distinct readings of the way Medea seeks change over the course of the play; each reading by itself does not account for the complete transformation of the character (though each maintains internal consistency), yet each reading seems equally significant. Taken in concert, the three means of transformation seem to come to no clear endpoint, and at times even seem to contradict each other. We shall find, however, that despite their dissimilarities, Medea's three strategies of self-adjustment rely on removing herself from her present situation: turning back time to remove Jason and the crimes committed on his behalf, restoring her bodily boundaries, and distancing herself from human society.

The most apparent means by which Medea attempts to manage her identity crisis is by recreating her past self.[22] Specifically, Medea creates an ideal self to imitate by calling to mind certain events from her past, and she then adopts the practices and attitudes that she feels correspond to the character comprised of these events. It is important to state that Medea's choice of past *exempla* to follow is significant in and of itself. That is, Medea could have chosen different events from her past, ones which did not involve murder, betrayal, or crime, but the focus is instead on three specific evil acts: the betrayal of her father, the murder of Absyrtus, and the murder of Pelias. By building a 'Medea' to become based on the events of her choosing, Medea creates a murderous character for herself, and acts in the way that her fabricated 'Medea' would act—in a criminal way.[23]

Medea often strengthens herself by calling up memories that seem to center her in her purpose. The subject of these memories is her past evil deeds (specifically, those mentioned above), all of which she performed for Jason's benefit. For example, at the beginning of the play, Medea, having called upon the various deities to help her, decides that her plan of action should emulate (and outdo) her previous deeds (47-50, cited above). She remembers the crimes of

her past self and models her present self by following and outdoing that persona.[24] Not an hundred lines later, she reminds herself again: '*scelera te hortentur tua/et cuncta redeant*' ('let your crimes compel you, and let them all return', 129f.). She then details her departure from Colchis, the murder of her brother, and the deception of Pelias' daughters, which leads to Pelias' death.[25]

It is significant for our analysis that these moments of self-exhortation occur while Medea is the only character on stage; she is speaking to herself, and the other characters cannot hear her.[26] She is only performing for herself and not catering her speech for the benefit of someone else.[27] This lends credence to the idea that, in the passages above, Medea is in fact using her past deeds to motivate her to punish Jason and the Corinthians, as well as a basis for establishing an identity in the absence of social recognition. However, even in her conversations with other characters, we can see Medea's reliance on (and obsession with) the past for the purpose of self-definition.

While she caters her self–presentation to assuage Creon's anxieties about her, Medea nevertheless belies her preoccupation with a return to a past self. When Medea and Creon talk about her exile from Corinth and potential return to Colchis, the contrast in their speech is striking. Medea stresses a turning back and a backwards motion, whereas Creon looks solely to the future, a unidirectional temporal stance.

Let us look at Creon's language:

> nondum meis exportat e regnis pedem?
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 180)

Has she not yet carried her step out of my kingdom?

> i, querere Colchis.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 197)

Go, complain to the Colchians.

> egredere, purga regna, letales simul
> tecum aufer herbas, libera ciues metu,
> alia sedens tellure sollicita deos.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 269-71)

Leave, purge the kingdom, and at the same time carry away those lethal herbs with you, free the citizens from fear, and agitate the gods while dwelling in another land.

> iam exisse decuit.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 281)

Already was it fitting for you to have left.

> uade.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 284)

Leave.

Now compare Medea's language:

> redeo: qui auexit, ferat.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 197)

I go back: but the one who drew me away, let him carry me.

> sed redde crimen.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 246)

But return the crime.

> profugere cogis? redde fugienti ratem
> uel redde comitem.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 272f.)

You compel me to flee? Return the ship to the one fleeing, or return the companion.

We see here that Medea interprets Creon's order as an order to go backwards in time, to retrace her steps back to Colchis.[28] In fact, this retracing is crucial to her argument that Creon should return Jason to her when she leaves Corinth: in order for her to return home, Medea must get Jason back as well. The contrast between Medea's and Creon's temporal attitudes reveals to the reader/viewer the extent of Medea's focus on the past as a looming potentiality.

Similarly with Jason, Medea brings the past with her into the present to argue that Jason is beholden to her (see especially 466ff.). She views the present as a logical repetition of past events: *fugimus, Iason, fugimus—hoc non est nouum* ('we fled, Jason, we flee now—this is not new', 447). When she asks Jason where she should go, she lists her options as the past locations of their journey from Colchis, mentioning the crimes she performed for him in the process:

> Phasin et Colchos petam
> patriumque regnum quaeque fraternus cruor
> perfudit arua?...
> Pontici fauces freti
> per quas reuexi nobilem regum manum
> adulterum secuta per Symplegades?
> paruamne Iolcon, Thessala, an Tempe petam?
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 451-53, 454-57)

> Should I seek the Phasis and the Colchians, and my father's kingdom and what fields fraternal blood soaked?... The jaws of the Pontic sea, through which I carried back the noble band of kings, having followed an adulterer through the Symplegades? Should I seek tiny Iolcos, Thessaly, or Tempe?

Medea suggests only the places where she has already been. Other locations—e.g., the West, where she may have already travelled,[29] or, notably, Athens, where she goes in Euripides' and Ovid's versions of her myth—are omitted. In this exchange, Medea presents herself as a woman who can only exist in the places she has already been (and accompanied by the people whom she already knows). Part of her posturing for Jason, therefore, puts a focus on the past as inextricably entwined with the present and with the future: Medea can only become the person who she has been. Thus Medea, even when she is not the sole occupant of the stage, constructs a potential future self who is completely based in her past.[30]

The recreation of an ideal 'Medea' seems to find its resolution in the final monologue. Fairly early on in the monologue, Medea states *Medea nunc sum* ('now I am Medea', 910)—one of many crescendos of resolve found in the speech. This particular climax begins with Medea exhorting her *animus* to outdo its previous deeds:

> teque languentem excita
> penitusque ueteres pectore ex imo impetus
> uiolentus hauri. quidquid admissum est adhuc,
> pietas uocetur.
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 902-05)

> Rouse yourself languishing, and, violent, draw up from deep within the heart the old attacks. Whatever was committed before now, let it be called piety.

Star concludes that the force of the final monologue is Medea exhorting herself to maintain a consistent character in her performance, much like Cato in the performance of his suicide in Seneca's *de Providentia*.[31] What Star misses, however, is the extent to which Medea's memories are intrinsically connected with this project. The process of becoming 'Medea' involves following the example of past Medea and modelling herself based on the horrible things she did before she came to Corinth. Her agency is not completely free, because her past self dictates the options that are actually open to her. Becoming Medea means having to reconcile the present with the past, and her self-exhortation, unlike Cato's, uses past-Medea as a model, and not some abstract set of principles.

As soon as she states 'now I am Medea', immediately the memories of her past come flooding back to her, and each one of them is a boon; *iuuat*, she repeats as she recounts each one:

> iuuat, iuuat rapuisse fraternum caput,
> artus iuuat secuisse et arcano patrem
> spoliasse sacro, iuuat in exitium senis
> armasse natas.
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 911-14)

> It pleases, it pleases to have stolen my brother's head, it pleases to have cut his limbs and to have robbed a father of his secret trove, it pleases to have armed daughters for the destruction of an old man.

These memories, moreover, seem to come back to her consciousness involuntarily (judging by the rapidity of her recollection, the short space given to each memory, and the repeated *iuuat*). Much like an earlier recounting of her crimes, though, Medea seems to be reiterating precisely the definition of her identity.[32] Medea, as she wants herself to be, is intrinsically bound to those memories. And her strategy seems to work, judging by her relief at the death of the first child:

> iam iam recepi sceptra germanum patrem,
> spoliumque Colchi pecudis auratae tenent;
> rediere regna, rapta uirginitas redit.
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 982-984)

> Now, now I have regained the sceptre, my brother, my father, and the Colchians possess the spoil of the golden beast; the kingdom has returned, stolen virginity has returned.

The completion of Medea's revenge is the successful restoration of the past, and her maiden status is regained along with the life of her brother, the possession of her father's kingdom, and the sanctity of the golden fleece in Colchis. By looking at her past evil actions as things that have prepared her for her present ones, Medea creates a teleological narrative of her life, resulting in her grand exit at the end of the play, all by following her own lead.[33] Her past evils are what she chooses as her model, and by mimicking these, her memories guide her to her new (old) identity.

Notice, however, her statement at 984: *rapta uirginitas redit*, 'stolen virginity has returned'. Medea's metamorphosis is not merely about turning back the clock. Inextricably bound to her restoration of a lost past (and the removal of Jason's presence in her life) is Medea's endeavour to masculinise herself over the course of the tragedy, perhaps as a means of asserting an identity when

faced with the loss of appropriate gender roles.[34] One of the first statements she makes to herself is an exhortation to 'banish womanly fear' (*pelle femineos metus*, 42). Indeed, the oft-cited tipping point of her self-development (*Medea nunc sum*, 910) seems to culminate also from the banishment of feminine things (and not just the recreation of the past, as we saw above):

> abeat expulsus pudor;
> uindicta leuis est quam ferunt purae manus....
> quid manus poterant rudes
> audere magnum, quid puellaris furor?
> Medea nunc sum; creuit ingenium malis.
>
> (*Med.* 900-01, 908-10)

> Let shame fall away, driven out; it is a trivial revenge which pure hands carry out.... What great thing were inexperienced hands able to dare, what great thing girly madness? I am Medea now; my inborn talent has grown with evil deeds.

While she desires femininity to fall away, Medea seems to replace it with an increasingly masculine persona; over the course of the tragedy, Medea habitually uses masculine language to describe her thoughts and actions, and this language increases in frequency as she progresses. She calls on the 'avenging Furies' (*ultrices deae*, 13) to aid her revenge:. The notion of avenging herself (and the associated word *ulcisci*) is crucial to Medea's adopted identity. She also uses this language at 172, during the exchange with her Nurse: *fugiam, at ulciscar prius* ('I shall flee, but first I shall avenge myself'), later again to herself: *regias egone ut faces/inulta patiar* ('shall I suffer royal torches unavenged?', 398f.) and *pars ultionis ista, qua gaudes, quota est* ('how small a fraction of revenge is this, in which you rejoice?', 896).

Medea also makes use of other masculine terms—images of battle, hunting, and weaponry—when she talks specifically about her revenge:

> accingere ira…
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 51)

> Gird yourself with anger.

> bene est, tenetur, uulneri patuit locus.[35]
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 550)

> This is good, he [Jason] is trapped, and a space has opened up for the wound.

> iuuat, iuuat rapuisse fraternum caput,
> artus iuuat secuisse et arcano patrem

spoliasse sacro, iuuat in exitium senis
armasse natas.

(Sen. *Med*. 911-914)

It pleases, it pleases to have stolen my brother's head, it pleases to have cut his limbs and to have robbed a father of his secret trove, it pleases to have armed daughters for the destruction of an old man.

quo te igitur, ira, mittis, aut quae perfido
intendis hosti tela?

(Sen. *Med*. 916-917)

Where therefore, anger, do you send yourself, or what weapons do you hurl against a faithless enemy?

ex paelice utinam liberos hostis meus
aliquos haberet….

(Sen. *Med*. 920-921)

Oh that from his mistress my enemy had some children….

hac qua recusas, qua doles, ferrum exigam....
in matre si quod pignus etiamnunc latet,
scrutabor ense uiscera et ferro extraham.

(Sen. *Med*. 1006; 1012-13)

In the place where you protest, where you grieve, I shall drive a sword through.... If in the mother there hides some pledge/child even now, I shall investigate my innards thoroughly with a sword and drag it out with iron.

As Fitch and McElduff state, 'Medea's language reveals how close her self-assertion is to the heroic ethos, with its competitive drive for *arete*/*uirtus* and its quest for the glory of public approval...' (38). While they note the degree of self-fashioning in Medea's language, Fitch and McElduff avoid discussion of the gendered repercussions of this particular self-fashioning. As we have seen, however, Medea's use of heroic language (*uirtus*, 160; *uires et artes*, 163; *peracta uis est omnis*, 843; *pietas*, 905; *uirtus*, 977; *uindicta*, 987) is also an aspect of her gender performance; Medea associates her forceful reclaiming of power with masculinity.

Thus we have another way of reading Medea's exultant declaration of success (982-84, cited above), as well as her threat to excise any *pignus* ('pledge' or 'child') still in her (1012f.): by killing her child, Medea has rid herself of the evidence of Jason's penetration of her body. Medea's adoption of masculinity is more an attempt to undo the feminisation of her self that was the penetration of Jason (literally) and the Argo (figuratively), a penetration that turned her into

a subordinate, dependent, socially anchored wife, with no legitimate social recourse to power and revenge against the person who broke their contract with her, and no certain authority over the solidity of her bodily boundaries. She adopts elements of masculinity because she sees it as a guarantee of bodily and psychic security and social independence—an absence of feminine penetrability.[36]

Finally, Seneca's Medea frequently stresses her divine heritage (an element of the character largely absent from her Euripidean counterpart and the Medea of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), both when she is speaking in soliloquy and when she is performing for others. She uses her divine ancestry to establish her position in a hierarchy of people and gods and to support the justification for her revenge. The fact that she is descended from the Sun gives her access to special powers to which other humans do not have access; Medea possesses absolute power to manipulate the natural world and to defeat any human enemy. Her ability to defeat potential enemies then gives her a sense of disregard for normal social hierarchy—she sits outside of and beyond the conventional power structures. The potential need to kill another human does not frighten Medea, or strike her as morally problematic, especially if it is done in the defence of Jason or her own goals.

Medea immediately sets herself apart from other characters in Senecan tragedy in the way she invokes Sol, her grandfather, to bear witness to her sufferings and to help her avenge those crimes committed against her.

> manibus excutiam faces
> caeloque lucem....
> da, da per auras curribus patriis uehi,
> committe habenas, genitor, et flagrantibus
> ignifera loris tribue moderari iuga....
> hoc restat unum, pronubam thalamo feram
> ut ipsa pinum postque sacrificas preces
> caedam dicatis uictimas altaribus.
>
> (Sen. *Med.* 27f., 32-34, 37-39)

> I shall shake out from their hands the torches and the light from the sky.... Grant, grant that I be carried through the air on my paternal chariot, entrust the reins, creator of my family, and allow me to direct the fire-bearing pair with blazing bridles.... This one thing remains—that I myself carry the marriage pine to the wedding chamber and (that), after the sacrificial prayers, I slaughter the victims at the dedicated altars.

Before she addresses him directly, she apostrophises his presence, setting him up as someone in support of her cause. In her speech, there is no doubt as to whether or not he actually supports her—Medea seems to assume this to be

true. The first half of this passage, before the imperatives *da, da*, is not quite a prayer, not quite the language of someone who is unsure of divine support for their actions.

Medea's statement also marks her as an outlier among Senecan suppliants because of her use of first person verbs.[37] There are many instances in Senecan tragedy where mortals ask gods to do things for them, but they rarely, if ever, offer to do things themselves (e.g., Theseus at *Phaed*. 945-53, Amphitryon at *HF* 205-07, the chorus at *Med*. 664-69 and 874-78, Hercules at *HF* 1202-18, the chorus at *Oed*. 405-11, and Oedipus at *Oed*. 868-81).[38] Medea's confidence in her own ability exceeds that of other mortals—she is able to carry out the punishment which, in every other case, the immortals alone are expected to do.

Medea's sense of divinity is especially apparent in her scenes with Jason. Jason needs to seek refuge from Acastus;[39] as he himself states, Jason thinks that he will face death if he chooses to honour his marriage to Medea (434-36). Instead of relying on divine help (i.e., the type of help Medea could provide for him), Jason resorts to a mortal solution—finding protection in another city, marriage to a mortal princess, and the assignation of blame on to his former wife. Medea seems to forget the social and political conditions in which Jason's marriage is taking place, and she seems so self–assured, single–minded, and perhaps delusional later in their exchange, when she refuses to acknowledge that any human might have the power to challenge her plan. Medea's strategy to ensure Jason's safety lies outside the logic of mortal existence—she offers to use her magic and destroy any army, any person who threatens them.

> I.: hinc rex et illinc—M.: est et his maior metus
> Medea. nos †conflige. certemus sine,
> sit pretium Iason. I.: cedo defessus malis.
> et ipsa casus saepe iam expertos time.
> M.: fortuna semper omnis infra me stetit.
> I.: Acastus instat. M.: propior est hostis Creo:
> utrumque profuge. non ut in socerum manus
> armes nec ut te caede cognata inquines
> Medea cogit: innocens mecum fuge.
> I.: et quis resistet, gemina si bella ingruant,
> Creo atque Acastus arma si iungant sua?
> M.: his adice Colchos, adice et Aeeten ducem,
> Scythas Pelasgis iunge: demersos dabo.
> I.: alta extimesco sceptra.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 516-29)

> J.: On this side a king, and on that side—M.: There is even than these a greater fear—Medea. Set us against each other. Allow us to fight it out, if the prize should be Jason. J.: I yield, tired from evil deeds. Even you should fear disasters already often experienced. M.: All Fortune always

> stood beneath me. J.: Acastus stands *on* you [i.e., he comes near]. M.: Nearer is that enemy Creon: flee from both. Neither to arm your hands against your father-in-law, nor to befoul yourself in kindred murder does Medea compel you: flee with me, innocent. J.: Yet who will withstand, if twin wars should fall upon us, if Creon and Acastus should join their arms? M.: To these add the Colchians, add even the leader Aeetes, join Scythia with the Pelasgians: I shall deliver them buried. J.: I dread especially the high sceptres.

Jason's fear is warranted. From Medea, though, there is a disregard for any human attempts to block her own desired trajectory. Note that in two cases above she speaks of herself in the third person (a marker of significance in Senecan tragedy)[40] and delays the revelation of herself as the greater fear, the one who can protect Jason from all threats. The size of the enemy army does not matter to her, nor does the number of human casualties. Nor is Medea intimidated by the social positions of those leading the battle (unlike Jason, who fears the high ranks of his enemies). Even kings (Creon and Acastus) ought to fear her power. Medea, separating herself from any interaction within the social structures, sees herself in a different class from human beings, an exception or outlier to proper social position.[41]

When Medea compares her powers to those of the natural world, she sees herself as the stronger force (411-14). This power over nature is linked to her threat against the gods through the repeated use of the first person future verbs (the importance of which is discussed below). When she contemplates the extent of her upcoming crime, Medea states that she will threaten (or join) the gods themselves:

> non queror tempus breue:
> multum patebit. faciet hic faciet dies
> quod nullus umquam taceat—inuadam deos
> et cuncta quatiam.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 422-5)

> I do not lament the short time: much will be available. It will do, this day will do the type of thing about which no one will ever be silent—I shall attack/usurp the gods and shake up everything.

Medea's language seems similar to that of Seneca's Atreus at *Thy*. 885-95, where Atreus also describes himself as godlike.[42] Medea, like Atreus, believes that she is able to wield power equal to that of the gods. Unlike Atreus, however, Medea displays no want or desire for power as such. Whereas Atreus expresses a wish that he be able to drag the gods back and make them watch his crime (implying that he actually cannot), Medea expresses no desire to have more power than what she already possesses, nor does she seem to require or

need the gods' approval, in general, for her crimes. Comparatively, Medea seems more confident (or at least comfortable) in her abilities; there is no anxiety over what she can and cannot accomplish, in part because she is not fighting against the gods, as Atreus is (see *Thy*. 891ff., where the gods clearly disapprove of Atreus' behaviour). In this way, Medea's character is more reflective of a Juno (i.e., an actual deity) than an Atreus (i.e., someone aspiring to be a deity).[43]

At the end of the play, it seems as though Sol makes good on his granddaughter's request[44]—the chariot appears and Medea flies off:

> bene est, peractum est. plura non habui, dolor,
> quae tibi litarem. lumina huc tumida alleua,
> ingrate Iason. coniugem agnoscis tuam?
> sic fugere soleo. patuit in caelum uia:
> squamosa gemini colla serpentes iugo
> summissa praebent. recipe iam gnatos, parens;
> ego inter auras aliti curru uehar.
>
> (Sen. *Med*. 1019-25)

> It is good, it is finished. Grief, I have nothing more which I might offer to you. Lift your swollen eyes here, thankless Jason. Do you recognise your wife? This is how I always flee. A way has been made open into the sky: the twin serpents offer their scaly necks bent under the yoke. Now, receive your sons, parent; *I* shall be carried on winged chariot into the air.

As Nussbaum seems to hint,[45] the image of Medea, granddaughter of Sol and driving his chariot, seems a replica of Phaethon, another offspring of the Sun, who also attempts to drive the Sun's chariot. The story of Phaethon is not, however, sprung on the audience only in the last image of the *Medea*. Phaethon is also invoked by the chorus when they seek an analogue to the Argonauts' journey and its consequences (599-606). Like Medea (and like the Argonauts), Phaethon attempts to cross the boundary between mortal and immortal, to prove that he has inherited paternal power and divinity. Unlike Medea (but still like the Argonauts), Phaethon is arrogant and ignorant.[46] Seneca refers to Ovid's extensive narration of the Phaethon story in the *Metamorphoses*.[47] After Phaethon makes the request to drive the chariot, his father explains that he is not qualified to undertake the job (*Met*. 2.54-58). Phoebus points out that Phaethon's mortality in particular makes him fundamentally unable to perform the task (*non est mortale quod optas*, 'what you wish is not mortal', *Met*. 2.56). Phaethon does not succeed at 'performing immortality', and his death is the result. In the *Medea*, Medea's exit invokes the image of Phaethon but highlights the fundamental difference between the two characters: where Phaethon fails to exhibit divine ability, Medea succeeds in exhibiting hers.

In fact, Medea's character contains elements that remind the reader specifically of Seneca's Juno character (arguably the only truly immortal character in Seneca's oeuvre)[48] in his *Hercules Furens*.[49] On the level of plot, Medea and Juno both begin their respective tragedies and prove themselves to be the masterminds of the plays' action;[50] both characters are faced with cheating husbands and mistresses who threaten to take their rightful places (*HF* 1ff.; *Med.* 16ff., 125f., 920-22 [cited above] and 1007); both characters call specifically on the Furies to help them execute their revenge for their husbands' infidelity (*HF* 86-88, 100-06; *Med.* 13-18);[51] and both of their punishments rely on fire (and, for Juno, fiery Furies: *HF* 87, 100f., 103, 105f.; *Med.* 15, 670-842 *passim*, 885ff.).

More significantly, Juno and Medea share similar emotional reactions to the infidelity/loss of their husbands. The primary responses of both characters are *ira* and *dolor*. Juno mentions her *dolor* twice in her opening monologue (*HF* 28, 99),[52] and her *ira* three times (*HF* 28, 34, 75). These are the same emotions predominant in Medea's character; the frequencies of *dolor* (used by Medea of herself at *Med.* 49, 139, 554, 907, 914, 944, 951, 1011, 1016, 1019) and *ira* (used by Medea of herself at 51, 203, 414, 556, 902, 916, 927, 938, 943, 944, 953, 989) are greater in the *Medea* than in any of Seneca's other tragedies (and *ira* significantly so).[53] Medea and Juno are both primarily characterised by their anger and grief.

Finally, though it seems at first unimportant, both Medea and Juno make frequent use of the first-person future indicative (or, in some cases, the present subjunctive) to make their threats and plan their revenge. As I have argued above, Medea's use of the first person illustrates the degree to which she is willing to enact her own revenge against her enemies, a trait which differentiates her from other Senecan characters asking for divine help. Juno, of course, has the ability to enact her own revenge, so it is no surprise that she expresses her own agency (*ostendam*, *HF* 91; *reuocabo*, 92; *educam*, *extraham*, 95; *stabo*, 118; *librabo*, 119; *fauebo*, 121). Medea, as we have seen, is more of an outlier among humans, yet her speech resembles that of Juno when she is talking about what she will do (*ibo*, *excutiam*, *Med.* 27; *cumulabo*, 147; *fugiam*, *ulciscar*, 172; *inueniam*, 173; *patiar*, 399; *sternam*, *euertam*, 414; *inuadam*, 424; *quatiam*, 425; *dabo*, 528; *exigam*, 1006; *perimam*, 1010; *scrutabor*, *extraham*, 1013;[54] *uehar*, 1025). Not only are Medea's verb choices intimately related to her own sense of agency,[55] but they also link Medea's speech to that of the other major divine character of Senecan tragedy; Medea's sense of agency itself comes to be read as a divine attribute.

The final monologue is a pivotal moment where Medea's divinity is challenged and reasserted; the act of infanticide, as we shall see, enables her to break off all ties with her mortal existence.[56] At the point of killing the first child, Medea believes so strongly in the divine identity (which she has built up over the course of the play) that she seems surprised at the hindrance of her body rebelling against her intentions:

liberi quondam mei,
uos pro paternis sceleribus poenas date.
cor pepulit horror, membra torpescunt gelu
pectusque tremuit. ira discessit loco
materque tota coniuge expulsa redit....
quid, anime, titubas? ora quid lacrimae rigant
uariamque nunc huc ira, nunc illuc amor
diducit? anceps aestus incertam rapit;
ut saeua rapidi bella cum uenti gerunt,
utrimque fluctus maria discordes agunt
dubiumque feruet pelagus, haut aliter meum
cor fluctuatur.

(Sen. *Med*. 924-28; 937-43)

Children once mine, you pay the penalty for paternal crimes. Horror has struck my heart, my limbs grow stiff with cold, and my heart trembles. Anger has left the place, and the mother returns, the whole wife having been expelled.... Why, mind, do you falter? Why do tears wet my face, and why now does anger to here, now love[57] to there lead me astray? A precarious seething snatches me uncertain; as when rapid winds wage a savage war, and from each direction the sea leads discordant waves, and the irresolute sea boils, in no other wise does my heart waver.

As she prepares to kill her children, Medea experiences an unexpected bodily response to her intentions: her heart and her limbs freeze up with horror and shiver, and tears come to her eyes. Her narration of the response, especially the vivid perfect and progressive verb forms, emphasises her surprise and confusion at the body's protest at her murder. Previous critics tend to view this scene as a conflict between Medea's 'mother' and 'wife' personas,[58] but I think, given the evidence for Medea's consistent self-deification over the course of the tragedy, one can read this episode as a revelation of the extent to which Medea's divine persona has eclipsed the presence of Medea's human body. The re-realisation of the physical body is the irruption of the real (as Lacan might say), a shattering of Medea's divine veneer (for the audience, though not for Medea herself, since her divine persona inevitably prevails). Medea's conflict is not only between 'wife' and 'mother'; it is also between mortal and divine.[59] Through the reaction of Medea's body to the prospect of killing its offspring, we see the inevitable result of Medea's denial of her own mortal bodily existence. I would like to posit that, by going through with the act of infanticide, Medea actively removes herself from her human state. She overrules her physical body's aversion to harming the children, and in doing so she performs her first perfect act of divinity. Her mortal body no longer exists, and she has secured her divine exit.

## IV: Conclusion

Thus we are left with a Medea who simultaneously restores a lost past, undoes her gendered penetrability, and becomes divine. These three metamorphoses of Medea may seem at odds with each other, but they are all defined by absence: the removal of her crimes (by turning to a pre-crime state), the removal of her penetration, and the removal of her humanity.[60] And like Ovid's Medea, her last act is to remove herself from the text. We seem to arrive at Ovid's transformed Medea: the witch, murderess, 'excluded from human society' and having eluded 'human judgment',[61] 'removed from human experience through divine and magical connections'.[62] But unlike the Medea of the *Metamorphoses*, Seneca's Medea has provided the reasons *why* she must transform: her crimes were *not* her fault, her bodily and psychic boundaries *were* penetrated, and the human society *did* reject and dishonour her. Seneca has given the power of speech back to Ovid's Medea, and we realise that her metamorphoses were her own design—forced upon her by Seneca's dramatic setup, to be sure, but generated and executed on her own. Perhaps this is why Seneca's characters fear Medea for her power of speech in particular.[63] Their worry is metatheatrical: not only that Medea is dangerous when she speaks, but also that Medea, in expressing her viewpoint, has the power to rebuild the sympathy we were all so ready to grant her as the love-sick maiden of Colchis.

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NOTES

1. The title of this essay is indebted to Newlands (1997) 'The Metamorphosis of Ovid's Medea', an article which has also influenced my impressions of Ovid's Medea in the *Metamorphoses*. This essay contains truncated sections of my dissertation, 'Seneca's *Medea* and the Tragic Self', completed at the University of Southern California in May 2011. I would like to thank A.J. Boyle for including my contribution in this volume and for all his helpful advice and corrections along the way. All inadequacies and errors are entirely my own.

2. Without making assumptions about Seneca's skill for invention (or lack thereof), we cannot know the full extent of Seneca's relationship to Ovid's tragedy, though some have tried—see, e.g., Cleasby (1907).

3. Newlands (1997), 192, 178.

4. See *Met*. 7.192-219 (Medea's incantation for the rejuvenation of Aeson); 7.309-11, 332-38 (to the daughters of Pelias); and 7.350-424 (escaping the daughters of Pelias, the Corinthian episode, and Medea in Athens).

5. As Newlands (1997), 187f., also observes.

6. See Walsh (2011), 173ff. Schiesaro (2003) and Guastella (2001) both explore this aspect of the Medea character.

7. All Latin and Greek texts are from the relevant volumes of the Oxford Classical Texts series, except for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* 12, for which I use the Teubner and Loeb editions, respectively. I have noted where I disagree with Zwierlein's text of Seneca's *Medea*. All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified. In translating Seneca's text, I have focused my energy on conveying Seneca's word order, even at the expense of a smoother English reading; I have found that Seneca's placement of words is often particular and laden with meaning.

8. I am not the first scholar to note the increased isolation given to Medea's character in Seneca's tragedy. See also Fyfe (1983); Davis (1993); Benton (2003), 274.

9. She also maintains her social distinction as mother with Aegeus, since (in addition to any children she might bear for him), she becomes the functional mother of Theseus (cf. Ov. *Met*. 7.402ff., Sen. *Phaed*. 697).

10. A common enough practice, if we are to imagine the application of Roman divorce law to Medea's situation: see Abrahamsen (1999).

11. Others have also observed Medea's isolation from the chorus. See, e.g., Davis (1993), 37: 'the constant absence of the chorus contrasts with Medea's constant presence...and serves to emphasize Medea's social and cultural isolation'; Fyfe (1983); and Benton (2003), 272-77, who, like me, includes Medea's gender as a factor in her isolated state.

12. See in Euripides, e.g., Medea's scenes with Creon (261-356), with Jason (446-622, 866-975, 1317-1404) and with Aegeus (663-758).

13. Eur. *Med*. 214.

14. Seneca's break from Greek tragedy in his use of the choral body is well-documented (see, e.g., Davis [1993] and Boyle [2006] for general changes from the Greek tradition). While Senecan choruses generally lack the level of participation present in Greek tragic choruses, the particular absence of choral interaction with characters in the *Medea* is striking.

15. Costa (1973) *ad* 56-115: 'note that the chorus throughout is hostile to M. and friendly to Jason (102ff., 362, 596); in Eur. the chorus is friendly to M. (e.g. 267-8)'.

16. One might contrast the choral activities in Seneca's *Oedipus*, *Troades*, and *Hercules Furens*, where the choruses converse with several characters and represent clearly defined communities of citizens. I suggest that the chorus of the *Medea* is also clearly defined (as Corinthian citizens, made apparent in the first choral ode) despite their general distance from conversation.

17. For a fuller discussion of these passages as they relate to Seneca's *Medea*, see Walsh (2011), 134ff.

18. See Davis (1993), 37, who believes that 'the chorus is absent from the stage in every act of *Medea* except during Act 5, scene 1 (879-90) when they are required as recipients for the messenger's news'.

19. Leaving aside any thematic similarities (of which there are many), the use of imperatives from Nurse to female protagonist is clearly part of the schema. Compare, e.g., *Med*. 174 with *Phaed*. 165 (*compesce*); *Med*. 157 (*siste furialem impetum*) with *Phaed*. 248, 263, and *Ag*. 203 (*siste furorem/ siste furibundum impetum/ siste impetus*); *Med*. 381 with *Ag*. 224 (*comprime*); *Med*. 175 (*animosque minue*) with *Phaed*. 256 (*animos corece*). Contrast Atreus who in his conversation with the Satelles (*Thy*. 204-335), despite its length, rarely uses the imperative.

20. That is, unlike in Euripides, there is no opportunity for the chorus to warn/counsel Medea against taking certain actions, a phenomenon which is also noted by Fyfe (1983), 79-81.

21.. Showing again that the final monologue of Seneca's play is not the *sine qua non* of meaning, as some critics tend to treat it, though Gill himself does admit that the difference between these two Medeas probably reflects 'larger differences between Euripidean and Senecan dramaturgy and psychology' (Gill [1987], 25, from which the passage quoted is also taken).

22. Several critics observe that Medea openly models herself on her past: Guastella (2001), 202ff., Schiesaro (2003), Star (2006), Gill (1987), 31ff., Boyle (1997), 58f., etc. Schiesaro argues for Medea's 'desire to push her life backwards, to deny the future any real possibility of unfolding and deviating from the past' (208). He also highlights the fact that Seneca invents this desire: 'Euripides' heroine makes no attempt to win back the object of her passion' (209). See generally 208ff. The following analysis aims to unpack Medea's reliance on the past as a means of self-creation. On the premise that Medea is anxious about being forgotten (including a comparison to Ovid's Medea of the *Heroides* and Ariadne of Catullus 64), see Walsh (2011), 173ff.

23. Here I agree with Fitch and McElduff (2002), who argue that the unfortunate result of Medea's self-assertion is that she 'misidentifies' her self with one set of characteristics; she 'associat[es herself] too completely with a particular role' (30). Fitch and McElduff, however, fail to problematise the mechanism of Medea's self-fashioning, and address only the outward consequences. I also find their opposition between Medea-as-wife and Medea-as-mother to be a too simplistic reading of her character. Benton (2003) argues (also too simplistically, in my opinion) that Medea chooses to become the character of the 'Other', a xenophobic stereotype which the Corinthians have created for her.

24. Much has been said about the paradoxical connection between Medea's motherhood and the necessary severity of her crimes. See, e.g., Guastella (2001), Nussbaum (1996), McAuley (2008) for a range of better interpretations (though none of the above, in my opinion, interprets the problem to a satisfying end).

25. See Walsh (2011), 198ff., for a more detailed assessment of this passage.

26. For the presence and absence of the chorus in Seneca's tragedies, see Davis (1993).

27. For Medea adjusting her speech to fit the expectations of others, see Walsh (2011), 23ff.

28. Though not connected directly with her return home, Medea uses 're-' words also to describe the return of the Argonauts to Greece (235, 238), and in other contexts (*recedens*, 282; *recidas*, 296). The 're-' vocabulary also appears in the Nurse's address to Medea at 380ff. (381, 383, 385, 389, 425). Perhaps of interest is Medea's language in Ovid's *Heroides* 12, where she tells Jason *redde* and *refer*.

29. See, e.g., *Med*. 727.

30. In this, Medea is similar to Ariadne (who envisions herself going back home at Cat. 64.177ff.), but she is unlike Vergil's Dido, who imagines herself travelling onwards with Aeneas to Italy, or waging war against the Trojans (*Aen*. 4.537ff.).

31. *De Providentia* 2.10ff., which is Star's primary comparison: Star (2006), 218ff.

32. This is usually the point in the monologue where critics identify Medea as having been overcome by madness or passion (or, as Gill might argue, an 'akratic self-succumbing to passion'). See Gill (1987), 25f., Costa (1973) and Hine (2000) *ad loc*.

33. This is a bit paradoxical—a teleology that is also a turning backwards, but Medea's own speech is paradoxical: for example, she calls herself *coniunx* (1021) and *mater* (1012) after she has decided that both children must die, and after she has declared that her virginity has been restored (984). Her own logic is not internally consistent.

34. See Section II above.

35 A.J. Boyle reminds me that this expression (the place being open for a wound) is reminiscent also of gladiatorial combat.

36. For the connection between female and penetrability, see Walters (1998), esp. 41. For a lengthier discussion of Medea's impression of feminine penetrability and the adoption of a masculine persona as a means of securing her boundaries, see Walsh (2011), 68ff. Segal (1983b), 178ff., and Nussbaum (1996), 453-57, also discuss Medea's quest to undo Jason's penetration, but they ignore the biological and gendered proclivity for penetration to be a problem (i.e., her female-ness), as well as the connection between Medea's penetrability and her adoption of masculinity throughout the play.

37. As I argue below, Medea's use of such verbs serves to reinforce her connection to the divine Juno in Seneca's *Hercules Furens*.

38. For further comparison of some of these passages with Medea's statement, see Walsh (2011), 83-86.

39. For more on the exigent circumstances of Jason's marriage to Creusa (and Creon's motivation for taking Jason in), see Fyfe (1983), 81, and Lawall (1979), 420ff.

40. See, e.g., Boyle (1994) comm. *ad* 614.

41. Her foreignness might also contribute to this perspective; though the social structure is familiar to her (having come from a land with a king and royal family), she is not socially or biologically Greek. For more on this topic, see Walsh (2011), 132-72, and Fyfe (1983) more generally on Medea's exclusion from the Corinthians.

42. Many scholars have also observed the similarities between Atreus and Medea, and there seems to be a consensus that Atreus' character is modelled to some extent on Medea's (or at least shares many of the same attributes, including a choice to see himself as a deity). See, e.g., Fitch & McElduff (2002), 36, Littlewood (2003), 38, 47, 97, 148-53, 174; Segal (1983a), 237ff.

43. Though it is outside the scope of this essay, one must reckon with the magic scene (lines 670–848), which comprises almost a fifth of the tragedy and is, perhaps, the clearest display of Medea's actual power. In the monologue itself (including the Nurse's descriptions and reported speech), Medea prays to Hecate to help her create the fire which, housed in the robe given to Creusa, will burn against the laws of nature (see the Messenger's report at *Med*. 888ff.) and destroy the city. In the course of observing Medea's magical ability, Medea professes a power over nature—defined broadly: flora (707-30), fauna (675-704), landscape (752ff.), seasons (e.g., 759ff.), planetary bodies (768ff.), and a power over the underworld (740-51).

44. A.J. Boyle reminds me that the theme of fulfilment of prayers is important in Senecan tragedy.

45. Nussbaum (1996), 463, mentions Phaethon alongside Icarus as proper warnings against ambition. While she argues extensively about the connection between Medea and Plato's Phaedrus, she does not examine in detail the resonance of the Phaethon myth.

46. For the ‘daring’ of the Argonauts, see Walsh (2011), 51-61; for the resonance of *immemor*, see 180ff.

47. For detailed verbal allusions, see Jakobi (1988) *ad Med*. 32, 33, 33f., 37f., 601f., 745, 758f.

48. The possible exception to this is the Fury at the beginning of the *Thyestes*, who could also make an interesting comparison to Medea.

49. For a fuller discussion of Medea’s similarity to Juno, as well as the echoing themes of boundary violation and broken *fides* contained in both tragedies, see Walsh (2011), 100-16.

50. For Medea as dramaturge, see, e.g., Boyle (2006), 208-10, 215ff., Schiesaro (2003), 16ff. *et passim*, Littlewood (2004), 45-51, 57ff.

51. It is outside the scope of this essay to describe how Medea herself resembles the Fury specifically invoked by Juno, but it is significant in showing how Medea embodies her own agent of revenge: see Walsh (2011), 106. For Medea as a Fury in general, see Littlewood (2004), 37, 103ff.

52. *HF* 99 occurs with *noster*, a phrase used by Medea more than once (*Med*. 554, 907f., 1011), and a phrase that does not occur in Senecan tragedy outside these two plays. Though it is outside the current scope of my project, T. Habinek points me towards the likely intertext for an angry and mournful Juno: Vergil’s *Aeneid* (and especially the opening: 1.4, 9, 11, 25, 130, etc.). See also Lawall (1983), who argues that Hercules’ *pietas* and *fortitudo* foil Juno’s plans to destroy his reputation as hero.

53. According to Denooz (1980), of the 64 instances of *dolor* in Senecan tragedy, 14 occur in *Medea* (over 20%). *Dolor* occurs in *Tro*., *Phaed*., and *Thy*. 11, 10 and 10 times, respectively. Of the 70 instances of *ira* in Senecan tragedy, 22 occur in *Med*. (almost a third); *Thy*. has the next place with 13 occurrences.

54. Note that this line has two first person future verbs, one of which is *extraham*; Juno also uses *extraham* as the second verb of a two-verb sentence at *HF* 95.

55. For a discussion of Medea’s agency and its relation to her use of first-person verb forms, see Walsh (2011), 194ff.

56. For a different interpretation of this part of the tragedy, see Fyfe (1983), 84f.

57. I am surprised that most critics, on the nature of Medea’s love in this passage, tend to assume that Medea’s love is love for Jason (thus she has conflicted feelings about him—anger and love). I think, however, that Medea’s love here is directed at her children, since they are the most pressing cause of her body’s rebellion. It makes more sense to see her conflicting emotions as (1) anger at Jason (the jilted wife who seeks revenge, which aligns her with Juno as well), and (2) love for her children (which would cause her to balk at murdering them). Structurally, the thing which is *amor* and pitted against *ira* seems to become expressed as *pietas* at *Med*. 943f.

58. See, e.g., Star (2006), Guastella (2001), Fitch and McElduff (2002).

59. Gill (2009) suggests a Stoic reading of Medea’s final monologue, in terms of Medea’s accordance with her ‘nature’.

60. In this, Medea also embodies the fulfilment of the chorus’ wishes: to return to a pre-Argonautic past (with firm boundaries between lands) and to restore their relationship with the divine (which was lost when the Argonauts set sail). See, e.g., Walsh (2011), 50-67.

61. Newlands (1997), 192.

62. Newlands (1997), 207.

63. See, e.g., *Med*. 114, 150, 174, 189, 281, 381, 390, 538, 856.