

Συναγωνίζεσθαι
Studies in Honour of Guido Avezzù

Edited by Silvia Bigliuzzi, Francesco Lupi,
Gherardo Ugolini



Skenè Studies I • 1

Executive Editor	Guido Avezzù.
General Editors	Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliuzzi.
Editorial Board	Simona Brunetti, Francesco Lupi, Nicola Pasqualicchio, Susan Payne, Gherardo Ugolini.
Managing Editors	Serena Marchesi, Savina Stevanato.
Editorial Staff	Francesco Dall'Olio, Marco Duranti, Carina Fernandes, Antonietta Provenza, Emanuel Stelzer.
Layout Editor	Alex Zanutto.
Advisory Board	Anna Maria Belardinelli, Anton Bierl, Enoch Brater, Jean-Christophe Cavallin, Rosy Colombo, Claudia Corti, Marco De Marinis, Tobias Döring, Pavel Drabek, Paul Edmondson, Keir Douglas Elam, Ewan Fernie, Patrick Finglass, Enrico Giaccherini, Mark Griffith, Daniela Guardamagna, Stephen Halliwell, Robert Henke, Pierre Judet de la Combe, Eric Nicholson, Guido Paduano, Franco Perrelli, Didier Plassard, Donna Shalev, Susanne Wofford.

Copyright © 2018 S K E N È
All rights reserved.
ISSN 2464-9295
ISBN 978-88-6464-503-2
Published in December 2018

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form
or by any means without permission from the publisher
Dir. Resp. (aut. Trib. di Verona): Guido Avezzù

P.O. Box 149 c/o Mail Boxes Etc. (MBE 150) – Viale Col. Galliano, 51, 37138, Verona (I)

Contents

SILVIA BIGLIAZZI - FRANCESCO LUPI - GHERARDO UGOLINI Πρόλογος / Prologue	9
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

Part 1 – Τραγωδία / Tragedy

1. STEPHEN HALLIWELL “We were there too”: Philosophers in the Theatre	15
2. MARIA GRAZIA BONANNO Tutto il mondo (greco) è teatro. Appunti sulla messa-in-scena greca non solo drammatica	41
3. VITTORIO CITTI Una nota inutile ad Aesch. <i>Suppl.</i> 950	69
4. ANGELA M. ANDRISANO Le <i>performances</i> della Pizia (Aesch. <i>Eum.</i> 29-33)	81
5. PIERRE JUDET DE LA COMBE Una dialettica regale. Gli argomenti della regina sulla ricchezza in Aesch. <i>Pers.</i> 159-69.	91
6. LIANA LOMIENTO Osservazioni critico-testuali e metriche su Aesch. <i>Eum.</i> 352-3 = 365-6	107
7. ENRICO MEDDA Alcune congetture inedite di A.E. Housman all’ <i>Agamennone</i> di Eschilo	133
8. FRANCO MONTANARI Mito e poesia: la figura di Clitennestra dall’ <i>Odissea</i> a Eschilo	147

9. ANTONIETTA PROVENZA Un destino paradigmatico. L'ibrido e la necessità del γάμος nel mito di Io	167
10. ALESSANDRO GRILLI Forme e funzioni della parola magico-sacrale nei <i>Sette contro Tebe</i>	195
11. GIOVANNI CERRI Antigone, Ismene e sepoltura di Polinice: protostoria di un mito	219
12. RENZO TOSI Creonte e il potere che rivela l'uomo (Soph. <i>Ant.</i> 175-7)	237
13. ROBERTO NICOLAI Perché Edipo è chiamato τύραννος? Riflessioni sull' <i>Edipo re</i> come tragedia del potere	251
14. SETH L. SCHEIN The Second <i>Kommos</i> in Sophocles' <i>Philoctetes</i> (1081-1217)	277
15. CAMILLO NERI <i>Marginalia Colonea</i>	299
16. FRANCESCO LUPI <i>Minima Sophoclea</i> . Fr. 150, 722, 338 R. ²	323
17. PAOLA ANGELI BERNARDINI Ecuba, le prigioniere troiane e la presenza del mare nelle <i>Troiane</i> di Euripide	341
18. ADELE TERESA COZZOLI Azione drammatica e metateatro nell' <i>Oreste</i> di Euripide	359
19. JORDI REDONDO <i>Alcestis</i> : Pro-Satyrical or Simply Romantic Tragedy?	385
20. MARCO ZANOLLA Tracce di polemica contro il <i>ploutos</i> nell' <i>Alcmena</i> di Euripide: fr. 95, 96 e 92 Kn.	403

21. EDWARD M. HARRIS
Pollution and Purification in Athenian Law
and in Attic Tragedy: Parallels or Divergences? 419

Part 2 – Κωμωδία / Comedy

22. ANDREAS BAGORDO
κομψευρικῶς. Tracce di Euripide socratico-sofistico
nella commedia attica 457
23. MARCO DURANTI
Due questioni interpretative nelle *Ecclesiazuse*
di Aristofane (vv. 1089-91, 1105-11) 491
24. GIUSEPPE MASTROMARCO
Aristofane, *Le donne che occupano le tende*, fr. 488 K.-A. 503
25. OLIMPIA IMPERIO
I demagoghi nelle commedie di Aristofane e dei suoi rivali 515
26. ANDREAS MARKANTONATOS
The Heracles Myth in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*:
The Boeotian and Dicaeopolis Scene (ll. 860-958) 545
27. PIERO TOTARO
Antiche e nuove esegesi di Aristofane, *Pluto* 168 563
28. FAUSTO MONTANA
Lamia nella *Collana* di Menandro (fr. 297 K.-A.) 585
29. GUIDO PADUANO
Un tema della Nea: la verità come perfetto inganno 599
30. MASSIMO DI MARCO
Una probabile eco della parodia comica del *Ciclope*
di Filosseno in Ermesianatte (fr. 7.73-4 Powell) 615

Part 3 – Παράδοσις / Reception

31. MARIA PIA PATTONI
Tragic and Paratragic Elements in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* 633
32. PAOLA VOLPE
Il Ciclope: un mostro tra antico e moderno 653
33. ERIC NICHOLSON
Finding Room for Satyrs at the Theatrical Table,
from Ancient to Modern Times 675
34. FRANCESCO DALL'OLIO
Oedipus Tyrant? Tyranny and Good Kingship
in Alexander Neville's Translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* 693
35. SILVIA BIGLIAZZI
Euripidean Ambiguities in *Titus Andronicus*:
the Case of Hecuba 719
36. VAYOS LIAPIS
On the Sources of Petros Katsaitis' *Iphigenia* (1720): Between
Lodovico Dolce, Molière, and the Commedia dell'Arte 747
37. GHERARDO UGOLINI
Il Genio della tragedia. Antigone nel *Vorspiel* di Hofmannsthal 783
38. DOUGLAS CAIRNS
Fascism on Stage? Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* (1944) 805
39. AVRA SIDIROPOULOU
Negotiating Oblivion: Twenty-First Century Greek
Performances of Ancient Greek Plays 833
40. MARTINA TREU
'Guidaci a passo di danza'. Cori comici sulla scena 857
41. ADELE SCAFURO AND HIROSHI NOTSU
Miyagi's *Antigones* 881

Part 4 – Ἐξω τοῦ θεάτρου / Theatre and Beyond

42. ANTON BIERL <i>Symmachos esso</i> : Theatrical Role-Playing and Mimesis in Sappho fr. 1 V.	925
43. WALTER LAPINI La casa dei belli (Asclepiade AP 5.153)	953
44. MAURO TULLI Plato's κάλλιστον δρᾶμα in Greek Biography	963
45. SIMONA BRUNETTI Il coraggio di tradire per poter tramandare: un allestimento contemporaneo del <i>Gysbreght van Aemstel</i> di Joost van den Vondel	975
46. NICOLA PASQUALICCHIO Piano d'evasione: carcere e utopia negli Shakespeare della Compagnia della Fortezza	1003
47. SOTERA FORNARO Il giovane rapsodo nella Stanza della Segnatura di Raffaello	1025
The Authors	1043

Appendix

Guido Avezzù's Publications (1973-2018)	1079
-----------------------------------------	------

Oedipus Tyrant? Tyranny and Good Kingship in Alexander Neville's Translation of Seneca's *Oedipus*

FRANCESCO DALL'OLIO

Abstract

This paper examines Alexander Neville's representation of Oedipus as a tyrant (a traditional feature of the character since Sophocles' tragedy) in his 1563 translation of Seneca's *Oedipus*, and the impact it has on its political message. The first two sections describe how Neville's changes create a different political landscape by making the Chorus the primary moral authority of the play and by enhancing Oedipus' intimate sense of guilt for the suffering he causes to the kingdom. Then, in the third section the article examines how Neville foregrounds Oedipus' potentially tyrannical character by showing his desire to hang on to power and behave unjustly towards Creon, although this means leaving Thebes vulnerable to plague. The article situates this analysis within the broader context of Elizabethan debate on tyranny and of contemporary dramas on the same subject.

1. Introduction

Alexander Neville's *Oedipus* is one of the most studied amongst the translations of the ten Senecan tragedies, published between 1559 and 1567 and then collected by Thomas Newton in the single 1581 volume of *Seneca. His Tenne Tragedies*. Friederick Kiefer (1978) and Jessica Winston (2008: 47-53) consider this play together with Jasper Heywood's translation of *Troades* as the most representative examples of how English Renaissance sensibility influenced early modern translative approaches to Seneca. Kiefer underlined Neville's emphasis on such topics as the precariousness of power and just retribution, which are only marginally present in Seneca. Following Kiefer,

Winston highlighted the political relevance of such choices, meant to encourage those in power “to practice humility and compassion by showing that those in position of authority cannot escape fortune’s reach” (53). In the following pages, I will pursue this line of interpretation by focusing on one main aspect of Neville’s translation: how Oedipus’ tyranny is affected by the translative approach the author adopted and the effects of the new vernacular context upon the story. I will therefore argue, following Woodbridge’s proposal to view Seneca’s translations as a sort of “resistance project” directed against tyranny (2010: 138), that Neville’s re-interpretation of the Senecan play is politically-oriented. Woodbridge contends that all the translations of Seneca’s tragedies should be considered as dealing with such a topic, either by having a tyrannical character (Atreus in *Thyestes*, Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*), or by describing the oppression subjects suffer by the arbitrary power of men and gods alike (the Greek army in *Troades*, and Iuno in *Hercules furens*, respectively; 149-52). Among them, *Oedipus* stands out as the “rare positive political exemplum” of a “king who pulls back from tyranny” (135).

Woodbridge’s interpretation has the merit of being the first to consider this aspect of the relationship between Neville’s translation and the literary tradition he received. In Sophocles’ tragedy, after hearing Tiresias’s revelation of the true story of his birth and actions, Oedipus shows signs of suspicious, angry and fearful behaviour, leading him to accuse the prophet and Creon of conspiring together against him. The way he acts in this scene displays a set of psychological traits that the cultural tradition of Attic tragedy associated with a tyrannical personality.¹ Seneca rewrote this episode in a way consonant to the political culture of his time, making Oedipus more similar to “a Tacitean portrait of a Julio-Claudian emperor than . . . [to] Sophocles’ protagonist” (Boyle 1997: 97). By rewriting Oedipus’ tyranny in a way more consistent with Renaissance political thinking, Neville was establishing himself as part of a well-defined literary tradition, notwithstanding his claim to have “in Sense

¹ Lanza offers a brief but accurate analysis of the ‘tyrannical’ behaviour of Oedipus (1977: 141-8). Some scholars have interpreted Oedipus as an altogether tyrannical character, but as Paduano has argued (1994: 94-100, and more recently 2012: 54-62) this interpretation is hardly convincing.

lytell altered" (a.vii^v) the Senecan tragedy.² For this reason, it is interesting to examine how this complex process took place and how Neville conveyed an ethical and political message around a very delicate topic at the time as that of tyranny.³

In the first two sections of this article, I will discuss how Neville dealt with the political issue. In particular, I will show how his approach was to emphasise, on the one hand, the people's suffering because of the plague, and on the other hand, Oedipus' characterization as a prudent, responsible and caring king. Then, in the third section, I will focus on the episode of his transformation into a 'tyrant', and its meaning in relation to the rest of the play. Thus, I will show how Oedipus' tyranny helps convey the moral and political message of Neville's translation, in contrast to the early phases of the tragedy, when Oedipus instead proves to be a good king.

2. A More Involved Chorus

As Kiefer (1978) and Winston (2008) have shown, the deepest and most extensive changes in Neville's translation occur in the choral songs. Of the five choral odes in Seneca's tragedy, only two (the

2 Which was nothing exceptional, at a time when, as Morini 1995: 17-24 reminds us, there was no established theoretical thinking about translations, and the old Medieval custom of widely changing the original text (if secular) to give voice to the translator's agenda was still practiced.

3 Many factors contributed to making tyranny a delicate topic in English literature between the late 1550s and the early 1560s. Henry VIII's arbitrary rule had created a rift between the crown and the Humanist-educated intellectual elite, that prompted the latter to abandon their traditional role as advisors and become covert critics of the tyrannical king (cf. Walker 2005). Mary's reign exasperated this situation and pushed renowned Protestants exiles to develop a 'resistance theory' centred around the right of people to rebel against a legitimate but abusive (i.e. tyrannical) king (cf. Woodbridge 2010: 138-49). Elizabeth's ascent was relatively smooth, but the new queen found herself confronted with subjects who, even when not spurned on to rebel by political or religious reasons, did not intend to submit to her power and tried to influence her by presenting her with 'images' of good kings, following the will of God and/or her people (cf. Hill 1992; Walker 1997: 196-221; Dall'Olio 2017: 476-8, 489-96). Speaking of tyranny during this period meant dealing with a very thorny and multifaceted issue.

first and the last one) retain at least something of the original, albeit with significant differences. Of the other three, the first one (the ode to Bacchus at the end of Act 2)⁴ is omitted, and the other two are rewritten in ways that make them entirely unconnected to the original play.⁵ These changes were not made randomly; on the contrary, as Kiefer contended, the choral odes are exemplary of Neville's translation practice as well as of his interest in the vulnerability of power to Fortune's blows and in the faith in divine justice to punish the sins of everyone, especially those in power (Kiefer 1978: 378, 382-5). In my opinion, these changes also contributed to involving the Chorus more in the dramatic action, stressing their role as representatives of the community and in this way foregrounding the people's suffering and opinions on the crisis in Thebes.

This enhancement of the Chorus' role is already evident in the first ode. Both the original Senecan piece and the translated version open with the Theban citizens entering on stage, lamenting the plague fallen upon the city. In both versions, the citizens also invoke a god (Bacchus in Seneca, an unnamed God in Neville) to come to their aid. However, in Seneca the prayer becomes almost immediately a poetic description of the lands Bacchus travelled together with his faithful Theban soldiers:⁶

Occidis, Cadmi generosa proles,
 urbe cum tota. viduas colonis
 respicis terras, miseranda Thebe.
 carpitur leto tuus ille, Bacche,
 miles, extremos comes usque ad Indos,
 ausus Eois equitare campis
 figes et mundo tua signa primo.
 cinnami silvis Arabas beatos
 vidi et versas equitis sagittas,

4 No doubt this ode seemed to Neville, as also to some modern scholars, as an unnecessary stop in the dramatic action. However, cf. Mastronarde 1970: 306-10 on its relevance for the imagery of Seneca's tragedy.

5 Cf. Kiefer 1978: 374-80, Winston 2008: 49-50.

6 All Latin and English quotations from Seneca's *Oedipus* are from Seneca 2011.

terga fallacis metuenda Parthi.
 litus intravit Pelagi Rubentis;
 promit hinc ortus aperitque lucem
 Phoebus et flamma propiore nudos
 inficit Indos.

(110-23)

[“High-born breed of Cadmus, you fall / With all the city. You watch lands / Widowed of tillers, piteous Thebes. / Death crops your soldiers, Bacchus, / Your comrades to furthest India, / Who boldly rode on Eastern plains / And fixed your standards at earth’s rim. / They saw rich Arabs in cinnamon / Groves, archer-riders in retreat, / The false Parthian’s ominous back. / They entered the Red Ocean’s shore, / Where Phoebus rises and unlocks / The light, and blackens the naked / Indian with close flame.”]

Neville replaced the description with a prayer to the god, so that the Chorus can know the cause of the pestilence. The ‘digressive’ moments of the Senecan ode are thus substituted with a more apparently caring attitude on the part of the Chorus, who therefore gain a prominent role as the voice of the subjects:⁷

More then thrice renowned stock of auncient Cadmus race.
 O mighty Thebes Citie great, O hevvy ruthfull Case.
 Loe now you lye all desolate, with Plagues devoured quight.
 O fowle and fearfull fates (alas) what causeth all this wo?
 O God whence springs this Pestylence? that us tormenteth so?
 (A.vi^{r-v})

In the remaining lines, Neville preserves the entire Senecan description of the devastated city, but he adds two more passages to emphasize the citizens’ anguish in witnessing its ruin. In the first one, they ask to the god that the plague should be aimed at punishing the guilty (“Powre downe on them diseases fowle, that

⁷ As Winston 2008, I will refer to the in-quarto version of 1563. It should be recalled that, at the time of its publication, with Elizabeth just ascended to the throne, the debate on tyranny and good kingship was still affected by the resistance literature that developed against Mary, and that prompted many writers to deal with the subject of tyranny in the hope of influencing the new queen.

them deserved have", A.vi^v), so that at least it may provide justice in the country,⁸ while in the second they reiterate their prayer that suffering will be put to an end (A.viiiⁱ). These insertions have a considerable effect on the beginning of the play. In the previous scene, Oedipus expressed his own personal anguish due to the plague destroying his kingdom, and, as will be seen, his fear of being responsible for his own potential role in it. Now, in the first choral ode, the Theban community echoes him, by asking what the cause of this plague is, what the plague should be, and by praying to the god that at least this common ruin may have some aspects of justice associated with it. As a result, their suffering appears as equally relevant to the play as that of the king, which establishes the Chorus as another, 'unofficial' protagonist.

The Chorus' deep concern about the fate of the kingdom sets the pattern for the next two odes (the third and the fourth in Seneca), where they reformulate what Neville presented, in the Preface to the translation, as the moral of the play: "a very expresse and lively Image of the inconstant change of fickle Fortune in the person of a Prince of passing fame and Renowne . . . by meere misfortune, nay rather by the deepe hidden secret Iudgments of God pyteouslye plunged in most extreame myseries" (a.v-vi). However, the two odes' focus upon this theme marks a total departure from Seneca. In the original text, the third ode begins with the Chorus passionately denying Oedipus' guilt ("Non tu tantis causa periculis" ["No! You did not cause this crisis"], 3.709) and then goes on with a long description of the Labdacids' curse, while the fourth ode opens with the Chorus wishing to fly away from present misery and then continues with the story of Icarus' flight, whose moral is "Quidquid excessit modum / pendet instabili loco" ("All that exceeds the mean / Stands poised upon the brink", 4.909-10). Nothing of this remains in Neville's translation, where the second ode (immediately following Creon's report of Laius' response declaring Oedipus guilty) presents his story as the proof that the life of princes is "a state ene fytt for men on whom Fortune wolde wreke her wyll" (D.ii^r), while the second one laments the definitive fall of Oedipus by the hand of Fortune, now that there is no doubt about his guilt ("A wofull thy-

8 Cf. Kiefer 1978: 379-80; Winston 2008: 51.

ng to see: / A Princely lyfe to myselfers state, converted for to bee", D.viii^v). In both cases, Neville discards the mythical landscapes and the poetic image present in Seneca to privilege a more explicit reaction by the Chorus to what happens on stage, rendered in the moralistic terms of the Christian and medieval tradition about Fortune's fickleness.⁹ It is worth noting that both odes stand in stark contrast with Oedipus' tyrannical behaviour in Act 3, when he rejects the oracle's response and tries to charge Creon and Tiresias with treason. Differently from the king, the Chorus accepts the response and its consequences, and the following events in the play will prove Oedipus wrong and the citizens right.

Neville's additions to the fourth and last Choral song (the fifth in Seneca) confirm the Chorus' active role. In this case, the translator faithfully reproduces the topics of the original Choral piece: man has to yield to fate's fixed course, and sometimes fear of what is to come paradoxically accelerates its occurrence. This last point is then developed by Neville in a longer *coda*, where the Chorus, as Keifer pointed out (1978: 374-5), laments not the inevitability of fate, but the human sense of instability, and therefore invites every man to be advised:

Wherfore set pevysh feare asyde,
and worthy courage beare.
And thou that Subiect art to Death
Regarde thy latter daye.
Thinke no man blest before his ende
Aduyse the well and staye.
Be sure his lyfe, and death, and all,
be quight exempt from mysery:
Ere thou do once presume to saye:
this man is blest and happy.
(E.iv^v)

This brings back to mind Oedipus' tyrannical behaviour in Act 3,

9 Cf. Kiefer 1978: 374-6; Winston 2008: 50. It is also worth noting that Neville moves to this ode the Chorus' expression of solidarity towards the king, present in the previous ode, but with a different meaning: "O Oedipus thy fatall fall, thy dredfull mischiefs right. . . . what hart may them reioyce / At thy dystresse? I can no more: my teares do stop my voice" (E.i^r).

against which the Chorus express the ultimate moral that power does not grant happiness, and men have to learn humility and acceptance of their fate (Winston 2008: 50-1).

3. The King and His People

It has been pointed out several times that one of the main differences between Seneca's tragedy and its Sophoclean model is that in Seneca Oedipus is presented from the beginning as internally plagued by fear and anxiety over his guilt, thus eliminating the positive connotations of his kingship present in Sophocles.¹⁰ The search for the truth leading to the terrible discovery of Oedipus' true parentage in the Greek tragedy is thus replaced, as Anthony Boyle noticed (1997: 91), by a desperate longing for innocence, and a more pessimistic analysis of the contradictory nature of power and law. In Neville's translation, this aspect is maintained, but is developed in a way that emphasizes its most directly 'political' consequences. Neville intensifies Oedipus' sense of inner justice and responsibility towards his subjects, elaborating on an aspect of his character that in Seneca is alluded to but never becomes central. In this way, Oedipus' kingship recovers some of the positive qualities it lacks in Seneca, thus creating a background against which the tyranny displayed in Act 3 will emerge as even stronger.

This strategy is apparent from the beginning of the play, in the monologue which marks Oedipus' entrance in Act 1. In Seneca, he expresses his fear that his being untouched by the plague may be the sign that a greater, more terrible evil will befall him (Paduano 2012: 82):

Iam iam aliquid in nos fata moliri parant.
 nam quid rear quod ista Cadmeae lues
 infesta genti strage tam late edita
 mihi parcit uni? cui reservamur malo?
 inter ruinas urbis et semper novis
 deflenda lacrimis funera ac populi struem

¹⁰ Cf. Mastronarde 1970: 315; Palmieri 1983: 183; Caviglia 1986: 261-5; Boyle 1997: 92; Paduano 2012: 80-1.

incolumis asto – scilicet Phoebi reus.
 sperare poteris sceleribus tantis dari
 regnum salubre? fecimus caelum nocens
 (1.29-36)

[Now, now fate fashions something for me. / What else can I think
 when this plague that fouls / Cadmus' folk, dealing universal death,
 / Sparing me alone? For what evil am I kept? / Amid the city's
 ruin, the endless funerals, / The unceasing sobs, the slaughter of
 men, / I stand untouched – truly damned by Phoebus. / Could one
 expect sin like mine to receive / A healthy realm? I've made the
 air guilty.]

Neville rewrites this passage so as to present Oedipus as anguished at the thought that his subjects may be suffering because of him:

For what should I suppose the cause? A Plague that is so generally
 And Cadmus' country wholly spoils and spreads itself thorough all?
 Should us amongst so huge a heap of plaged Bodies spare?
 And we alone amongst the rest reserved to mischiefs are?
 O heavy hap. And byde we still alone the spoyle to see?
 Of Cities great, of men, of beasts, by plague that wasted be?
 And thou amongst so many yls, a happy life to lead,
 Couldst once persuade thy selfe (O wretch) without all fear or dread.
 Of Phebus secret Judgements to, and that in kinges estate,
 Thou, thou, infected hast the ayre, in such a filthy rate.
 (A.ii^r)

In this passage, Oedipus' original fear of what fate might have in store for him is replaced by his own self-blame for having thought that he could live "a happy life" while the city is suffering. This detail recalls a previous passage in this same monologue, when he acknowledges the true, harsh reality of a prince's life:

Doth any man in Princely throne reioyce? O brittle Joye
 How many ills? how faire a face? and yet how much annoy
 In the doth lurke, and hidden lies? what heapes of endless stryfe?
 They iudge amys, who dream who Prince to have the happy lyfe.
 For as the mountains huge and high, the blustering windes withstand,
 And craggy Rocks, the belching fluds do dash and beate from land.

Though that the seas in quiet are and nought at all do some:
 So kingdoms great submytted lye, to fortunes doulfull Dome.
 (A.i^v)

In this passage too, Neville rewrites the original Senecan passage on the negativity of the *regnum* as only a superficial benefit:

Quisquamne regno gaudet? o fallax bonum,
 quantum malorum fronte quam blanda tegis!
 ut alta ventos semper excipiunt iuga
 rupemque saxis vasta dirimentem freta
 quamvis quieti verberant fluctus maris,
 imperia sic excelsa Fortuna obiacent.
 (1.6-11)

[What joy lies in kingship? O treacherous prize, / What evils you
 hide with that smiling face. / As soaring ridges always catch the
 gales / And craggy rocks on which vast ocean splits / Are lashed
 by waves of the most tranquil sea, / Exalted power is Fortune's
 plaything.]

The difference between the two passages is a telling example of Neville's reinterpretation of the play. In Seneca, Oedipus laments that the *regnum* causes unhappiness and is subjected to Fortune's blows, a recurrent theme in his theatre and particularly prominent in this play.¹¹ For him the plague is a proof that the *regnum* is battered by Fortune and this is how the gods punish him for his crimes. For that reason, in a subsequent passage, while declaring that he never sought a kingdom, he will claim: "caelum deosque testor – in regnum incidi" ("heaven witness! – [I] stumbled on a kingdom", 1.14). Neville, instead, lays the emphasis on Oedipus' personal pain due to his own cares as a king, which he did not have when he was a vagabond and exile (Kiefer 1978: 378). For him the plague is a disgrace that hits him personally, since, as a prince, he has to see his own people perish while he does not suffer, and this is precisely what makes his life wretched. After all, he cries that "a kingdom is befauln on me" (A.i^v), thus strengthening his own passivity in front of destiny.

¹¹ Cf. Boyle 1997: 97; Paduano 2012: 81.

Therefore, it is no surprise that, while in both texts Oedipus intends to discharge himself from the accusation of ambition, only in Neville's does his cry for innocence sound really desperate. Oedipus declares that kingship is a condition that he was afflicted with against his will, doing away with all traces of willingness and hints of guilt still perceivable in Seneca with regard to his acceptance of kingly power: Oedipus stumbled on a kingdom and did not refuse it (Paduano 2012: 81). This is not the case in Neville, where Oedipus' protestations of innocence strengthen his painful sense of responsibility: he never intended to cause suffering to the Theban people in order to satisfy his own personal ambition. At the outset, he is undoubtedly good and caring, justly concerned with the future of his country, and even willing to exile himself, if this could help take away the plague.

It is interesting that the two main themes of Oedipus' monologue in Act 1 will be reprised and expanded by the Chorus: the preoccupation for the safety of the kingdom is immediately picked up in the first choral ode, while the negative view of kingship, as we saw above, provides the argument of the second and third odes. As a result, the relationship between the king and his people is strengthened, reinforcing the impression of Oedipus as a good king. This sets the pattern for the rest of the play, where Oedipus' personal responsibility to respond to the political crisis and save the kingdom becomes a main aspect of the political message of the tragedy. In fact, Neville underlines in plenty of ways the fact that it is only as a result of his protagonist's will that Thebes can be restored to health.

On the one hand, Neville cuts off all the passages which in Seneca's text allude to the Labdacids' family curse, or equips the play with a larger mythical landscape. We saw this already in the first section above with regard to the Choral odes, but there is another place in the tragedy where this intention becomes evident: Creon's retelling of Laius' necromancy in Act 3. In the original text, Laius' appearance is preceded by that of his ancestors, everyone named in a way reminding the audience of the family history:

primus emergit solo,
dextra ferocem cornibus taurum premens,

Zethus, manaque sustinet laeva chelyn
 qui saxa dulci traxit Amphion sono,
 interque natos Tantalus tandem suos
 tuto superba fert caput fastu grave
 et numerat umbras. peior hac genetrix adest
 furibunda Agave, tota quam sequitur manus
 partita regem. sequitur et Bacchas lacer
 Pentheus tenetque saevus etiamnunc minas.
 (3.609-18)

[First to rise from the ground / Is Zethus – his right hand grips a wild bull / By the horns; then – a lyre in his left hand – / Amphion, whose sweet music moved the rocks. / The Tantalid with her children, safe at last / In pride, bears her stony head with disdain / And counts her ghosts. A worse mother appears, / Frenzied Agave, leading the whole troop / Who dismembered the king. Torn Pentheus / Trails the Bacchae and still his wild threats rage.]

In Seneca, these references define Oedipus' guilt as a result of the family curse of the Labdacids, thus placing part of the blame for his crimes on a tradition of familiar horror and decay (Mastrorarde 1970: 311-2). This aspect is completely lost in Neville's text, where the mythical characters are reduced to names only:

Both Tantalus and Zetus to, and pale Amphion Ghost:
 And Agave, and after her, ten thousand sprights do post.
 Than Pentheus and more and more, in lyke estate ensue:
 Tyll out at length coms Laius: with fowle and griesly hue.
 (C.vi^r)

The omission of the mythical references to the family curse deprives Oedipus' actions of their mythical resonances, leaving him to cope with his own personal guilt.¹² No curse can be invoked to partially justify his parricide and incest: Oedipus is alone in front

¹² Winston remarks that in this way Neville "reduces the particularity of the story, shaping Oedipus into a generally representative man who suffers the vicissitudes of fortunes and operations of justice" (2008: 49). While this is substantially true, I believe that the changes also serve to highlight and enlarge Oedipus' personal responsibility.

of his sins.

On the other hand, Neville keeps underlining the effort Oedipus puts into his search for Laius' murderer, a task which Oedipus sees as a way to exercise his royal power as a defender of the Theban community. When Creon comes back from Delphi with the oracle's response about the need to find out Laius' murderer, Oedipus is indignant and amazed at the thought that any man could kill a king: "Durst eny man on yearth attempt, / that noble prince to slaye?" (B.iii'). In the original Latin text, Oedipus just asked who the murderer was: "Et quis peremptor incluti regis fuit?" ("And who was the renowned king's assassin?", 2.221). The emphasis Neville lays on the extraordinariness of the murder of a king suggests that Oedipus-the-king cares more about the administration of justice than his counterpart in Seneca's tragedy, also considering that king-killing was a more delicate question to deal with in Neville's time.¹³ Likewise, the consequent curse on Laius' unknown murderer too is more violent and expands the idea present in the original that the murderer must be excluded from human society:

Let him no health, no comfort have, but al to crusht with cares,

¹³ Killing a tyrannical (i.e. legitimate but abusive) king was a matter of furious debate in the 1560s. Resistance writers such as John Ponet, Christopher Goodman and John Knox advocated in their works the people's duty in doing so, as a form of punishment sanctioned by God. This theory was to be taken up again later (albeit in a much less religious tone) by Scottish humanist and scholar George Buchanan. In his *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos Dialogus* (published in 1579 but written a few months after Mary Stuart's deposition in 1567) he argued that the power of kings derived by popular will, and therefore a king whose behaviour was not in accord with the law could be justly killed (cf. Mason and Smith in Buchanan 2004: xxvii-xxix, xlvi-xlviii). To contrast such theories, official Tudor ideology went on to assert, in texts such *An Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion* (1571), that the people had no right to rebel even against a bad king, since this would have been an act of revolt against the order of Nature as established by God's will (cf. Dall'Olio 2017: 476-7). However, this did not entirely settle the issue: on the contrary, as Mack's and Miola's analyses of Shakespeare's plays show (cf. Mack 1973; Miola 1985), the theme of 'killing the king/tyrant' kept haunting the Elizabethan imaginary, time and again prompting political and cultural debate.

Consume his wretched yeres in grief and though the Death him spares
 A while. Yet mischiefs all at once, at lengthe upon him light.
 With all the evils under sonne, that uglye Monster smight.
 In exile let him lyve a slave, the rated course of life.
 In Shame, in Care, in penurye, in Daunger and in strife.
 Let no man on him pitie take, let all men him revile.
 (B.v^t)

In Seneca's text, this part of the curse was contained in just two verses: "hunc non quieta tecta, non fidi lares, / non hospitalis exulem tellus ferat" ("[He] is to find refuge in no quiet home, / No faithful hearth, no friendly land – an exile", 2.257-8), while greater relevance was given to the ethical part of the punishment, with a special emphasis on the culprit committing family crimes, such as parricide and incest, as part of his damnation. The shift in the emphasis from one aspect of the curse to another witnesses Neville's different inflection of Oedipus's story, making the political aspect of the regicide much more important than the moral one: the king's murderer has committed an impious crime polluting the city, therefore he has to be excluded by the community he tainted as a fitting punishment. While it remains true that, as in Seneca, Oedipus projects on the unknown murderer an image of himself-as-the-murderer, devising the punishment that he fears that could be inflicted to himself (Caviglia 1986: 261), Neville's re-writing emphasizes the social aspect of Oedipus' curse, thus reinforcing the idea that Oedipus is a righteous king bent on doing the right thing.

The same preoccupation with the right punishment will crop up again at the end of the tragedy, when Oedipus, in blinding himself, will show the same care about justice and retribution. This aspect is present in Seneca too, as Gottfried Mader has shown,¹⁴ but Neville points up its political and social relevance. In Seneca, his self-blinding is presented as an intentional act through which Oedipus accepts and declares in its full extent his own wretched nature, thus finally imposing his own will on the fate

14 Mader 1995: 307-9. Cf. also Palmieri 1983: 157-8: she was the first to insist on Oedipus' choice of excluding himself from every community, the dead and the living, as the rationale behind the choice of blinding himself.

forcing him to be parricide and incestuous (Mader 1995: 316-8). In Neville the recurrence of “revenge” and “vengeance” in Oedipus’ final speech (absent in the Latin text) adds an ethic nuance: the king is obsessed by the thought of punishing himself with a penalty fitting his crimes, thus restoring justice and order (Kiefer 1978: 379-80). Oedipus goes out at the end of Act 4 with a “revenging mynd” (D.viii^v), and invokes the gods to receive “vengeance due” (E.i^r) for the crimes he committed. In the following speech, the Nuntius tells the Chorus that Oedipus decided not to kill himself, because that would not “make / A meete amends outright” for his crimes (E.iii^r). Oedipus even wishes he could live a hundred times so that he could “vengeaunce take / Upon this wretched pate” (ibid.) again and again. In this way, Oedipus proves that he is still a rightful king, as he applies to himself the same punishment he was to mete out for the unknown murderer. His self-blinding both makes him an object of horror for every man and is the explicit mark of his own exclusion from society. Oedipus’ final words sanction the justice of it:

Now spare you Gods, spare now, my Countrey prest to fall.
 I have done that you did commaund: Your wraths revenged bee.
 This wretched looke, this mangled face, is fittest now for thee.
 (E.iv^v)

In Seneca, this same passage ended with a somehow proud affirmation of Oedipus’ own ingenuity: “*Inventa thalamis dig-na nox tandem meis*” (“Now I’ve found night fit for my marriage bed”, 5.977). Self-blinding appeared to be a way of finally proving to himself and everybody that he had accepted his fate. In Neville, instead, Oedipus shows satisfaction because his punishment is fit for the revenge of the gods, and therefore it is an act of both personal and social justice.

4. Oedipus the Tyrant?

It is against the backdrop of the Chorus as the moral authority of

the play, and of Oedipus as a king genuinely devoted to administering justice, that the following discussion of Oedipus' tyranny in Act 3 is set. We may start by pointing out that, in Neville's text, Oedipus's tyranny is more explicitly declared than in the original. In Seneca, he behaves like a tyrant, when he accuses Creon of conspiring against him and has him imprisoned for no other reason than his fear of losing his throne, but he is never defined as such.¹⁵ In Neville's translation, instead, Act 3 ends with Creon openly saying that Oedipus behaved like a tyrant towards him: "Who so the Tyrant playes and gyltles men with force doth smight / He dredeth them that hym do dred" (D.i^v).¹⁶ Thus, Neville makes explicit what Seneca only alluded to, making Oedipus descent into tyranny faster.

The impression of a quicker descent is reinforced by Neville's decision to cut the ominous signs present in the first part of Act 3, when Oedipus orders a reluctant Creon to reveal Laius' ghost's response. In Seneca, Oedipus' insistence on having it becomes suspicious, as he, in a fit of rage,¹⁷ denies Creon the "muta libertas" ("the right of silence", 3.525) that his brother-in-law presents as the fundamental right to be granted by a king. Scenes like this are typical of Senecan tragedies (Boyle in Seneca 2011: 237), where tyrants are often shown to be afraid of the silence of their subjects, which they see as a sign of a possible threat against their power, as Oedipus himself says: "Saepe vel lingua magis / regi atque regno muta libertas obest" ("The right of silence / Harms king and kingdom – often more than speech", 3.524-5).¹⁸ The denial of the right of silence thus becomes as an assertion of absolute power: refusing Creon his right to a fundamental *libertas* as that of holding his peace, Oedipus claims absolute submission.

This feature is absent from Neville's text, where Creon sim-

15 Cf. Mader 1993; Boyle 1997: 97; Paduano 2012: 80.

16 In the original text, the idea is the same, but the word 'tyrant' is not mentioned: "Qui sceptris duro saevus imperio regit / timet timentis" ("The savage who kings it with merciless power / Fears those who fear", 3.705-6).

17 A typical psychological feature of the tyrant in Seneca's tragedies: cf. Boyle in Seneca 2011: 236.

18 Cf. Mader 1993: 114 on this sentence as a perfect example of 'tyrant-logic'.

ply asks “leve to hould my peas” (C.iii’), as the lesser one “of all the pardons Princes graunt” (ibid.). This different word choice gives a very different meaning to Creon’s request. He is not asking Oedipus to respect a fundamental right of every subject, but permission to act as he thinks best, even if his duty towards king and country requires that he reports the response of Laius’ ghost. Creon thus implicitly recognises that Oedipus’ request is legitimate, even if he threatens him with punishment; he is justified because since what is at stake is the fate of the kingdom and his request only confirms that he continues to be a careful and good prince, as proved by his answer to Creon: “As though the Silence hurts not more, oftimes than words ill spent” (ibid.). Neville here eliminates the political references of the original (where silence was a threat to power), giving Oedipus’ answer a generalizing tone, more appropriate to a wise and caring king. Even Oedipus’ wrath, in this context, may be viewed as an appropriate emotional response to Creon’s silence, which endangers the city by concealing what could ensure the salvation of Thebes.

By contrast, after Creon’s speech Neville accelerates the process through which Oedipus comes to accuse Creon and Tiresias of conspiracy. In Seneca, before accusing Creon Oedipus is caught by fear that the response may be truthful and reminds himself, in an aside, of what may instead prove that it is not. Only after having weighed the evidence, does he come to the conclusion that he is the victim of a plot:

Et ossa et artus gelidus inuasit tremor.
 quidquid timebam facere fecisse arguor.
 tori iugalis abnuit Merope nefas
 sociata Polybo; sospes absoluit manus
 Polybus meas. uterque defendit parens
 caedem stuprumque. quis locus culpae est super ?
 multo ante Thebae Laium amissum gemunt,
 Boeota gressu quam meo tetigi loca.
 falsusne senior an deus Thebis gravis?
 iam iam tenemus callidi socios doli.
 (3.658-68)

[An icy shiver knifes my bones and limbs. / All I feared to do, I’m

accused of having done. / But Merope's partnership with Polybus /
 Refutes any impious marriage; Polybus lives, / Clearing my hands
 of guilt. Both parents disprove / Murder and incest. Where can
 my guilt lie? / Thebes lamented the loss of Laius / Long before I
 stepped on Boeotian soil. / Does the old priest lie – or a god hate
 Thebes? / Now, now I've got them and their devious plot.]

On the contrary, Neville has Oedipus immediately accuse Creon of treason, and all the actions that in Seneca's play were evidences he brought to quiet his own fear, become arguments to show Creon the failure of his plot. Oedipus goes as far as challenging him to "lay what [he] can unto [his] charge", as nothing will prove him guilty:

That, that I alwayes feard, alas upon me now is layde:
 But slender props thei are (God wot) wherby your Treason is sayde.
 Meropa my Mother deare, shall me from this defende.
 And Polibus shall purge me quight, from Actions that all tend
 To muder, or to incest vile, they both shall me excuse.
 In suche a case no means at all of tryall I refuse.
 Laye what you can unto my charge, no fault in me remayns.
 The Thebanes long or I cam here, of Laius death complayns.
 My mother yet alive, my father styll in lyke estate.
 No, no, this is som doliysh drift, of yon false Prophet parte.
 (C.vii^v)

The king, who at the beginning of the play seemed ready to give up his power for the good of the people, rapidly becomes a power-hungry tyrant once his power is threatened. Neville's changes to the text emphasize this sudden transformation by omitting all transition between the two phases of Oedipus' psychological characterization.

In addition, Neville also takes care of presenting Creon as a positive character by putting in his mouth the moral about the wretchedness of the life of princes endorsed by Oedipus at the beginning of Act 1 (1.6-11, see above), and repeated by the Chorus after this scene in the second and third choral odes of the play (see above). This is evident in the way Neville re-elaborates Creon's original first response to the charge of treason: "si me fides sacrata cognati laris / non contineret in meo certum statu, / tamen ipsa me for-

tuna terret nimis” (“If sworn loyalty to my family’s house / Did not keep me firmly in my own place, / Such fortune . . . Would stop me”, 3.672-4). In his translation, the English author expands this sentence through Creon’s insistence that “yll fortune . . . / Whose guyse it is on Princes heads, houghe heapes of Cares to throwe” (C.viii), will deter him from any such attempts. Moreover, Neville also dilates the following passage (3.687-93) when Creon states that he does not need to aim for power, since he already enjoys all the advantages of his position. Neville has Creon explicitly say that his life is blessed because it is “from Pryncely Cares exempt” (D.i^r), and therefore this is enough to dissuade him from seeking more power. Creon thus emerges as a proper, faithful servant of the state, respectful of his position in society and lacking ambition. He also appears to share the same view of the Chorus on the life of princes, a view that Oedipus, after having supported it in his monologue at the beginning of the play, now seemingly opposes when confronted with the concrete possibility of losing his power.

In my opinion, here lies the key to understand Neville’s peculiar treatment of Oedipus’ tyranny: this is the first and only time, in the whole play, when Oedipus does not act for the good of his people, but for his own, personal sake. After starting as a good sovereign aware of the duties of a ruler, bent on doing the right thing, Oedipus suddenly reveals himself as hanging on to power, whatever the consequences. This perspective is clear in the way Neville modifies Creon’s answers to Oedipus’ question: “dost thou me exhorte thou slave my kingdom for to leave?” (C.vii^v).¹⁹ In Seneca, Creon simply stresses that Oedipus has no other choice: “Suadeam hoc illis ego, / in utrumque quis est liber etiamnunc status. / tibi iam necesse est ferre fortunam tuam” (“I’d advise this / To men who are free to choose what to do. / Necessity now makes you bear your fortune”, 3.679-81). In Neville, Creon says the same thing, but adds that, in any other case, he would ‘not’ endorse such a proposal:

Think you I wold them so perswade whiche freely myght possess

19 “Hortaris etiam, sponte deponam ut mea / tam gravia regna?” (“Are you really asking me to lay down / Freely this heavy crown?”, 3.678-9). It is worth noting that, here too, Neville intensifies Oedipus’ wrath and arrogance, by making him insult Creon.

Theyr Realmes? Of those you neede not fear least cares should
 them oppres.

But as for you, of force you must, your fortunes change abyde.
 (C.vii^v)

The way Neville translates Creon's answer clarifies that Oedipus must abdicate for the sake of the kingdom, since the response of Laius' ghost identified him as the cause of the Theban plague. Oedipus' refusal to abdicate suggests that he is in fact enamoured of the power he acquiesced to give up in the first part of the play, and ready to do anything to preserve it. That is what makes him a tyrant.

Oedipus' transformation is also stressed by the way in which Neville rewrites the final dialogue about fear and kingship. In Seneca, when Creon asks "*Quid si innocens sum?*" ("What if I'm innocent?"), 3.698), Oedipus replies that nonetheless he is to be imprisoned, because "*dubia pro certis solent / timere reges*" ("Kings often take / Dubious fears for real", 3.698-9), and that to let him go is too dangerous: "*quisquis in culpa fuit / dimissus odit. omne quod dubium est cadat*" ("If the accused goes free, / He still hates. All that is suspect must fall", 3.701-2). Neville makes a drastic change by having Oedipus advocate the general right of the endangered man to "seeke all meanes to shun lyke yls as he hath overpast" (D.i^v). The focus is shifted from the uncertainty of Creon's guilt to Oedipus' right to be relieved from his fear even at the cost of being hated by his own subjects.

To conclude, Oedipus' tyranny lies in his refusal, in Act 3, to act for the benefit of the country by explicitly rejecting the truth of his guilt. This choice sets him against the Chorus, whose voicing the moral on the wretched state of princes in the following ode illuminates, by contrast, the foolishness of Oedipus' refusal even in the face of his inescapable fate. What until that moment had been presented as a united community, where king and subjects were linked by a common way of viewing things, is now divided between the deluded will of a well-meaning but stubborn sovereign and the painful consciousness of the subjects on the best way to save their country. While it is true that this does not turn Oedipus into a full tyrant (not even in Seneca's text this could be said of

him),²⁰ still it highlights an inconsistency in Oedipus' behaviour, that shows a very different side of him, leading him to be the loser at the end of the tragedy. By contrast, the Chorus emerge as the real authority of the play, not only because their suffering is functional to the dramatic action at the beginning of the play, but also because, in the following odes, they show themselves to have a better understanding and a wider moral horizon than the king, who is entirely absorbed by the painful process of self-knowledge and unwilling to listen to anybody. In the loss of this connection between the king and the Chorus, the representatives of the kingdom, there resides the rationale of Neville's reinterpretation of Oedipus' tyranny. When in the last Act Oedipus renounces the throne and punishes himself with self-blinding, he will go back to being a good king: fully aware of his guilt, he will choose to accept his fate and will behave accordingly, thus saving Thebes.

Therefore, the play invites us to identify Oedipus alternatively as a good king or as a tyrant depending on whether he behaves in the interest of the people or of himself. This distinction between tyranny and kingship was not an innocent one in the 1560s when tyranny was a frequent topic in drama (Bevington 1968: 141-68). Neville's *Oedipus* followed Thomas Preston's *Cambises* (printed 1569, but commonly thought to have been written around 1560) by only three years, the first Elizabethan tragedy to explicitly deal with a traditional tyrant figure represented as an unstable and assertive king who refuses to take counsels and carries on ruling according to his desires.²¹ Slightly earlier, figures of tyrannical kings deposed by their own subjects for not respecting the law nor ruling for the people's sake had made their way into the anthology *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), on whose frontispiece it was written that the stories contained in it would show the reader "howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperitie is founde, even of those, whom Fortune seemeth most highly to favour".²² Thus it invited to consider those stories as moral examples

20 Cf. Caviglia 1983: 269; Paduano 2012: 80.

21 On Preston's *Cambises* in its political context, see the fundamental study of Hill 1992; cf. also Dall'Olio 2017: 491-2.

22 See Winston 2004 on *The Mirror* and its political meanings.

through which one could learn humility in front of fickle Fortune – the same purpose Neville wanted to achieve with his translation. One year after *Oedipus'* print, Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pythias* was to stage the figure of a fearful tyrant, obsessed with his own security and deaf to all counsel. All these plays, written either by young Protestant intellectuals educated during the Marian persecution, or by older authors who had lived at the Marian court,²³ had one thing in common: tyrant figures presented as stubborn and self-absorbed kings whose wilful rule oppressed their subjects, eventually leading most of them to a gruesome and pitiful end. By offering them as negative examples of kingship, their authors gave, by contrast, indications about what a good king should be like: he who reigned according to the law, defended justice and respected the freedom of the people and their well-being.

Neville rewrote *Oedipus'* tyranny along these lines, providing yet another example of a literary work that “fostered a kind of political awareness” (Winston 2008: 51). In this tragedy, *Oedipus'* tyranny offered the perfect negative example not to be followed: the king's desperate effort to retain his power and prove his innocence demonstrates a man refusing to relinquish his power, too consumed by his personal involvement in the situation to make the right decision. Thus, through textual manipulation and the reinvention of the Chorus's role, Neville's *Oedipus* recasts the story as a mirror for magistrates, suggesting that the only way for a king to be a good ruler is to pursue the good of the country and accept with humbleness and submission what an unpredictable future holds for him, always putting the people's sake, and the law, before personal advantage.

Conclusion

Neville dedicated his work to Nicholas Wotton, an important figure of Tudor diplomacy between the 1540s and the 1560s, thus

²³ This is the case for Richard Edwards: see Ros King's introduction in Edwards 2001.

making of it “a subtle form of admonition, encouraging a powerful and influential person to practice humility and compassion by showing that those in positions of authority cannot escape fortune’s reach” (Winston 2008: 53). Within this context, Neville’s re-interpretation of Oedipus’ tyranny occupies a very important role, one that so far has not received much attention. In contrast with both the Chorus’ moralistic view of the life of princes as subjected to Fortune’s instability, and Oedipus’ behaviour at the beginning and at the end of the play as a truly righteous king, Oedipus’ transformation into a tyrant marks the moment, at the play’s centre, when the sovereign becomes an example of Fortune’s reversal. Driven by fear and insecurity, Oedipus refuses to accept that the only way to save the kingdom from the plague is to renounce power, and instead charges Creon with treason, denouncing his will to pursue safety for his own power by any means. As a result, he becomes an example of arrogance and pride, a king who deems his own power more important than the good of his subjects. This justifies his fall, on an ethical plane, as an example of divine punishment, while at the same time reinforcing the ultimate moral of the play about Fortune’s fickleness and the need for a governor to learn humility. That was a strong message in the Elizabethan age, one that his readers would have easily grasped as being deeply political.

Works Cited

- Baldwin, William (1559), *A Myroure for Magistrates, Wherein may be seen by example of other, with howe grevous plages vices are punished and howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperitie is founde, even of those, whom Fortune seemeth most highly to favour*, London: Thomas Marsh.
- Bevington, David (1968), *Tudor Drama and Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boyle, Anthony James (1997), *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Buchanan, George (2004), *A Dialogue of the Law of Kingship among the Scots*, ed. by Roger Mason and Martin Smith, Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate.

- Caviglia, Franco (1986), "L'*Oedipus* di Seneca", in Bruno Gentili, Roberto Pretagostini (eds), *Edipo: il teatro greco e la cultura europea*, Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 255-74.
- Dall'Olio, Francesco (2017), "Xenophon and Plato in Elizabethan Culture: The Tyrant's Fear Before *Macbeth*", *Comparative Drama* 51 (4): 476-505.
- Edwards, Richard (2001), *The Works of Richard Edwards: Politics, Poetry and Performance in Sixteenth-Century England*, ed. by Ros King, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Hill, Eugene D. (1992), "The First Elizabethan Tragedy: A Contextual Reading of *Cambises*", *Studies in Philology* 89: 404-33.
- Kiefer, Frederick (1978), "Seneca Speaks in English: What the Elizabethan Translators Wrought", *Comparative Literature Drama Studies* 15: 372-87.
- Lanza, Diego (1977), *Il tiranno e il suo pubblico*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Mack, Maynard (1973), *Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Mader, Gottfried (1993), "Tyrant and Tyranny in Act III of Seneca's *Oedipus*", *Grazer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für die klassische Altertumswissenschaft* 19: 103-28.
- (1995), "Nec Sepultis Mixtus et Vivis Tamen / Exemptus: Rationale and Aesthetics of the 'Fitting Punishment' in Seneca's *Oedipus*", *Hermes* 123 (3): 303-19.
- Mastrorarde, Donald (1970), "Seneca's *Oedipus*: The Drama in the World", *Transactions and Proceedings of American Philological Association* 101: 291-315.
- Miola, Robert S. (1985), "*Julius Caesar* and the Tyrannicide Debate", *Renaissance Quarterly* 38.2: 271-89.
- Morini, Massimiliano (1995), *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Neville, Alexander (1563), *The Lamentable Tragedy of Oedipus the Sonne of Laius King of Thebes out of Seneca*, London: Thomas Colwell.
- Paduano, Guido (1994), *Lunga storia di Edipo Re: Freud, Sofocle e il teatro occidentale*, Torino: Einaudi.
- (2012), *Edipo: storia di un mito*, Roma: Carocci.
- Palmieri, Nicoletta (1983), "Sulla struttura drammatica dell'*Edipo* di Seneca", *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Siena* 4: 115-64.
- Seneca, Lucius Anneus (2011), *Oedipus*, ed. with introduction, translation and commentary by Anthony James Boyle, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Walker, Greg (1997), *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2005), *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Winston, Jessica (2004), “A Mirror for Magistrates and Public Political Discourse in Elizabethan England”, *Studies in Philology* 101: 381-400.
- (2008), “Seneca in Early Elizabethan England”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (1): 29-59.
- Woodbridge, Linda (2010), *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.