DECLAMATORY LUDISM
AND
SENECAN CHARACTERISATION

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis attempts to identify and analyse the influence of the tradition of declamation on characterisation in the dramatic compositions of the Stoic philosopher Seneca. Two argumentative lines structure this thesis: the first relates to a concept of ludism, which is argued to help re-visit declamatory rhetoric, and re-appreciate its functions in Roman society. The second one is twofold: first, that the concept of ludism - in the ways in which it is argued to be applicable to declamatory rhetoric - can describe effectively the influence of declamation on Senecan characterisation; and second, that it may allow us to re-visit the issue of the place of Senecan characterisation within the whole of Seneca’s philosophical writings, by putting into relief an educative function of Senecan characterisation.
DECLARATION

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The system of abbreviations for classical texts and authors used in this thesis is that of Oxford Latin Dictionary and Liddell and Scott. The OCT editions have been used in all quotations from Greek and Latin authors, except for the passages of declamatory speeches from the Elder Seneca’s collection, and pseudo-Quintilian’s Major and Minor Declamations. These have been taken from the Teubner relevant editions, and from M. Winterbottom’s edition of the Minor Declamations ascribed to Quintilian (Berlin / New York, 1984).

Reference works

OLD  Oxford Latin Dictionary
TLL  Thesaurus Linguae Latinae

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1 INTRODUCTION

'We are accustomed to think of play and seriousness as an absolute antithesis. It would seem, however, that this does not go to the heart of the matter.'

Huizinga (1944) 18

'Play is a thing by itself. The play-concept as such is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness.'

Ibid. 45

'It is through this playing that society expresses its interpretation of life and the world.'

Ibid. 46

Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher, composed his dramatic works at a time when declamation was a popular social activity. Originally starting as a type of training in rhetoric practised by young Romans in preparation for their future political career, declamation developed into a form of pastime for adults, who declaimed speeches (either deliberative or forensic) on fictional themes in highly epideictic performances. This increasingly epideictic tendency together with declamation’s popularity during the Imperial period led to the association of declamation with extreme, novel themes and an excessive, bombastic style, which has often been traced in the literary output of the Empire. Seneca’s dramas are no exception.

Traditionally, declamation has been seen as the trademark of decadent rhetoric. For old-school criticism, declamatory style and themes are a sign of corruption. Similarly, Senecan drama, which is a most prominent example of the so-called Silver Latin, has been criticised for its declamatory features. But while the influence of the tradition of declamation on Seneca’s dramatic compositions is taken for granted, there is little research which actually analyses the declamatory properties of Senecan drama in a systematic manner. The few relevant studies which do exist tackle the question only in a haphazard or partial manner.

Drawing upon two strands of research (on declamatory rhetoric and on Senecan drama), the main purpose of this thesis is to develop an understanding of the ways in which declamatory mechanisms may be traced in Senecan characterisation. Overall, the argumentation presented in this thesis relies on and explores the premise that Senecan dramas can be

1 On the dating of Seneca’s dramas see Fitch (1981).

2 Casamento (2007a), (2007b), (2002), (1999); Braden (1970) argues that rhetoric in Senecan drama is not mere self-indulgent play, but that it is intertwined with characterisation; Canter (1925) lists in a comprehensive manner the rhetorical elements in Seneca’s tragedies; Preisendanz (1908), Rolland (1906); Leo (1878), viii proposed that Seneca wrote a new type of tragedy, rhetorical tragedy.
interpreted as part of Seneca's Stoic philosophical education. By implication it will proposed
that Seneca makes Stoic thought and declamatory training interact with one another, and in so doing designs a new version of philosophical education in which declamatory techniques and modes of thought are put to serious use.

1.1 LUDISM AND DECLAMATORY RHETORIC

Ludism is a key concept in this thesis. It is used as an explanatory category which seeks to
capture the function of play in social practices and activities, and which here consists in the
combination of agonism and theatricality. The first section of the thesis will focus on the
manifestation of ludism in declamatory rhetoric, designating this form of ludism as
‘declamatory ludism’. The ludic function of declamatory rhetoric is contrasted with the non-
ludic or pragmatic function of political rhetoric.

Political rhetoric as a practice with pragmatic goals (as opposed to the lack of political
pragmatism of declamatory rhetoric) held a fundamental position in Roman society, a society
which scholars have frequently described as performative. It has been pointed out, for
instance, that rhetoric provided Romans with a platform for constructing their identity in a
performative manner. This is reflected in a view common in ancient thought, that the way
one speaks is indicative of one’s morals, and is reminiscent of Quintilian’s fusion of moral
qualities with rhetorical skills in his description of the ideal Roman.

But whereas pragmatic rhetoric functions on the basis of an established and commonly
accepted social code of morality, declamatory rhetoric turns that very social code into a
matter of reflection and negotiation in its own right. This difference may be captured by the
term ‘ludic’ in the sense of ‘pre-performative or preparatory for the actual performance of
one’s identity’. By implication, those who trained themselves in rhetoric by practising
declamation (students, eminent figures of Rome, or newcomers who strove for recognition in
Roman society) essentially engaged in a cultural, studious game on what constitutes
appropriate Roman behaviour. What makes declamation ludic is the fact that in it there is
nothing at stake, and anything is possible, as the practitioner tests out in imaginary and
sometimes ridiculous scenarios the principles on which he will need to act when playtime is
over. That activity was essentially a game of cultural learning (for Roman teenagers) and
‘learned-ness’ (for Romans, and for non-native people who sought to establish their
awareness of the Roman culture). Within that ‘learning programme’ of declamatory ludism,

3 Gleason (1995) and Gunderson (2000) discuss how rhetoric allowed one to embody
manhood, while a poor embodiment could jeopardise the establishment of manhood.

4 *uir bonus peritusque dicendi* (Quint. 12.1.1). See Winterbottom (1964) on the significance
of this phrase for Quintilian’s conception of the ideal orator. Walzer (2003) points out the
Stoic colour of Quintilian’s rhetorical education which aimed at creating the *uir bonus*.

investigating, testing and probing were vital functions, as declamation’s practitioners sought to test the principles not only of rhetoric but of Romanness.

Indeed in recent years, scholars have established a relationship between declamatory rhetoric and the Roman process of self-conceptualisation. It has been proposed that declamation allowed its practitioners to rehearse behavioural patterns, the appropriateness of which was challenged or defended in a constant process of negotiation and re-negotiation of the established social norm. I shall argue that, to achieve that effect, declamatory rhetoric makes use of stock anthropological categories (usually called ‘declamatory stock characters’), such as the tyrannical father, the stepmother, the pious son, the hero etc. If seen as a whole, these categories compose an anthropological map, so to speak, which ‘visualises’ the ways in which Romans dealt with social status and identity anxieties.

It will be shown that the declamatory social map combines these anthropological categories in antithetical pairs; that these pairs juxtapose positive (uir fortis, pater indulgens, fidus/-a coniunx, pius filius, pia mater etc.) and negative (tyrannus, affectator tyrannidis, pater luxuriatus, filius luxuriatus, perfidus/-a coniunx, impius filius, nouerca, etc.) anthropological categories. These categories represent established views on, and moral expectations of, the Roman figures of the paterfamilias and the materfamilias regarding moral issues of piety, cruelty, valour etc. It has been recognised, for instance, that the figures of the father (pater) and the master (dominus) served as paradigms for the authority of the Emperor in the Imperial period. Their antithetical combination enables the questioning and (in cases of extreme experimentalism) the transgression of the boundaries which distinguish these categories. This allows declamatory rhetoric to promote reflection upon tensions concerning what is considered appropriate in terms of family and social roles.

Two related (and inter-related) aspects of declamatory ludism contribute to this process of questioning boundaries and investigating private and public roles, aspects which we will term ‘agonism’ and ‘theatricality’. Declamation as a practice might have been performed in private (note, for instance, Cicero’s ‘practice sessions’ at home), but it was usually inherently adversarial. In particular, its agonistic aspect will be shown to relate firstly to the actual process of negotiating moral issues. The declaimers embarked on a highly antagonistic

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6 These categories are everywhere to be found in the major surviving collections of declamations, such as the Elder Seneca’s and pseudo-Quintilian’s Major and Minor Declamations.


8 It will be shown that the reality of the arena provides apt metaphors which capture the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric. It will be explained that the suitability of such imagery lies in that it provides a combination of agonism and theatricality, the two aspects of ludism, given the intensely theatrical character of the spectacles of the arena, with gladiators often re-enacting mythical battles. Coleman (1990) and Shelton (2000) discuss the element of theatrical re-enactment in the spectacles of the arena.
process of invention in their attempt to surpass other declaimers’ take on any given declamatory theme. This tendency is designated as ‘antagonistic invention’, and extends to the second, fictional level, as the declamatory speeches engaged in intertextual relationships with the literary tradition, and demonstrated awareness of their metafictional status, explicitly seeking to promote themselves as capping those other fictions. This tendency is designated as ‘antagonistic intertextuality’. Since declamatory characters were instances of moral commonplaces, such as piety, cruelty, heroism, etc., the negotiation on moral issues in declamation was intertwined with the antagonistic invention, ultimately promoting new astonishing views on moral issues.

Such an adversarial process depended upon role-playing. The element of theatricality, which is inherent in declamation (students / declaimers impersonating a father, for example, or a son, according to the requirements of the declamatory theme) is only one form of it; it will be argued that declamation’s theatricality can also be identified in the self-reflective re-enactment of literary fictions stripped of their specifics as they appear in declamatory themes, and represented by stock characters. For instance, a declamatory father speaking against his wife, or a declamatory son speaking against his stepmother can not but be seen as re-enacting other similar situations inspired from the literary tradition. As the specifics of names and characters has been removed, declamation in its advanced form could be seen as a theatre of situations and dilemmas. Seneca’s (seemingly highly specific and well-known) characters can be shown to be drawing upon such ‘abstract’ theatrical problems in defining who they are and what they should do next.

1.2 SENECAN CHARACTERISATION

The rest of the thesis will interpret Senecan characterisation in the light of declamatory ludism. It will be argued that Seneca’s dramas portray characters with particular emphasis on their search to establish their true selves (designated as ‘ludic phase’), before they embark on the actions which their mythological selves dictate (designated as ‘non-ludic phase’), when their identity is finally established. In this argument, the ludic phase acts as illustration of the characters’ process of self-investigation, self-enquiry and consideration of alternatives, and decision-making leading to them becoming themselves, while the non-ludic phase corresponds with the actions they take, when they have finally become themselves.

Section two of the thesis will describe the ways in which declamatory ludism can be traced in Senecan characterisation, by exploring the two sides of ludism, agonism and theatricality, separately for methodological simplicity. Theatricality will be traced in the special emphasis given to the social roles of the characters who seek to establish their identity. It will be argued that, as in declamation, Senecan characters tend to be stripped of specifics, so that they emphatically embody such roles as mother, stepmother, father, tyrant, hero, debauched father/son etc. Theatricality will also be traced in the metatheatrical awareness which Seneca’s dramatic compositions demonstrate. It will be suggested that within an intensely self-conscious, dramatic world, the behaviour and actions of Senecan characters are
presented as re-enactments of fictional scenarios drawn from a literary past of which they possess some sort of intuitive knowledge. It will be shown that this re-enactment relies on special emphasis on characters’ roles, such as family roles (mother, father, son) or social (master, tyrant, subject). These roles correspond to declamatory stock characters, and appear in antithetical combinations, designated as ‘declamatory binaries’.

Agonism will also be argued to be of two sorts: the first-level agonism, which refers to the characters’ engagement in a negotiation (either internally or externally) of their identity, a process more often than not given a judicial colour; and second-level agonism relating to a metafictional level, where characters engage in competitive behaviours relating to their awareness of their metafictional status. This involves the characters’ involvement in a process of antagonistic relationship with mythological figures of other literary fictions, in their attempt to find their true selves through the similarities to, and/or differences from, other characters. Their reflections on their social status and identity are informed by the desire for innovativeness, as they seek to find their true selves, by pushing the boundaries of what constitutes appropriate behaviour. With declamatory stock characters being instances of commonplaces, Senecan characters’ search for identity implicates the corresponding commonplaces, and promotes reflection upon what is possible or impossible, appropriate or inappropriate in terms of social behaviours.

In summary, the ludic tendencies in Senecan characterisation which we attribute to the influence of declamatory rhetoric are as follows: questioning and considering transgressions of established boundaries of roles (this takes the form of open, often rhetorical, questions or comments addressed to the relevant character regarding the plausibility, appropriateness, novelty etc. of the social roles which they are presented to embody, and which are strongly emphasised); investigating/experimenting with possible expressions of a role through a metafictional insight into the literary tradition (this takes the form of comparative allusions to mythological figures famous/infamous from the literary tradition for manifesting the specific role in a certain way, positive or negative); finally testing whether acting out a role in one’s own newly-invented way actually allows them to become themselves, until this is confirmed externally, i.e. other characters.

To explore all this, my study will focus on character-portrayal in those dramas of the Senecan corpus which scholarship unanimously accepts as genuine, namely *Hercules Furens, Medea, Troades, Phaedra, Agamemnon, Oedipus* and *Thyestes*. The three excluded dramas are *Phoenissae, Hercules Oetaeus*, and *Octavia*. The *Phoenissae* was
excluded due to its incomplete state, whereas *Hercules Oetaeus* and *Octavia* on the basis that they are not considered genuine Senecan works.\(^9\)

### 1.3 Ludism and the Educative Capacity of Senecan Characterisation

The concept of ludism, as applied to declamatory rhetoric, is intended to describe the processes of self-questioning, investigation, and moral experimentalism of Senecan characters. From this foundation I shall argue that Senecan characterisation, informed as it is by declamatory ludism, is also consonant with Stoic views on the psychology of human action. Ultimately it will be proposed that Senecan characterisation can be integrated in the Stoic system of thought, which has been a problematic issue. Indeed scholars tend to identify a jarring dissonance between Seneca’s Stoic background and the passionate characters of his dramas.\(^11\) The concept of ludism may help address this apparent dissonance, by identifying common ground among declamatory rhetoric, Stoicism and Senecan drama.

Stoicism encourages the life-long development of the individual’s capacity to live in real life according to strictly defined principles. To accomplish their personal development the Stoic disciples are advised to practise active engagement in society following (or followed by) a phase of contemplative detachment from it. This can be expressed by the antithetical pair Theory – Praxis. The ludic element of Senecan characterisation which this thesis seeks to delineate should be looked for in the Theory phase among the mental processes prescribed to combat the passions. The specific mental processes which feature in Senecan drama correspond with the judicialising of events, prior to the main characters’ becoming their true selves and establishing their identity.

It is worth remembering here that the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga sees judicial procedures as ludic activities. The staging of an imaginary trial in one’s mind so that all parties are acted out as roles played by the Stoic disciple is ludic, as it combines both role-playing and agonism. Practising this mental exercise helps the Stoic disciple investigate whether they have reason to believe that they have actually been harmed by the other party’s actions. The ultimate purpose of this mental exercise is to challenge established views on the content of the moral categories of *bonum, malum*, virtue and vice which

\(^9\) Most scholars argue for the incomplete state of Seneca’s *Phoenissae*. Frank (1994) proposes that the supposed incomplete drama represents a novel type of dramatic form.

\(^10\) See Ferri (2003), 31-53, on the relation of *Octavia* to the rest of Seneca’s dramatic corpus. See also Fitch (2004), 332-3, and 510-12 on the issue of authorship of *Hercules Oetaeus* and *Octavia* respectively.

\(^11\) For instance, Salmon (1989), 206 argues that ‘although much scholarly labor and ingenuity has been devoted to the literary influence of Seneca tragedy, there appears to be little in Seneca’s dramatic output that connects it with Stoic philosophy.’
promote passionate behaviour, and which therefore require re-defining, if passions are to be eradicated.\textsuperscript{12} The Stoic investigation and re-definition of moral categories as a way of avoiding passions can be compared with the reflection on and questioning of the boundaries of social roles found in declamation.

The stock roles featuring in declamatory rhetoric are instances of commonplaces for certain virtues and vices. For example, the tyrant is an instance of a commonplace for cruelty, sexual licence etc.; a hero is a commonplace for heroism; a stepmother is a commonplace for cruelty. When declamation (and according to my argument, Senecan drama also) presents characters acting out debates on the legitimacy/appropriateness of transgressing the boundaries of these stock roles, essentially they question the content of the virtues and vices which underlie these stock roles. We can think, for instance, of Hercules’ struggle to establish whether he is a tyrannical or a heroic figure, by reflecting and finally re-defining the content of virtue, to cover not only military behaviour but also courageous attitude towards life’s crises. This sort of reflection encountered in declamatory rhetoric can be paralleled with the ludic phase of Senecan characterisation which, according to my argument, corresponds to the Stoic mental process of staging a trial in someone’s mind, in order to establish whether one has actually been harmed by the other party’s actions.

Arguing that the prescribed mental activity has ludic features effectively implies that it possesses an agonistic and a theatrical aspect. The agonistic feature which is particularly relevant to the part played by Stoicism in my argument can be traced in the element of (internal or external) debate to establish the identity of those characters who seek to become their true selves. Similarly, the element of theatricality is not meant in the narrow sense of playing a specific role. Instead, the kind of role-playing which is relevant to the ‘Stoic part’ of my argument should be seen in its broader sense of acting out of scenarios featuring a judicialised debate as part of a character becoming their true selves. In this broader sense of role-playing, such declamatory issues as ‘a mother behaves in ways which make her look like a stepmother’, or ‘a hero acts in ways which make him appear to have tyrannical tendencies’ are relevant here not in their specifics (that is, the specific roles of a mother, stepmother, hero or tyrant played by characters, which is, of course, important in establishing that Senecan drama uses declamatory mechanisms for reflecting upon identity issues); rather, they are relevant for the judicial colour in acting out those scenarios, which consist of the debate to establish a motherly, stepmotherly, heroic or tyrannical identity.

These issues will be explored in the third section, which seeks to draw together the two main sections of the thesis. Its ultimate aim is to provide a methodological justification from a Stoic perspective for establishing links between the ludic properties of declamatory rhetoric and Senecan characterisation. It will argue that the ludic process by which these characters become themselves, by challenging the boundaries of stock roles (eventually re-defining

\textsuperscript{12} See Hine (2000), 2-3 for a brief description of the Stoic re-definition of the conventional content of goodness, happiness and passions.
their content in often extreme ways) through moral inversion, strongly resembles the mechanisms by which the Stoic disciple is instructed to re-define the content of moral categories by challenging their conventional, established boundaries.

Tension occurs when declamatory experimentalism clashes with the ‘according to Nature’ principle which governs Stoic philosophy. Senecan characters use the techniques of declamatory ludism to explore what is ‘according to Nature’ for themselves. This involves reflection on appropriateness in seemingly well-defined social roles, BUT the extreme experimental mode imposed by declamatory techniques of thought (which demand transgressions of boundaries and an ‘anything goes’ attitude) produce a final, non-ludic, phase in which the characters have discovered that what is according to Nature in their cases is, in fact, criminality.

These transgressions are described in terms of moral inversions, which are the results of the characters’ flawed logic incapacitated as it is by passion. When the characters recognise this, they express hesitation and wavering to proceed to actions which they realise are criminal, yet which they regard as appropriate for their becoming their true selves. If one assumes that Seneca’s dramas can have an educative role, then this tension can work as a reminder that passions hinder one’s moral progress. The characters’ final option of (and even praise for) criminal actions manifests this tension by working as an epideictic tour de force, not different from the sophistic praises of adoxa (ignoble, unexpected), such as praise of poverty, baldness, etc.; in other words, Seneca’s dramas provide the Stoic disciple with a novel, experimental case-studies of passions, whose educative effectiveness relies on their shocking ingenuity.
2 DECLAMATION

2.1 DECLAMATORY RHETORIC IN THE LIGHT OF LUDISM

It is a commonplace to speak of the popularity of declamation under the Empire, and to characterise the literary output of that period as declamatory. More often than not, the terms ‘declamation’ and ‘declamatory’, with often negative connotations, are seen as synonyms of a preference for absurd, exotic and unoriginal themes, and of the so-called ‘pointed’ style. Although there is a lot of truth in such observations, the high degree of generality and of misconception which they carry hinders one’s understanding of the phenomenon of declamatory rhetoric. This misunderstanding stems - at least in part - from a failure to recognise declamation as a genre with its own distinctive features and conventions, and to understand its functions. As a result the identification and assessment of its influence on Imperial literature become problematic. Even though there has been an increasing interest in declamation recently, the fact that it has remained one of the least studied areas of Latin literature for a long time is still largely responsible for our generally poor understanding of it.

This section proposes that looking at declamatory rhetoric in the light of the concept of ludism helps better appreciate its function, and re-visits in positive terms the ways in which it has influenced the literary output of the Empire. Quotations from declamatory speeches will be drawn from the Elder Seneca’s Controversiae et Suasoriae, pseudo-Quintilian’s Declamationes Maiores and Declamationes Minores. Calpurnius Flaccus’ Declamationes will not be used due to their truncated condition.

Sporadic instances of an early scholarly interest in the tradition of declamation do exist. One strand includes general studies which seek to provide an overview of the tradition of declamation, a ‘navigator map’, so to speak, to the largely unknown territory of declamation. Another strand of that early scholarship focuses on the technical rhetorical aspects of declamation, and on possible links with social reality. This strand underlies the misconception that declamation is a form of pseudo-rhetorical composition. A number of studies also indicate a movement towards recognising declamation as a distinct prose

\[13\] Sedgwick (1931).


\[15\] For the relation between declamation and ancient novel see Van Mal-Maeder (2007), 115-145; for the relation between declamation and other dramatic genres, see on tragedy (especially Senecan tragedy) see Casamento (2002); (of suasoria in particular) with pantomime Clark (1957), 222 citing Lucian Of Pantomime 65; Walker (2000), 362, note 46, argues that mime is closely related to sophistic declamation.

\[16\] Lecrivain (1891) on declaratory laws, Borneque (1902), Rossi (1918), Greer (1925), Deratani (1929), Hofrichter (1935) on the historical development of declamation, Parks (1945) on declamation as a preparation for law courts.
literary genre, among them also being thematic approaches which seek to delineate declamation's preferences for certain topics.

From mid-twentieth century onwards there is increasing emphasis on the role of declamation in the educational curriculum of Rome. Recent scholarship of the last few decades has shown a more systematic interest in the socio-cultural role of declamatory rhetoric. Mary Beard's paper, in which she argued for the mythopoetic function of declamation, seems to have laid the foundation for a trend in scholarship, in which the role of declamatory rhetoric in the exploration of Roman identity, self-perception and self-fashioning was central. This triggered fruitful new approaches to the already recognised educational role of declamation, which now seek to shed light on such functions as pedagogy or acculturation. The necessary recognition of the epideictic tendencies of declamatory rhetoric seem to be the direct result of its socio-cultural functions, and has allowed scholarship to revisit the view that declamation represents a decadent type of rhetoric. The interpretation of declamatory rhetoric as a social practice of a ludic nature presented in this thesis is a development founded precisely on the recognition of its epideictic function, and its implications.

2.1.1 DECLAMATION: TYPES AND ATTITUDES

The use of the general term 'declamation' does not help one to recognise the fact that declamatory rhetoric in its specific manifestations of declamatory speeches is not so much characterised by homogeneity as by diversity. Examples of this diversity include the following. First is the distinction between controversia and suasoria: both are types of fictional declamatory speeches, yet the former is of a forensic, whereas the latter of a deliberative nature. Secondly, declamation is not an exclusively Roman practice. Although this study focuses on the Roman side of the practice, declamation also has a Greek side, and is, in fact, of Greek descent. In a chapter devoted to the history of declamation, Fairweather stresses that declamation is not just a phenomenon of Roman Imperial times, but that its existence can be detected among the Greeks in various forms as early as the fifth century.

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17 Haight (1936), 121-150, Norden (1898).
18 Simonds (1896), Kohl (1915) who catalogues the declamatory topics drawn from history.
19 Clarke (1951), Jenkinson (1955) and (1958) the latter recognising the role of popular ethics in declamation, and being thus at the beginning of recognising an interaction between declamation and ethics.
22 Walker (2000).
23 See Russell (1983) for an overview of Greek declamation.
and fourth centuries B.C. as an expression of the First Sophistic.\textsuperscript{24} Declamation did not cease to exist in late antiquity either (even after the second century A.D.).\textsuperscript{25} There are differences between the Greek and the Roman declarers: for example, Roman declarers seem to prefer non-mythological themes in \textit{controversiae}, whereas the Greeks tend to compose \textit{controversiae} with mythological themes.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, although declamatory speeches tend to use fictional themes, historical declamations do exist in the form of fictional speeches presented as responses to actual oratorical speeches of famous orators in antiquity.\textsuperscript{27} In addition to declamation’s inherent diversity, the terms used by ancient authors in reference to declamatory speeches, or to stages in the development of declamation, and their precise sense (\textit{thesis, causa, schola, scholastica, melete, declamatio}) contribute to the obscurity of declamation’s nature.\textsuperscript{28}

In spite of the diversity of its specific forms, declamation was primarily an exercise in rhetoric. The rhetorical training with which declamatory rhetoric originally provided young Romans involved the composition of speeches in imitation either of a deliberative (\textit{suasoria}) or of a forensic (\textit{controversia}) speech, and their subject matter was usually fictional. When it was based on historical facts, it would not necessarily stick to historical truth.\textsuperscript{29} Declamatory performances would take place in the classroom, in the presence of the master and other schoolmates. Parents or relatives could also attend the classes.\textsuperscript{30} Contest was an element of school-declamation, with the students also seeking to be the best at following the prescriptions and teachings outlined by their schoolmaster, in order to compose a speech better than their classmates’.\textsuperscript{31}

The main feature of the exercise was speaking \textit{in persona}, that is, the impersonation of a character prescribed by the declamatory theme. In a \textit{controversia}, the student would

\textsuperscript{24} Fairweather (1981), 104-131. Note also that Kremmydas (2007) points out that a papyrus fragment of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century B.C. with a Greek declamation provides an instance of a precursor of the Roman \textit{controversia}. This suggests the continuity of the tradition of declamation within the history of rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{25} Gunderson (2003), Kennedy (2007).

\textsuperscript{26} For instance, Libanius’ speeches in Russell (1996).

\textsuperscript{27} For instance, Aelius Aristides’ Leuctrian and Sicilian discourses represent this type of declamation.

\textsuperscript{28} Fairweather (1981) gives an account of the content of those terms.

\textsuperscript{29} See Roller (1997) on how declamatory tradition has contributed to the fictionalisation of Cicero’s death.

\textsuperscript{30} Quintilian in \textit{Inst.} 2.4-6 and 10.2.39.

\textsuperscript{31} Calboli-Montefusco (1996) mentions this aspect of competition among students.
impersonate the characters of the case to be pleaded, or would play the role of the advocate. For instance, in the following declamatory theme

Qui fortiter fecerat, bello imminente, soporem ab nouerca subiectum bibit. Causam dixit tamquam desertor. Absolutus accusat nouercam ueneficii.

*(Decl. Min. 246)*

the student would impersonate both roles, that of the young hero, and of his stepmother, and accordingly challenge the other character. In the *suasoria* the student was required to persuade (or dissuade) a historical or mythical figure regarding a decision to be made. The extent of impersonation in a *suasoria* depended on the declamatory theme: if the theme dictated that the speaker be one of the characters of a situation, then playing the role of that specific character was required, for example: *Deliberat Cicero an scripta sua conburat promittente Antonio incolumitatem, si fecisset* (Sen. Suas. 7). In this *suasoria*, the student would impersonate the orator Cicero, following the requirement of the theme which prescribed speaking in the person of a specific figure. If, however, the declamatory theme prescribed that the speaker be anonymous, then direct role-playing was limited: *Deliberant Athenienses an trophaea Persica tollant, Xerxe minante rediturum se nisi tollerentur* (Sen. Suas. 5).32 This theme, which requires the impersonation of an Athenian, clearly reduces the necessity for role-playing, as the character is only defined by a national name and the specific historical circumstances.

Being composed in imitation of pragmatic rhetorical speeches, declamatory speeches would abide by the precepts of pragmatic rhetoric. The student would take into consideration the five aspects of pragmatic oratory, *inuentio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria* and *actio*,33 while he would follow the division of pragmatic oratorical speeches into *exordium, narratio, probatio, refutatio, peroratio*. At the same time, the composition of a declamatory speech would be governed by declamatory laws. This would apply to the *controversia* type of declamation, as *controversiae* were composed in imitation of forensic speeches. Regardless of whether or not one accepts that the declamatory laws were - fully or partly - based on existing legislation of Ancient Greece and/or Rome, the fact that the *controversia* is presented as being pleaded on the basis of a specific law indicates its tendency to recreate the reality and context of pragmatic forensic speeches.34

32 A case of absolute anonymity and, therefore, of minimal personification occurs in Juvenal, *Sat.* 1.15-16, where he mentions that, as a school boy, he used to practise a *suasoria* by which he would counsel Sulla to retire from public life: *et nos consilium dedimus Sullae, priuatus ut altum dormiret.*

33 See Fairweather (1981), 149-239.

34 The fact that there is a controversy about the real or fictional character of declamatory laws is supportive of this study, in that declamation owes to genuine rhetoric (or reality) as much as it owes to fiction. It should be noted, however, that Bonner argues that the
Declamation, however, did not remain an exercise in the curriculum of Roman rhetorical education, but also took on the proportions of a social event.\textsuperscript{35} It was practised by eminent figures of Rome and was even attended by the Emperor. Declaimers could be professional orators, teachers of rhetoric, or simply men of intellect who strove to gain social recognition.\textsuperscript{36} Literary men such as Ovid also have a well-documented relationship with declamatory performances.\textsuperscript{37} This type of declamation is often referred to as show-declamation, in order to distinguish it from the educational type described above. Show-declamation could take place in private houses or even in schools of rhetoric, whose owners were themselves declaimers. In the latter case, the performance played also the role of self-advertisement for the declaimer as a teacher of rhetoric, and, therefore, aimed at attracting potential students. This type of social event was an opportunity for people to meet their acquaintances and ‘sharpen their wits’,\textsuperscript{38} and offered a chance for mutual criticism in a friendly and thought-provoking environment. A show-declamation was a gathering of educated people of Rome, who had gone through the process of rhetorical training and, therefore, would be in the position to appreciate the merits and identify the faults of a declamatory performance, which was an act of demonstration of their skills as public speakers. As such, contest was an integral element of their performance: declaimers would compete with one another seeking distinction, and ultimately the audience’s applause.

This development of declamatory rhetoric, however, as represented in the show-declamation, created a paradox: although declamation aimed at creating able orators by means of the rhetorical training, which it provided, declamation was considered a decadent type of rhetoric. At the same time, Philostratus in his \textit{Vitae Sophistarum} 614, delineates the difference between a forensic orator and a sophist (declaimer). These may be summarised in the vigour, self-confidence and assertiveness which the former possesses, but which the latter lacks. A reasonable question to ask, therefore, is how declamatory rhetoric differs from pragmatic rhetoric, which I shall pursue in the next section.

2.1.2 DECLAMATORY VERSUS PRAGMATIC RHETORIC

Two representatives of declamatory rhetoric express their opinions as follows. The first, Votienus Montanus, is one of the declaimers mentioned in the Elder Seneca’s work. His view

\textsuperscript{35} Quintilian mentions this transition in \textit{Inst. Orat.} 4.3.3.
\textsuperscript{36} For a comprehensive account and a short biography, where available, of the declaimers appearing in the Elder Seneca’s work, see Borneque (1901), 143-201.
\textsuperscript{37} Seneca the Elder mentions Ovid’s relationship with the schools of declamation.
\textsuperscript{38} Bonner (1949), 40.
is indicative of the role of the audience in declamatory rhetoric: *multa autem dico non quia mihi placent, sed quia audientibus placitura sunt* (Contr. 9, pr. 1). Votienus Montanus’ comment sheds light on how the audience and their expectations determined the declaimer’s choices in his performance. A similar view is expressed by Cestius, an orator who, according to Seneca the Elder, was not favourable to the practice of declamation:

rationem quaerenti mihi ait: utram uis? honestam an ueram? si honestam, ne ...,\(^ {39}\) <si ueram, ne> male adsuescam. qui declamationem parat, scribit non ut uincat sed ut placeat. omnia itaque lenocinia [ita] conquirit; argumentationes, quia molestae sunt et minimum habent floris, relinquit; sententiis, explicationibus audientis delinire contentus est. cupid enim se approbare, non causam.

*(Contr. 9 pref. 1).*

Votienus Montanus’ critique relates to show-declamations, and especially those which sacrifice reason for alluring absurdity, in order to obtain the audience’s applause. Votienus’ words *non ut uincat, sed ut placeat* ‘not to win, but to please’ are of particular interest, as they raise the issue of the emphasis on the role of the audience in the authorial choices.\(^ {40}\)

The passage points out that the declaimer needs to secure the audience’s positive disposition: since the declamatory performance is essentially a self-advertisement, the declaimer sought to obtain the audience’s positive opinion of himself through a successful performance. Since, in order for the declaimer to win, pleasing the audience is also necessary, one might wonder here how winning and pleasing can be incompatible with each other, such that Votienus Montanus’ statement can present them as two opposing goals. Winning should probably be seen here as an allusion to the difference between declamatory rhetoric and civic oratory with the former being more interested in pleasing the audience with little interest in the appropriate treatment of the theme, whereas the latter ideally seeks to win a case using the established methods of persuasion.

Our second witness is Cicero, who discusses the duties of an orator in his *Brutus*, a dialogue about the most important figures of rhetoric in Rome:

\(^{39}\) The text is corrupt. Winterbottom (1974), vol. 2, 209, n.1 presumes that the corrupt text would refer to the orator’s unsuitability for declamation.

\(^{40}\) See Homke (2007) for a brief commentary on these particular words of Votienus Montanus.
tria sunt enim, ut quidem ego sentio, quae sint efficienda dicendo: ut doceatur is, apud quem dicetur, ut delectetur, ut moueatur vehementius.

(Brut. 185)

Cicero states that the duties of an orator involve informing the audience, pleasing them and moving their passions.41 Despite the emphasis on pleasure, his remarks refer to pragmatic, not to declamatory rhetoric. In fact Cicero in his Orator (65) attempts to distinguish the orator from the sophist (which in this context means a rhetorician, and it is thus very close to the meaning of ‘declaimer’).42

Sophistarum, de quibus supra dixi, magis distinguenda similitudo uidetur, qui omnes eosdem uolunt flores, quos adhibet orator in causis, persequi. Sed hoc differunt, quod cum sit his propositum non perturbare animos, sed placare potius nec tam persuadere quam delectare, et apertius id faciunt quam nos et crebrius, concinnas magis sententias exquirunt quam probabiles, a re saepe discedunt, intexunt fabulas, uerba altius transferunt eaque ita disponunt ut pictores uarietatem colorum, paria paribus referunt, aduersa contrariis, saepissimeque similiter extrema definiunt.

His comparison between the two practices helps reveal their affinities and differences. Let us start with delectare. Both the pragmatic orator and the declaimer aim at pleasing their audience. The orator needs to have a well-disposed audience, in order to increase the effectiveness of his speech. In a similar manner, the declaimer too needs to consider their potential response to his treatment of the declamatory theme, and to adapt the composition of his declamation accordingly, given that he seeks the audience’s applause and subsequent recognition. Indeed, Cicero argues for its importance for an orator as well as for a declaimer. The way he discusses the matter, however, might seem contradictory. The apparent contradiction lies in the use of delectare in the Brutus passage, which describes the orator’s duties on the one hand, and in the Orator passage which describes the sophist’s difference from an orator on the other. A closer examination of the passages will reveal that pleasing the audience is not meant in the exact same sense for the orator and the declaimer. The difference concerns the weight and the priority of delectare for the declaimer as opposed to the political orator, as the use of the phrase nec tam...quam in the Orator passage suggests.

41 One will here be reminded of Horace’s lectorem delectando pariterque mouendo (A. P. 344-5).

42 On the proximity of sense between the terms sophist and declaimer see Kennedy (1974).
More specifically, in the *Orator* passage, which outlines the differences between a political orator and a sophist, Cicero uses the verbs *delectare* and *placare* to refer to the establishment of a positive relation between the audience and the declaimer. The occurrence of *delectare* in the passage from *Brutus*, as one of the duties of the orator in his attempt to persuade his audience, points to the affinity between the two practices on one level. Cicero thus argues that *delectare* is conducive to persuasion in political rhetoric. The *Orator* passage elaborates on the matter through the *non / nec tam...quam* (not / neither so much ... as). The sophist (declaimer) differs in that *delectare* is for him a priority and a goal in its own right. This, together with *placare* (affiliate to oneself, as opposed to *mouere / perturbare*, which pertain to the practices of the political orator), points to the self-referential nature of a sophistic (in the sense of declamatory) speech. This confirms Votienus Montanus’ point earlier about the role of pleasing the audience in a declamatory performance. In that sense, the declamatory speech has no pragmatic goals, and only aims to advertise the skills of the speaker. The aim of the declaimer equals a departure from the political utilitarianism of pragmatic oratory: apart from losing any links to reality, and becoming thus unsuitable for informing the audience of facts and specifics, it demonstrates a strong emphasis on pleasing the audience in order to affiliate them with the declaimer.

With regards to *docere*, while the orator aims to persuade his audience by informing them of unknown facts, the declaimer uses declamatory stock situations which lack concrete pragmatic links to reality. This renders informing the audience (*docere*) least relevant in declamatory rhetoric. Declaration recycles stock material with which the audience is largely familiar through their own rhetorical training and their exposure to declamatory performances. Declaratory rhetoric teaches values and attitudes of mind. As was the case with *delectare, docere* is perceived differently in pragmatic rhetoric and in declamation.

The comparison between pragmatic and declaratory rhetoric and the foregrounding of *epideixis* as a function of crucial significance in revisiting declaratory rhetoric in positive terms inevitably invites the consideration of the political environment when declamation was popular. Given the attendance of political figures at declamatory performances, one cannot avoid considering the political significance of declaratory rhetoric, which is related to the reasons for its popularity especially under the Empire. In times when the political environment imposed restrictions on the free expression of the orators’ political views,

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43 Gagarin (2001) argues that sophists did not aim at persuasion, but at self-demonstration.
44 On the epideictic nature of declamation with regards to the audience see Videau (2001).
45 See discussion on the role of *docere* in declaratory rhetoric a few paragraphs earlier.
declamatory rhetoric was a harmless substitute for pragmatic rhetoric. To use Gunderson’s words: ‘As the senate falls silent, the city buzzes with rhetorical fictions that still ask the old questions in new forms’. Declaratory performances provided the opportunity for public speakers to achieve social recognition and distinction in an environment where these goals could not so easily be reached by earlier means. This, of course, does not mean that pragmatic rhetoric ceased to exist under the Empire, and Pliny is a most obvious example. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the presence of the Emperor triggered changes in the public discourse, the specific expressions of which, such as oratory, had now to be displaced to a private space.

2.1.3 DECLAMATORY EPIDEIXIS

Declamation’s increasing loss of practical utility is reflected in the use of the term ‘pseudo-rhetorical’ which one encounters in scholarship. This term refers to declamation’s use of fictional material, that is, characters/events which are either mythological or, when they are historical, are not treated with an interest in historical truth. Characterising declamation as pseudo-rhetorical speech, however, reveals a confusion of the boundaries between the categories of ‘pragmatic’/’nonpragmatic’ (in the sense of ‘having practical value’/not strictly ‘utilitarian’), and ‘genuine’/’mock’ (in the sense of ‘authentic’/’fake’), and suggests that a speech can only be recognised as rhetorical if it is of practical use. If this is not the case, as happens with declamation, then the speech is considered to be fake, as the terms pseudo-forensic and pseudo-deliberative indicate. In that sense, a rhetorical speech is defined primarily by utilitarian purposes, while the combination of fictionality and utility is perceived as problematic, so much so that it undermines the rhetorical status of the speech. This approach is particularly obvious in the criticism of declamation, and is not helpful for two reasons. First, the definition of declamation as pseudo-rhetoric (a pseudo-forensic or pseudo-deliberative speech) is negative in its presentation: one says what it is not, not what it is. Second, and more importantly, by dismissing the rhetorical status of declamation, one discards or denigrates a generalised tendency of the period.

In an attempt to describe in positive terms this phenomenon of the so-called ‘decadent rhetoric’ represented by declamatory rhetoric, and to incorporate it organically into the history of rhetoric, Walker proposed that the conventional approach to the rhetoric of the Imperial times as decadent fails to recognise a shift of the interest from a pragmatic political oratory to

46 Fontana (1993) describes the effect of the presence of the Emperor in Rome, through Tacitus’ account of ‘the degeneration of the principatus into a dominatio and a regnum’ (27) in the Annals and the Histories.

47 Gunderson (2003), 148.

48 See Fontana (1993) for a discussion on Tacitus’ relevant views on the republic and the empire.
one liberated from the political needs of the Forum.\(^\text{49}\) He named this tendency of rhetoric ‘epideictic’. Quintilian, the prominent teacher of rhetoric of the 2nd century A.D., and the most important source of information regarding declamation after Seneca the Elder, also comments on declamation’s developing epideictic properties. It should be noted that he was not negative to the practice of declamation. In fact, he recognised the educational value of practising declamation:

pauc\(a\) mihi de ipsa declamandi ratione dicenda sunt, quae quidem ut ex omnibus nouissime inuenta, ita multo est utilissima. Nam et cuncta illa de quibus diximus in se fere continet et veritati proximam imaginem reddit, ideoque ita est celebrata ut plerisque uideretur ad formandam eloquentiam uel sola sufficere.

\((\text{Inst. 2.10.1-2})\)

Quintilian’s comments in the passage above clearly concern school-declamation. He praises the utility of declamation in an educational context and its suitability for cultivating eloquence. Furthermore, his work \textit{Institutio Oratoria} provides numerous instances of the use of declamatory themes to illustrate examples in argumentation, which further confirms that he did identify an educational value in declamation.\(^\text{50}\) He also appears to make allowances for the attempts of the declaimers to capture the attention of their audience through brilliance, when it comes to show-declamation:

si uero in ostentationem comparetur declamatio, sane paulum aliquid inclinare ad uoluptatem auditum debemus. nam et in iis actionibus, quae in aliqua sine dubio veritate uersantur, sed sunt ad popularem aptatae delectationem, quales legimus panegyricos, totumque hoc demonstrativum genus, permittitur adhibere plus cultus omnemque arte, quae latere plerumque in iudiciis debet, non confiteri modo, sed ostentare etiam hominibus in hoc aduocatis. quare declamatio, quoniam est iudiciarum consiliorumque imago, similis esse debet veritati; quoniam autem aliquid in se habet ἐπιδεικτικόν nonnihil sibi nitoris assumere.

\((\text{Inst. 2.10.10-12})\)

According to Quintilian, when declamation takes on a more epideictic function (\textit{demonstrativum} / ἐπιδεικτικόν), then it can lean somewhat towards pleasing the audience. The recognition of an epideictic function in declamation is of the utmost importance, if one


\(^{50}\) Fantham (2001). Winterbottom (1983) mentions what were considered by Quintilian as faults in declamation, such as addressing a judge who does not exist.
wants to avoid the misconceptions of past scholarship on declamation. These misconceptions emanate primarily from declamation’s quasi-theatrical character, and its subsequent tendencies for the exotic and the absurd - both in subject matter and in style.51 In other words, declamation was not by default treated with contempt. Quintilian’s views on the matter are particularly relevant here:

Quid enim attinet iudicem preparare qui nullus est, narrare quod omnes sciant falsum, probationes adhibere causae de qua nemo sit pronuntiatus? Et haec quidem otiosa tantum.

(Inst. 2.10.8).

Quintilian’s criticism here refer to the quasi-theatrical nature of declamation (of a controversia in particular), which effectively consist in the staging of a trial. His objections relate to the declaimers’ effort to conciliate a judge who does not exist, to the narration of events which everyone knows they are false, and to the enumeration of arguments for a judicial case on which judgement will never be passed. Being himself a teacher of rhetoric, and preparing his students to be effective in real law-court conditions, Quintilian seems to regard the excessively unreal and theatrical properties of the declamations practised in schools as a deviation from their educational purposes.52 A similar view is expressed by Cassius Severus, a most able orator whose oratorical powers would fail him when he came to declaim, according to Seneca’s account. When Seneca asked him to explain this weakness, he attributed it to declamation’s lack of actuality, as the following passage indicates:

In scholastica quid non superuacuum est, cum ipsa superuacua sit? Indicabo tibi affectum meum: cum in foro dico, aliquid ago; cum declamo, id quod bellissime Censorinus aiebat de his qui honores in municipiis ambitiose peterent, uideor mihi in somniis laborare.

(Contr. 3, pr. 12).

Cassius Severus characterises declamation as superfluous (superuacua),53 whereas his comparison of practising declamation with struggling in one’s dreams (in somniis laborare).54
In this manner he graphically criticises declamatory rhetoric for being inconsequential and lacking any utilitarian purpose. It can thus be plausibly argued that the criticism against declamatory rhetoric relates not so much to its epideictic tendencies, which even pragmatic rhetoric possesses to a lesser extent, but to its increasingly excessive epideictic tendencies especially at the time on which our investigation focuses, that is, the late Republic and the early Empire.

2.2 LUDISM ANDDECLAMATORY RHETORIC

An epideictic activity is theatrical and antagonistic, that is, representative of an actual activity, and competitive, due to the participants' desire for distinction through the activity in which they are engaged. As mentioned above, declamation - especially in its form as a social event - was a demonstration of one's rhetorical skills, and as such it involved an element of contest and theatricality. Even in its role as a schoolboy exercise, declamation was a performance in the presence of the master and schoolmates with the intention of proving and improving one's rhetorical skills. The remainder of this chapter will argue that theatricality and agonism lead us to the identification of ludism as an all-pervasive feature of declamation.

In this thesis the term 'ludism' is used as an explanatory category, and not as a technical term with a specific meaning. It is applied to the practice of declamatory rhetoric, and seeks to explain the process of creation and experience of the actual practice to which it is applied. Interpreting the term merely as 'playfulness' (ludus play, game) is not utterly inaccurate, as the notion of play is indeed crucial. Nonetheless it does not fully render the sense in which it

55 Hawee (2002).

56 Declamation originates from the Greek sophists of the phenomenon which has been called First Sophistic. Sophistical influence, in the form of ἀγώνες λόγων, for instance, is a distinctive feature of the plays of Euripides, which is traditionally associated with the sophistical movement in the late fifth and fourth-century Athens, and with Euripides' apprenticeship with them. In the light of the sophistic origin of declamation, it comes as no surprise that Senecan drama demonstrates declamatory/sophistical tendencies, and makes it plausible to argue that Senecan drama belongs in the same sophistical tradition which produced Euripidean drama.

57 See Dupont (1997), 50-52 for ludism in relation to the practice of recitatio, and Dupont (1985), 48ff. for ludism in general. Dupont (1997), 50 argues that in the ludic context of a recitatio, which is similar to that of a declamatory performance, the morality of the content of the performance is not of any concern. In my opinion, it might be more accurate to say that concern in morality still exists, only that it is displaced.
Another disadvantage of rendering ludism as playfulness lies in the fact that the notion of playfulness has been associated with literary forms such as Catullus’ or Pliny’s poetic *ineptiae*. This shows the need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by the term ‘ludism’. This chapter will then seek to delineate the ludic qualities of declamatory rhetoric.

The term ‘ludism’ should probably not be interpreted merely as denoting activities and practices which qualify as forms ‘play’. The choice of the term is largely based on its etymological sense which possesses links to the Latin word *ludus*. In the Roman context, the term *ludus* covers a number of different yet related cultural practices and institutions. Firstly, *ludi* were the games which accompanied religious festivities; *ludi* were also the training schools for gladiators; lastly, *ludus* (literarius) was the Roman primary or elementary schools for children up to the age of eleven. All three meanings of *ludus* share one feature, the combination of personal development through training/performing an exercise, and of recreation of the participants. More specifically, the element of training and exercising is integral to *ludi* as games, both in the context of religious festivities and within gladiatorial schools. As for the third meaning of *ludus* as ‘elementary school’, its pedagogical aspect has clear links with the aspect of training which the first two meanings of *ludus* involve, since training is integral part of educational as well as of athletic practices. With regards to recreation, all three meanings of *ludus* concern social activities/institutions, which are manifestations of cultural play to a greater or lesser degree.

The historian and cultural theorist Johan Huizinga argues that play is a crucial element of culture, such that no aspect of human culture may be fully comprehended without taking it into account. When looking at such cultural practices as declamation, it is easy to miss the element of play due to the misconceptions and erroneous preconceptions with which this genre has been inundated. In fact, I would suggest that these misconceptions are largely due to the failure to identify its ludic elements. As noted above, declamation was, particularly for adults, a form of pastime. Notwithstanding the educational character which declamation had for schoolboys, the element of play was no less significant therein.

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58 It is worth noting that Gunderson (2000), 19 describes declamation as playful, but the sense in which he means it verges on the comic or ridiculous, as explained on page 21.


60 Although rhetorical training was primarily provided in later stages of the educational curriculum, *ludi* could also offer such training on a limited scale. As Clark (1957, 65-6) points out, Suetonius in his work *De rhetoribus* explains that in early days grammar schools provided rhetorical training, while rhetoricians would also use *progymnasmata* in their teaching.

61 Huizinga (1949).
Huizinga claims that play has two functions: first, play is a contest for something, and second a representation of something. We may designate these two functions as agonistic and theatrical respectively. These two functions, Huizinga continues, can become intertwined so that the game provides a representation of a contest, or, conversely, the agonism of the game seeks to provide the best representation of something. Furthermore, he explains that play has certain distinctive features, such as the disinterestedness in the reality of life, the fluidity of seriousness, and the repetition in the patterns of the ludic activity. Approaching declamation in ludic terms would amounts to understanding it as a sort of contest. The notion of contest is characterised by the element of play, as the contest shows signs of awareness that the activity at issue is not actual, but mock. In that sense the players consciously engage in an activity which seeks to demonstrate their abilities, and which is a theatricalised version of the actual activity.

Indeed declamation is a rhetorical play in which the players (teenage student or grown-up declaimers) seek to demonstrate their rhetorical skills in the presence of an audience who will assess their performance, and applaud those which stand out. Both the contestants and the audience are engaged in an activity which imitates pragmatic oratory, but stops short of any pragmatic aspirations. As is the case with any ludic activity, the practice of declamatory play is not devoid of seriousness for its participants. In the introduction of his book *Declamation, Paternity and Roman Identity*, Gunderson points out that analysis of the psychic life of the Romans allows for the delineation of the field of play for certain key symbols within a given cultural configuration. Indeed, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, the issues raised in the material with which declaimers work speaks against any argument about declamation’s frivolous character. The following chapter will focus on the implications of the ludic qualities of declamatory rhetoric for its conception of human behaviour and identity.

### 2.2.1 DECLAMATION AS AN EXERCISE OR PRE-PERFORMANCE

As mentioned above declamation’s original function was that of an exercise in rhetoric, as it sought to cultivate the rhetorical skills of young Romans in preparation for their future senatorial career. An exercise is the mock version of an actual activity and aims at preparing somebody towards the performance of that particular activity. This is the sense in which declamation may properly be described as ludic. A passage from the preface of the ninth of

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62 Huizinga (1949), 32.

63 Huizinga, *ibid*.

64 Gunderson (2003), 18, note 70. He makes reference to Barton’s study *Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (1993), a book which focuses on the social significance of the spectacles of the Roman arena, with which he compares his own approach to the Roman psychic life, without proceeding any further with that.
the Elder Seneca’s *Controuersiae* describes precisely that function of declamation as preparatory for the actual activity of political rhetoric:

> Non est autem utilis exercitatio nisi quae operi simillima est, in quod exercent; itaque durior solet esse uero certamine: gladiatores grauioribus armis discunt quam pugnant; diutius illos magister armatos quam adversarius detinet. athletae binos simul ac ternos fatigant, ut facilius singulis resistant. cursores, quom intra exiguum spatium de velocitate eorum iudicetur, id saepe in exercitationem decurrunt, quod semel decursuri sunt in certamine. multiplicantur ex industria labor quo condiscimus, ut leuetur quo decernimus. In scholasticis declamationibus contra euenit: omnia molliora et solutiora sunt.

*(Contr. 9. praef. 4-5)*

The passage is the declaimer Votienus Montanus’ polemic against declamation, in which he argues for declamation’s ineffectiveness as a preparation for political oratory. He starts by pointing out that the utility of any exercise is determined by the degree of its similarity to the actual activity for which it prepares someone. He adds that an exercise is usually more demanding than the real activity, and proceeds to a number of examples which support his argument, drawn from the sphere of athletics. Finally he states that declamation goes against that general tendency which wants an effective exercise to be of increasing difficulty, since everything about declamation is softer and more relaxed. The point made in this passage concerns what Votienus considers the ineffectiveness of declamatory rhetoric as a means of preparation for needs of political oratory. Nonetheless it is still important in arguing for the pre-performative function of declamatory rhetoric, in that it suggests that the (ideally) preparatory role of declamatory rhetoric was recognised, even though this was matter of debate.

Furthermore, the process of teaching or of performing an exercise involves high levels of meta-awareness and meta-cognitive regulation. This means that one reflects on how to perform an activity in the very process of performing it. Practising an exercise often involves high levels of meta-language, that is, talk about talk and writing (or in our case, talk about how to practise a rhetorical exercise). Let us now look at a passage taken from a Greek collection of progymnasmatic exercises:

> Θουκυδίδης μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς δευτέρας τῶν ἱστοριῶν κατὰ τὸν τοῦ ἀποφαινομένου τρόπον ἐξήνεγκεν τὴν διήγησιν ταύτην. Θηβαίων ἄνδρες ὀλίγῳ πλείους τριακοσίων ἐισῆλθον περὶ πρῶτον ὑπὸν σὺν ὀπλοῖς εἰς Πλάταιαν τῆς Βοιωτοίας, οὕτως ἐν ὁμαλίνῳ συμμαχίας. ημεῖς δὲ εἰ βουλούμεθα πλέον τι τοῦ ἀποφαίνεσθαι ποιεῖν, οὕτως ἐροῦμεν· ἐν μεγάλων ὡς ἐστὶν πραγμάτων συνεχώς γέγονεν Ἀθηναίοις καὶ Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ τοῖς ἐξ ἑκάστων συμμαχοῦσιν Ἀθηναίοις καὶ Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ τοῖς ἐξ ἑκάστων συμμαχοῦσιν Ἐθηβαίοις εἰς Πλάταιαν

65 In the context of modern pedagogical theory, Marshall (1989) and Bastick (1993) discuss the topic of student awareness of their learning, and its value in the learning process.
ἀφίξις· Θηβαίων γὰρ ἄνδρες ὀλίγῳ πλείους τριακοσίων εἰσῆλθον περὶ πρῶτον ὕπνον σὺν ὅπλοις εἰς Πλάταιαν τῆς Βοιωτίας καὶ οὕτω τὰ λοιπὰ τῆς διηγήσεως συνάψομεν. ἄρα γε ἀληθές ἐστιν, ὅτι Θηβαίων ἄνδρες ὀλίγῳ πλείους τριακοσίων εἰσῆλθον περὶ πρῶτον ὕπνον σὺν ὅπλοις εἰς Πλάταιαν τῆς Βοιωτίας; καὶ οὕτως ἐρωτηματικῶς τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα διελεύσομεν.

(Spengel 87-8)

The passage comes from Aelius Theon’s collection of progymnasmatic exercises. It provides instruction in the composition of a narrative (διήγησις), through the intervention with a Thucydidean quotation. One will notice the high level of meta-awareness, which manifests itself in the frequency of self-regulating language, such as ἡμεῖς δὲ εἰ βουλοίμεθα πλέον τι τοῦ ἀποφαίνεσθαι ποιεῖν, οὕτως ἐροῦμεν and ἦν δὲ ἐρωτᾶν βουλοίμεθα, οὕτως ἐροῦμεν. The actual composition of the narrative thus becomes a secondary issue, and reflecting upon and rehearsing that action monopolises the subject’s attention.

Similar tendencies can be identified in declamatory speeches too. In his commentary on Declamatio Minor 372, a case of a dispute between a natural and a foster father over the punishment of the son by the latter, Dingel also points out the difficulty in distinguishing between the master’s sermo and the actual declamatory speech. For instance, Winterbottom in his edition considers the lines Sera post damnationem innocentiae defensio est. Istud quod nunc dixisti ante dixisses. Sed non potuisti dicere: pater tuus eram iure praesentis condicionis (372.11) part of the master’s model speech. However, it could well be part of his sermo, the section where the master’s formal instruction normally is encountered: the statement regarding the belatedness of one’s defence, when it comes after the condemnation, may be interpreted as a meta-cognitive comment on the practice of declamation as an exercise. Gunderson explains that this is due to their ‘supplementary relationship: either one can complement or even displace the other. This may sound reasonable for school-declamation, as the Declamationes Minores largely are. A similar tendency, however, can be identified in show-declamation, as we shall see below, on self-reflexivity and re-enactment as a manifestation of the theatrical nature of declamatory rhetoric.

Indeed, describing an exercise as a rehearsal of the actual activity will imply that a certain degree of theatricality exists in the process of performing an exercise. An exercise has theatrical properties: the subject is involved in a re-enactment of the actual action, in which (s)he consciously plays the role of someone performing the actual activity for which the

67 Gunderson (2003), 62.
exercise trains him. Seeing an exercise as a minute drama foregrounds its ludic function: not being the actual activity but a mock one, an exercise is thus perceived as a quasi-dramatic activity which aims at learning. Furthermore, the ludic side of an exercise also involves agonism. The agonistic side of an exercise manifests itself in the antagonistic attitudes manifested while performing an exercise: the subject’s aim always to achieve a better performance of the exercise, in order to increase his chances of excelling at his performance of the actual activity. He thus adopts an agonistic attitude both with himself and with others. The theatrical and agonistic properties of declamation will be explored in more detail in chapters 2.4.1. and 2.4.3. in their interrelation with declamation’s metafictional awareness, as this is the manner in which they are particularly relevant to this thesis.

Nonetheless it should suffice to say here that the function of declamation as a rehearsal or pre-performance is of special significance for its pedagogical role in the moral development of the students, as declamation sought to engage its players/practitioners in their reflection upon ethical issues, attitudes, and behaviours raised by the declamatory themes.  

For instance, the master in the discussion of the topic of the Minor Declaratio 259, which concerns a case of a father disowning his daughter, advises a restrained and apologetic style in the daughter’s defence-speech against her father: *in omnibus quidem abdicationis controversiis, quatenus pro liberis dicimus, summissa debeat esse actio et satisfactioni similis*. Role-playing was the crucial means for moral inculcation which declamation provided, as it required the consideration and quasi-theatrical presentation of what the *ethos* of the role would allow to be said. The embodiment of social roles which role-playing involves would enable students to seriously engage in and reflect upon such issues as family or social relationships and duties, as they are raised by occasion of conflicts of various forms.  

Show-declamation was no less interested in the moral issues raised by a declamatory theme. Role-playing was a means for adults too to explore the various roles which a Roman would perform during his life. But whereas school-declamation can be compared to a rehearsal of the roles which would comprise the identity of a Roman, show-declamation can be seen more as a means for scrutinising the constituents of Roman identity, while rehearsing it. In that sense, the educative role of show-declamation lay in its elenctic properties. Declaratory performances were an opportunity to reflect upon vital aspects of the Roman identity, and to rehearse social roles publicly confirming one’s awareness of

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68 Bloomer’s article on the element of impersonation (speaking *in persona*) in declamation as a means of moral inculcation makes it plausible to argue that declamation may be compared to the modern methods of drama pedagogy.


‘Roman-ness’. If the declaimer was not a native Roman, then practising declamation was a means for promoting himself as familiar with what ‘Roman-ness’ consists of, and therefore, as worthy of being regarded as Roman. In this way, declamation also functioned as a means for acculturation. As Gunderson points out, it can be no coincidence that Seneca the Elder, the compiler of our largest collection of late Republic and early Imperial declamation, was of Spanish origin, as were many major declaimers presented in his collection. For non-native Romans, like the Senecas, who sought distinction in Rome, the demonstration of their awareness of the ‘do’s and don’ts’ of Roman-ness was indispensable. Declaratory rhetoric provided a means for accomplishing that.

To sum up, the ludic nature of declaratory rhetoric provides the platform or dramatic space for a reflective rehearsal of the constituents of Roman identity. The function of rehearsal or pre-performance inherent in declaratory rhetoric suggests that its conception of human behaviour and identity is subject to constant making through its rehearsal. While pragmatic rhetoric aims at the performance of moral values and attitudes of mind (in other words one’s identity) in order to make one’s speech persuasive and of political utility, declaratory rhetoric promotes a rehearsal or pre-performance of those values and attitudes, with the intention (usually not explicitly expressed) of a collective self- and identity-scrutiny, by which ‘one studies how best to be oneself’. In what follows it will be argued that a notion of ludism encapsulates this pre-performative attitude of declaratory rhetoric to ethics and identity.

### 2.3 LUDISM AND MORAL REFLECTION IN DECLAMATORY RHETORIC

Declaratory performances reached their peak during the late Republic and the early Empire, a fact which has been associated with the restrictions imposed by Emperors upon civic oratory and on freedom of speech. In that climate of increased popularity, declamation was not exempt from the general fondness for theatricality, the extreme and the absurd, which was the trademark of Imperial times. This meant that declamation’s socio-cultural function of promoting moral reflection seemed to suffer under the pressure to provide new and innovative versions of declaratory themes. Its increasingly epideictic tendencies meant that declaimers would not hesitate to replace serious moral reflection with performances favouring the more paradoxical and unexpected treatment of a declaratory theme, even if

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72 Note also that our other major source of Imperial declamation, Quintilian, also originated from Spain. Even the first sophists, the distant ancestors of the declaimers, were in their majority not native Athenians, such as Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias of Leontini etc.
73 Gunderson (2003), 110.
74 Bartsch (1994).
that went against traditional social norms, so much so that declamation was criticised for being a frivolous preoccupation, as its practical value seemed to be increasingly diminishing.

However, the pursuit even of the extreme and the absurd on the level of rhetorical invention should not by default be considered incompatible with moral reflection in declamatory rhetoric. The absurd and exotic elements of declamation are merely modes of rhetorical invention, as they are represented by such figures of thought as allegory or irony (figurae per immutationem). This way of approaching the absurd may allow one to identify seriousness even in the paradoxographical or adoxographical tendencies in the tradition of declamation.  

With that in mind it comes as no surprise that scholarship has classified this tendency of declamation among the sophistical epideictic speeches, which are traditionally termed as paradoxography, adoxography etc. Indeed, rhetorical technical works acknowledge the existence of this type of epideictic literature (Menand. Rhet. Διαίρεσις τῶν ἐπιδεικτικῶν 346 (Spengel)):

τῶν ἐγκώμιων τὰ μὲν ἔστιν ἐνδοξά, τὰ δὲ ἄδοξά, τὰ δὲ ἄμφιδοξά, τὰ δὲ παράδοξά.
ἐνδοξά μὲν τὰ περὶ ἄγαθων ὀμολογουμένων, οἶον θεοῦ ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς ἄγαθοῦ
φανεροῦ· ἄδοξά δὲ τὰ περὶ δαιμόνων καὶ κακοῦ φανεροῦ· ἄμφιδοξά δὲ ὅσα τῇ μὲν
ἐνδοξά ἐστι, τῇ δὲ ἄδοξά, δ ἐν τοῖς Παναθηναϊκοῖς εὐρίσκεται καὶ Ἰσοκράτους καὶ
Ἀριστείδου· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἔπαινετά, τὰ δὲ ψεκτά, ὑπὲρ ὧν ἀπολογοῦνται·
παράδοξα δὲ ὧν Ἀλκιδάμαντος τὸ τοῦ Θανάτου ἐγκώμιον, ἢ τὸ τῆς Πενίας
Πρωτέως τοῦ κυνός.

This passage of Mendander explains the various types of epideictic speeches of praise. Among them he classifies ἐνδοξά (honourable), ἄδοξά (ignoble, unexpected), ἄμφιδοξά (of double/doubtful repute), παράδοξά (contrary to opinion). It is interesting that Burgess classifies the declamations of the Elder Seneca’s collection in this category of adoxographical compositions.  

A passage from Aulus Gellius will help us understand what the adoxographical compositions involved and how they related to philosophical inquiries:

infames materias, siue quis maulut dicere inopinables, quas Graeci ἀδόξους
ὑποθέσεις appellant, et ueteres adorti sunt non sophistae solum sed philosophi
quoque, et noster Faurorinus oppido quam libero in eas materias <se> deiciebat uel
ingenio expurgificando ratus idoneas uel exercendis argutiis uel edomandis usu
difficultatibus, sicuti cum Thersitae laudes quaesuit et cum febrim quartis diebus
 recurrentem laudavit, lepide sane multa et non facilia inuentu in utramque causam
dixit eaque scripta reliquit.

75 On controversiae figuratae see Breij (2006).
76 Burgess (1902), 119.
This passage from Aulus Gellius points out that the adoxographical compositions (inopinabiles), which involve the praise of ignoble or unexpected things such as negative mythological figures such as Thersites, or illnesses, were taken up not only by sophists, but also by philosophers, in order to sharpen their wits or to stimulate thought. He also stresses that these compositions were demanding in terms of rhetorical invention (non facilia inventu). Although such compositions were a demonstration of speakers' skills in rhetorical invention, and an attempt to distinguish themselves from other speakers, the tendencies outlined above meant that declamation would not hesitate to question and seriously challenge the boundaries of the socially accepted, in its attempt to promote reflection on moral issues. Huizinga's point on the fluid character of seriousness in play (page 9 of the thesis) will find here a most apt manifestation.

2.3.1 DECLAMATORY ABSTRACTION AND PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

In the light of the observations made in the last chapter, I would argue that declamatory rhetoric is found at the point of interaction between rhetoric and philosophy. The request for an orator to be able to deal with philosophical issues, and for a philosopher to speak eloquently, can be traced back to the First Sophistic, where the origins of declamatory rhetoric lie. Plato's polemic against the sophists' tendency to blur the boundaries between rhetoric and philosophy indicates that their practices were perceived as an infringement on foreign territory. This chapter will seek to explore how the ludic properties of declamatory rhetoric become manifest in declamation's tendency to reflect on moral issues in abstract and generalised terms. In fact, as Winterbottom has shown, this tendency towards the abstract which brings rhetoric and philosophy closer can be detected throughout the history of rhetoric, even though it particularly characterises declamatory rhetoric.

In the case of late Republican and Imperial declamation this interest in generalisation and in the abstract treatment of questions seems to have a double origin, a philosophical and a literary one. On the one hand we have the philosophical thesis, which is the treatment of an abstract question, such as 'Should one get married?' or 'Do gods exist?'. The philosophical thesis was practised by the Peripatetics as an exercise for their students, and at some later point (probably during Hellenistic times), it was introduced into the curriculum of rhetorical

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77 See Pease (1926) on the topic of adoxography.
78 See Desmond (2006) on the praise of poverty in the Greek tradition and relationship with Cynicism.
schools, as one of the standard exercises called *progymnasmata* (preparatory exercises), which preceded declamation.  

At the same time we encounter the type of generalisation of the *hypothesis* (particularised themes - yet stripped of specific names, time and place) which, as such, can be detected in works as early as the First Sophistic (fifth/fourth century BC). The writings of the early sophists show signs of such a treatment: for instance, Gorgias’ *Helen and Palamedes*, Alcidamas’ *Odysseus*, and Antisthenes’ *Aias and Odysseus* provide cases of ‘rhetorical treatment of philosophical themes, for example, questions about courage, justice, cosmology’ with a tendency to ignore the particular details of the myth so that all that remains is the basics.

Declamation of the Second Sophistic features this sort of literary generalisation, with the exploitation of conventional stock characters and situations. Our sources name Aeschines as the first to introduce abstract stock characters in rhetoric (Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* I. 481). Even the early writings of the Greek sophists, such as Antisthenes’ *Tetralogiai*, depict characters strongly reminiscent of the stock figures of declamation (for instance, the poor and the rich of Republican and Imperial Roman declamation). This strengthens the claim for a continuity between the two Sophistics, and more importantly for generalisation as being a distinctive feature of declamation.

The reasonable conclusion would be that declamatory rhetoric belongs in an early tradition which aims to bring the practices of the philosopher and of the orator close to each other. Generalisation and fondness for the abstract is a ‘symptom’ of this desire. It is worth citing here a lengthy passage from pseudo-Dionysius’ *Ars Rhetorica*. Although the contents refer to Greek declamatory speeches, in which topics inspired from Greek mythology were much more common than in Roman declamation, they are applicable to Roman declamation too, as they articulate a request/interest for moral content in declamatory speeches:

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80 For the *thesis* as part of the curriculum of the rhetorical education in Rome see Clarke (1951) and Jenkinson (1955). For a comprehensive account of the history of the *thesis*, see Throm (1932).


82 See Kneupper and Anderson (1980) for a discussion of the issue of the unity of eloquence and wisdom.

83 Whereas declamatory rhetoric is interested in the general, pragmatic rhetoric is interested in the specific. This recalls the different role of *docere* in declamatory and in pragmatic rhetoric discussed above.

84 Russell (1979) says that, although the treatise is from late antiquity, it is legitimate to argue that its views also apply to the rhetorical tradition before the time of its composition.
This passage is interesting for a number of reasons: firstly, the whole discussion revolves around declamation and how a declamatory speech should be composed, in order to promote its educative function, which makes it particularly relevant to my investigation. Secondly and more importantly, it illustrates how a declamation can serve as a method of moral inculcation. The author of the treatise focuses on *ethos* (character) and distinguishes between a general one and a particular one. The general *ethos* (or philosophical) is closer to the point I want to make here, as the author associates it with the moralising aspect of the declamation, which promotes virtue and discourages vice. This can be achieved when a character is deprived of its name and all that remains is the moral value which this character embodies, be it virtue or vice. The characters thus become agents of moral philosophy. The author embarks on a detailed enumeration of the various morals which can be found in books (*τὰ βιβλία*). As Roller puts it: ‘in declamation a moral understanding of events is the primary mode of understanding; ethical appeals are more authoritative and persuasive than appeals on other grounds’.85

As was mentioned in 2.3 and 2.5, a major feature of declamatory rhetoric is the emphasis on ethical issues, which can be identified in both *controuersiae* and *suasoriae*, whether they are based on historical or on mythological material. The declamer works with his material in a way which emphasises social or family roles, thus foregrounding the moral issues involved. Let us look at some examples. The Elder Seneca in his book of *Suasoriae* provides us with the following declamatory theme: *Deliberat Agamemnon an Iphigeniam immolet negante*.

85 Roller (1997), 113.
Seneca mentions the case of Arellius Fuscus Senior, whose *sententia* illustrates the controversial moral issues which the situation raises: *ne quid huius virginitati timerem, persequar adulterum* (*Suas. 3.1*). Also in the discussion on the division of the topic we encounter the following: *hoc sic tractavit, ut negaret faciendum quia parricidium, quia plus inpenderetur quam peteretur: peti <Helenam>, inpendi Iphigeniam; uindicari adulterium, committi parricidium* (*Suas. 3.3*). Even though Agamemnon is not Helen’s husband, there is here an emphasis on Helen’s adultery which relates to him as a husband (but not her husband). He is thus expected to choose the preferable course of action on the basis of the ethical questions which these two roles pose. The ultimate question with which he is faced is which of the two weigh more for him, paternal love or damaged conjugal pride.

A similar example, one which is based on a historical event this time, is the following: *Trecenti Lacones contra Xersen missi, cum treceni ex omni Graecia missi fugissent, deliberant an et ipsi fugiant* (*Suas. 2*). According to historical sources (Herod. 7. 209) there was only one debate before the final stand of the Spartans which resulted in the departure of the contingents, but there is not any information about any other debate taking place.\(^8^6\) This is an instance where the declamatory tradition invents fictional events which are then used as platforms for the negotiation of moral issues, in order to provide a moral re-enactment of a historical situation. Here the moral issues raised concern bravery as opposed to cowardice in front of the fearsome enemy. Note for instance Cestus Pius’ comment on the prospect of retreat: *O graue maiorum virtutis dedecus: Lacones se numerant, non aestimant* (*Suas. 2.6*). Advocating the retreat of the Laconians would not only be against historical truth, but also would undermine the opportunity to offer a moral teaching of bravery by endorsing cowardice.

One major feature of composition of declamatory speeches, then, is the reduction of any given material to an ethical barebone. This is performed through the emphasis on certain recurring ethical categories or commonplaces, represented by stock anthropological categories. In what follows, we shall see how stock declamatory categories help in the establishment and reproduction of the ludic properties of a declamatory speech by acting as agents of theatricality and agonism.

### 2.4 A LUDIC APPROACH TO LITERATURE: THE CASE OF DECLAMATORY RHETORIC

Habinek uses the term ludic as a category to describe an approach to, and experience of, literature as ‘playful, fragmented, at ease, improvisational, escapist’ in which he also

\(^8^6\) See the Loeb edition of the Elder Seneca’s *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae*, vol. 2, p. 506-7, n. 1, where the intervention of the rhetoricians in the invention of the fictional extension of the event is recognised.
identifies ‘an educative function’.\textsuperscript{87} He points out that the ludic experience of literature can be more effective than indoctrination in a literary canon.\textsuperscript{88} This implies that the ludic context of a cultural practice such as declamation does not deprive it of an interest in moral enquiries. On the contrary, precisely the very fact that moral teaching is not the driving force in ludic practices makes them potentially more efficient in dealing with moral enquiries in a covert manner. Furthermore, Dupont applies the term to the practice of \textit{recitatio} (the public readings of literary works as a prelude to their publication), in order to emphasise a crucial feature of \textit{recitationes}, namely the element of displacement.\textsuperscript{89} She argues that when, for instance, an oratorical speech is recited at a \textit{recitatio}, a practice which in its essence resembles a declamatory performance (when the recited work is a rhetorical speech), it lacks what she calls social reality and the entire performative mechanism. The terms ‘escapist’ and ‘displacement’ can plausibly be seen to relate to the disinterestedness which Huizinga argued to be a feature of play.

This displacement also reflects and, at the same time, is the result of the change in the public discourse, as was briefly outlined 2.2.2 in the comparison between pragmatic and declamatory rhetoric. The suppression of political oratory under the Principate meant that its function as a platform for performing one’s identity had to be displaced and be served by a type of ludic discourse. That was declamatory rhetoric, which used not pragmatic political situations but material inspired from the literary tradition as a means for performing one’s identity. This displacement also meant that one’s identity was no longer performed but pre-performed or rehearsed in a ludic manner of fluid seriousness, which could be tolerated by the Principate.

2.4.1 DECLAMATORY THEATRICALITY

Although, according to Huizinga, agonism and theatricality (the two functions of play) appear intertwined, for reasons of methodological simplicity I shall attempt to identify them separately in declamatory rhetoric. In 2.2.1 I argued that declamatory rhetoric functions as a pre-performative exercise or rehearsal of the actual activity for which it prepares someone. The argument presented in this chapter is a development of this description of the function of declamation as a pre-performance or rehearsal.

\textsuperscript{87} Habinek (1998), 4-6.
\textsuperscript{88} Habinek \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{89} Dupont (1997).
Although manifestly not a dramatic genre, declamation does have qualities which support its classification as at least a para-dramatic type of performance.\(^{90}\) Role-playing was central to a declamatory performance (more evidently in controversiae, but also in suasoriae).\(^{91}\) Either in its form as a school-boy exercise in rhetoric, or as a pastime for adults, declamation used stock characters which the speakers would impersonate. The surviving collections of declamations provide numerous instances of reference to a declamatory performance in theatrical terms. For example, the Elder Seneca (Contr. 2.4.9) refers to a declamer's treatment of the ethos of a declamatory character with the term persona, which clearly possesses theatrical connotations: *quidam personam eius qualem acceperant introduxerunt duram et asperam*. Similarly in pseudo-Quintilian’s ninth *Maior Declamatio* we have: *an ille animus rediret in cellulam, ferret saginam, magistrum, personam denique sceleris?* (Mai. Decl. 9.22). Finally, a particularly striking example is *de hac re consedistis, hoc concitauit istam iudicii scena, panis datus mendico* (Mai. Decl. 9.10), in which the declamer refers to the space of a declamatory performance as a ‘stage of judgement’.\(^{92}\)

This constitutes a striking difference from pragmatic rhetoric, in which the orators would not engage in a similar process of role-playing. This, of course, does not mean to say that theatricality was alien to pragmatic rhetoric, as scholars have pointed out the affinity between the categories of *actor* and *orator*.\(^{93}\) Notwithstanding the theatrical properties of pragmatic rhetoric, the difference of its theatricality from the theatricality of declamatory rhetoric lies in that in the former it is conducive to the audience’s persuasion - that is, the orator exploits histrionic mechanisms such as gesticulation or *prosopopoëia* (impersonation of a figure) in order to make his oration more effective. On the contrary, the histrionics of a declamatory performance aim at creating a fiction of an intense theatrical nature. This chapter will argue that the theatrical properties of declamatory rhetoric may be identified on two levels, the performative and the metafictional.

When during a declamatory performance the declamer plays the role of the father or of the son, the success of his performance will be determined not by the sincerity of the *ethos* of

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\(^{90}\) Dupont (1997), 51 points out that the *recitatio* of any literary composition is an activity which ‘is always on the verge of becoming theatre’.

\(^{91}\) On the dramatic properties of a *controversia* see Pianezzola (2003). Note also Regali (1985), who identifies a dramatic structure in pseudo-Quintilian’s ninth *Maior Declamatio*. Garelli appears to class declaration as a para-dramatic genre.

\(^{92}\) Schouler (1992) discusses the vicinity between declamatory performances and the theatre in Imperial times. See also Maier-Eichhorn (1989) on the connection between declamatory gestures and theatrical performances.

\(^{93}\) Fantham (2002), 362-76, points out that the boundaries between the practices of the *actor* and the *orator* in ancient times was obscure, with one category trespassing on the grounds of the other.
his role, as there is no such thing for a declamatory performance, but by its truthfulness to life, and by how well the ethos of his role has been acted out in relation to established norms and patterns of behaviour in Roman society.\textsuperscript{94} By contrast, pragmatic rhetoric heavily relies on the speaker’s establishing an authentic and reliable ethos.\textsuperscript{95} As Gunderson points out, ‘the orator becomes the self he performs’.\textsuperscript{96} This pragmatic ethos aims to help his oration gain in persuasiveness, and ultimately to help him achieve his political goals. Furthermore, declamatory theatricality is not limited to the declaimers’ part, but also involves the declamatory performance as a whole: for instance, in a controversia which was essentially the quasi-dramatic staging of a judicial procedure, the audience would play the role which the declamatory speech would assign to them, for instance the judges or the magistrate.\textsuperscript{97} Of particular relevance to my point is the passage from Quintilian discussed in 2.1.3, where he criticised declamation for addressing judges that do not exist. Obviously Quintilian’s criticism referred to declamation’s increasing loss of pragmatism (relative to itself over time), as manifested in the quasi-dramatic tendencies which show-declamation demonstrated, which eventually had a negative effect on school-declamation making it deviate from its educational goal and acquire epideictic tendencies.

The theatrical nature of declamatory rhetoric also concerns the level of metafiction.\textsuperscript{98} To make my point clearer, I would argue that a certain degree of theatricality can be identified in any literary genre which shows signs of awareness of its secondariness: when texts engage in an intertextual relationship with the literary tradition, they effectively become engaged in a process which can be paralleled to a dramatic exchange, in that such an exchange portrays the intertextual conversation of the new texts with the old. In a similar way, modern scholarship on the Second Sophistic describes the literary output of that time as a re-enactment of the classical literature.\textsuperscript{99} Since declamation has been shown to be a Roman manifestation of the Second Sophistic phenomenon, it comes as no surprise that the notion of re-enactment borrowed from the scholarship of the Second Sophistic appears to be applicable to Roman declamation too. In the following chapter, we shall explore this second-level theatricality of declamatory rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{94} It is tempting to associate the truthfulness of the declamatory ethos with the Aristotelian request for plausibility of tragic plots and characters, which suggests declamation’s vicinity with the dramatic genres.

\textsuperscript{95} Gunderson (2000).

\textsuperscript{96} Gunderson (2003), 41.

\textsuperscript{97} Sharrock (2009) discusses the function of audience as a character of the play in Roman comedy.

\textsuperscript{98} On metafiction see Waugh (1988).

\textsuperscript{99} Whitmarsh (2005), 9.
2.4.2 SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND RE-ENACTMENT

Intertextuality to a large extent depends on reception. If a text is well received and incorporated into a literary canon, then its chances of being read again and again increase. The use of literary works as school books - a kind of reception in itself - determined to a large extent the influence they would exert on future literary production. In general, school practices, irrespective of time and place, have a large share of responsibility for the transmission of cultural capital including literary products. Thus declamation either as a school practice or as a social event beyond the classroom offers the opportunity for an insight into the mechanisms of exploiting past and contemporary literary production for new literary compositions. Before proceeding to the examination of declamation itself, an examination of the stages preceding it would, I think, be helpful in demonstrating this tendency as a pervasive force throughout ancient rhetorical education.

It has been mentioned that declamation was only the last stage in the process of teaching rhetoric. Rhetorical training included the progymnasmata (preparatory exercises), which were considered to be easier and for this reason more appropriate for earlier ages (from the ages of twelve to fifteen on). These set exercises could take the form of compositions of fable, narrative, chreia (anecdote), maxim, refutation and confirmation, commonplace, encomion or invective, syncrisis (comparison), ethopoeia and prosopopoeia (speaking in character and personification), ekphrasis, thesis and nomos (attack and defence of a law). In these exercises, which were basically studies in imitative prose composition, the students were required to reproduce a text by modelling it on the texts of classical literary tradition. The original text was used as a starting point for various ways of imitative re-creation, depending on what each type of preparatory exercise required. Let us look at two examples. The first passage provides an instance of paraphrasing in prose of the first few lines of the *Iliad*, as they have been preserved in the Bodleian Greek Inscription 3019 (3rd century BC).

**COLUMN I**

ἄρξομαι ἀπό σοῦ, ὦ Μοῦσα, τοιαῦτης

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100 The passage from progymnasmatic exercises to the practice of declamation was not abrupt, since these would crop up in declamatory exercises, as Quintilian confirms (2.1.10). This guaranteed the continuity of the educational curriculum.

101 See Clarke (1957), 176-212 and Kennedy (2003) for an introduction to this form of exercise in prose composition, as well as a translation of parts of ancient handbooks of progymnasmata.

102 The source of this inscription is Morgan (1998), 205ff.
The passage reflects a student composition of a new version of the Homeric text by closely following the original narrative. There is a clear self-conscious distancing of the narrator from the narrative he relates through a reference to it as ὑπόθεσις (subject matter), something which is not found in the original Homeric text. It is also interesting to note that the student’s composition refers to its status as a reworking of the original: πειράσομαι καὶ τοῦτο ἀναδιδάξαι. This statement (ἀναδιδάξαι) reveals the dependence of this composition on a previous one: it is an indication that what follows is not an original narrative, but rather a reworking of a narrative familiar through a previous literary work. It amounts to a metacompositional statement: the author informs the reader of the status of the narrative, which is a retelling of another narrative, in this way pointing to the Homeric intertext as a prerequisite for the reading of the present text. Especially the preposition ἀνα- introduces the notion of ludic repetition or iteration, which Huizinga claims to be a feature of play. At the same time, this statement is also a meta-cognitive comment of the student which relates to the practice of an exercise. The use of τοιαύτης (such as, similar to) in the phrase τοιαύτης ἐχόμενος τῆς ὑποθέσεως indicates that the new composition will bear a resemblance to the original one.
The passage delineates the kind of prescribed interaction of the students with the canonical texts.

In 1.3.1. a passage from a progymnasmatic exercise was used to argue that the ludic nature of an exercise lies in its function as a pre-performance of the actual act for which it prepares someone. That same passage is also relevant here, as it aims to teach how to re-enact a passage from Thucydides in such a manner as to create a new composition. The new composition bear signs of distancing from the original one ὡς ἔοικε (it seems) and ἃρα γε ἀληθές ἐστιν (is it really true?). The student re-writes the original and makes the new composition consciously position itself in relation to the original work in an interrogative manner (ἐρωτηματικῶς). It thus delineates a kind of prescribed interaction of the students with the canonical texts.

Let us now look at a number of passages from declamatory speeches which demonstrate a similar awareness of their metafictional nature. The following passage is an example of declamation commenting on its status as a fictional narrative:

Hoc prorsus ad fabulas repleto sceleribus nostris saeculo deerat ut narraretur aliquis solitus a piratis, adligatus a patre.

(Contr. 1.7.5).

This passage demonstrates an intense self-reflexivity: the declamer presents the speaking character reflecting on his situation and comparing it with others legends (fabulas). He also refers to the declamatory situation as being a narrative (narraretur). All this constitutes a meta-compositional comment, by which the declamer/narrator guides the audience to perceive his narrative as fiction (fabula) in the light of other fictions, and to compare it with them. A similar example can be drawn from the Major Declaimations of pseudo-Quintilian:

Credibiles fabulas fecimus, felices miserias, scelera innocentia. omnes quascumque clades fama uulguit, solacia hinc petant, hinc audient occisos sine sanguine, sepultos sine ignibus <homines hominibus> cibos. si quis mentitus est Cyclopas, Laestrygonas, Sphingas aut inguinibus urgininis latratum Siciliae litus et quaecumque miser didici domi committens, [quaere] hinc argumentum, hinc fidel accipiant. quaedam plane falsa sunt: sol in ortus non occidit, nec ad humanorum uiscerum epulas diem uertit, uidit nos funeribus pastos et ad euiscerata corpora inluxit. publice monstra commissa sunt, et inexpiable nefas uno ore ciuitas fecit.

(Pseudo-Quint. Decl. Maiiores 12.26)
The declamatory situation is as follows: a city which suffered from famine sent an agent to buy grain, and a date was set when he was supposed to return. Because of a storm he was carried off to another city where he sold the grain at double price, and then bought double the original amount of grain. Back in his hometown the citizens having no food, ate the corpses of their fellow citizens. Although the agent returns on the set date, he is charged with harming the state. The narrator/declaimer engages in the same process of drawing a comparison between his situation and the legends (fabulae). He mentions a number of monsters, such as the Cyclops, the Laestrygonians, the Sphinx, the Scylla, which at the same time recall the mythical events/characters and texts related to them. It is reasonable to assume that the declamer expected his audience to be able to recognise the allusions to fictions largely familiar through the Odyssey or the myth of Oedipus (in the case of the Sphinx).

One should also note the self-reflexivity which the phrase credibiles fabulas fecimus reveals, and by which we are offered an insight into how the declamer promotes the fiction of his declamatory speech: this statement, essentially a ‘refutation’ of a narrative, one of the progymnasmatic exercises listed earlier, promotes the incredible nature of the declamatory fiction. As Van Mal-Maeder puts it, the declamatory myth makes claims to reality, and presents itself as a myth which goes beyond real myth. It is worth noting that Lausberg identifies refutatio as a type of figure of thought, more precisely of (conceptual) irony, pointing out that in the demonstrative genus this takes the form of the inversion of praise and censure. This recalls the adoxographical tradition (praise of ignoble or unexpected things), which scholarship often identifies in declamatory rhetoric.

These observations suggest that the progymnasmatic exercises as well as the declamatory speeches were various forms of self-reflexive intervention with the literary tradition, in an attempt to produce new compositions which follow the original, but at the same time distance themselves from it in an innovative re-enactment of the literary tradition. The notion of innovation is crucial in our investigation, and will be explored in the following chapter on declamatory agonism.

103 For a brief commentary on this declamatory speech see Stramaglia (2003).
104 Another similar instance is quicquid historiae tradiderunt, carmina finxerunt, fabulae adiecerunt sub hac comparatione taceant. (Decl. Mai. 9.8). The narrator-declaimer seeks to promote his own take on the traditional material as innovative, and one that caps previous similar instances found in historical writing or the various poetic genres.
2.4.3 DECLAMATORY AGONISM

Like theatricality, agonism is also twofold, that is the performative (or first-level) and the metafictional (second-level). The so-called performative can be identified in the controversial nature of a declamatory performance. It concerns the actual antagonistic disposition among the declaimers, and it is a direct consequence of the epideictic nature of declamatory rhetoric. The Elder Seneca’s comment on the sententia of the Greek declaimer Nicetes is indicative of this antagonistic attitude: *Nicetes illam sententiam pulcherrimam, qua nescio an nostros antecesserit* (*Contr.* 1.4.12). Seneca argues that Nicetes’ *sententia* was of such beauty that it was not surpassed by any Roman declaimer.

As far as the metafictional or ‘second-level agonism’ is concerned, it relates to the various manifestations of self-awareness of declamatory speeches, and emanates from its status as meta-discourse. My argument identifies these manifestations of agonism, firstly in the negotiation of the content of commonplaces as they are represented by stock declamatory characters, such as the tyrant, the stepmother, the hero, the pious son, the cruel father etc.; secondly in the antagonistic intertextuality which develops through comparison of previous literary fictions and figures with the current situation and the stock characters involved. In this manifestation of declamatory agonism, the evocative capacity of stock characters, which allows the involvement of fictions of the literary tradition in this agonistic re-enactment, is crucial. Finally second-level agonism is identified in the judicialised conception of the situations presented in declamatory speeches of the *controuersia* type.

The ‘second-level’ declamatory agonism should be seen both in the light of the particular declamatory performance and of the literary tradition, or, in other words, synchronically and diachronically. It becomes obvious that, by approaching declamatory invention agonistically, we equate it, in a sense, with the relationships which any author develops with his predecessors. As Bloom has proposed, every later-coming author engages in an agonistic relationship with his predecessors, whose influence he tries to overthrow, in order to acquire his own authorial identity. The declamatory performance can thus be seen as the laboratory of the various authorial relationships with the tradition, and a microscopic, and real-time model of the process of the macroscopic relationships developed between authors. On these grounds the use of such postmodern critical terms as metafiction to describe declamation seems to be justified.

This second-level declamatory agonism is especially significant for my case, as it relates to declamation’s ludic function which is most relevant to the argumentation in this thesis: the second-level agonism in declamatory rhetoric becomes intertwined with the quasi-theatrical re-enactment of the literary tradition, the same tradition which has contributed in the

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107 Mendelson (1994), 97 coins the term *controuersia-as-inuentio*.


formation of the declamatory themes and stock characters. One might identify some degree of circularity in the description of the formation and function of the declamatory material. However, it is probably more accurate to speak of a repetitive process, which aspires to introduce new versions of old, familiar material. The notion of repetition adds to the ludic character of declamatory rhetoric, as Huizinga has identified repetition as a distinctive features of play. Gunderson comments on the tendency of declamation towards repetition (he actually uses the term ‘iteration’), which he associates with the memory of a rhetorical past providing models for declaimers.\(^{110}\)

2.4.4 DECLAMATORY INGENUITY

It was mentioned in 2.1.2 that the pleasure of the audience was a priority which differentiated the declaimer from the orator. An interesting passage from the Greek sophist Gorgias’ Ἑλένης Ἐγκώμιον, an adoxographical composition of the First Sophistic, points out the importance of pleasing the audience by means of ingenuity: τὸ γὰρ τοῖς εἰδότοις ἴσαι λέγειν πιστὶν μὲν ἔχει, τέρψιν δὲ οὐ φέρει. (Gorg. Hel. 5).\(^{111}\)

It is worth considering here how laborious a task it was to capture the audience’s attention in order to please them and to obtain their applause.\(^{112}\) The first challenge was the restrictions which were imposed on the declaimer by the set themes of the declamations. Secondly, declamation’s capacity for novelty was even narrower because of the rather type-bound characters which populate the declamatory universe, and who had been charged with certain qualities by previous figures (either mythological or historical) in the course of the declamatory tradition.\(^{113}\) In addition to the genre’s restrictive nature, the fact that during any declamatory performance the declaimer who would declaim later would have to surpass any previous ones, which would mean that, if the previous performance was successful and received the audience’s applause, then the room for ingenuity and originality was seriously reduced. This situation contributed to the declaimers’ constant pursuit of novelty (nouitas), in order to engage the audience’s attention. Indicative of the weight of novelty in declamatory rhetoric is Seneca’s praise of the declaimer P. Vicinius’ novel treatment of a declamatory theme with the words P. Vicinius et pulchre dixit et nouitas (Contr. 1.4.11).

Indeed, the pursuit of novelty is a recurrent motif in our surviving declamatory texts. Let us look at a number of passages which feature the term nousitas or its cognates. The first passage comes from a speech based on the declamatory theme of the two brothers. The

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\(^{110}\) Gunderson (2003), 45.

\(^{111}\) Text taken from MacDowell (1982).

\(^{112}\) Gunderson (2003), 80 draws our attention to this problem.

\(^{113}\) For instance, the figure of the nouerca (stepmother) had as literary ancestors Medea, Juno (Hercules’ stepmother), Phaedra, etc. The figure of the raped girl (who would marry her rapist) had as historical model the Sabine maidens, who, tradition had it, did the same, and also the many raped girls of New Comedy.
son who faces the consequences of his father and uncle’s enmity exclaims: ego indicabo cur me abdices: tu indica cur adoptaueris. Quae iam accedunt noua? (Contr. 1.1.3), commenting thus on the novel factors which inform his current circumstances. In another case of disinheritance, the Elder Seneca mentions the treatment of the declamer Silo Pompeius:

Silo Pompeius illo colore egit: nemo illi placere potest; ne in hoc quidem aliquem retinuit, ut non omnes abdicaret. ‘Ecce nunc’, inquit, ‘inuenit nouam abdicationem, ne quid de reditu sperare possent’.

(Contr. 2.1.30)

The declamer describes the father’s attitude to his sons as a novel form of disinheritance.

It should be noted that declamatory innovativeness frequently led the declaimers to the absurd, which, as has been previously indicated, rhetorical theory classes as epideictic παράδοξα and ἄδοξα. One such instance may be found in a passage from the Elder Seneca. The speaker in the following passage points out the novelty of the charge against him: in me noui generis dementia arguitur: sanus eram si non agnoscerem meos (Contr. 2.4.2). Here a father defends himself from the charge of madness (dementia) by emphasising the novel inversion of expectations which this charge involves: he is considered mad because he acknowledges a son, when the reverse would in fact be an indication of madness for a father.

Another example illustrates how the expectations and the ethical appropriateness played a central role in the treatment of the topic:

alteram partem pauci declamauerunt. nemo <paene> ausus est Ciceronem ad deprecandum Antonium hortari; bene de Ciceronis animo iudicauerunt.

(Suas. 6.12)

The theme of the suasoria is Cicero and his deliberation on whether to beg Antony’s pardon or not. The Elder Seneca notes that most declaimers who declaimed on this topic did not choose to support the latter option (Cicero begging Antony’s pardon). This was because Cicero’s character did not allow such a treatment of the case (de Ciceronis animo iudicauerunt). Consequently only few declaimed that side.114 This is an instance which sets limitations on the declaimer’s freedom of invention, and restricts the options for the appropriate only to what the character as a historical figure allows.

Seneca also mentions the declamer Asinius Pollio, who, he claims, was the most hostile enemy of Cicero’s reputation (qui infestissimus famae Ciceronis permansit, Suas. 6.14). Asinius, according to Seneca, declaimed on topic Deliberat Cicero an salutem promittente

114 In Inst. Orat. 3.8.46, however, Quintilian points out that the other side could exhort Cicero to save himself for the state’s sake.
Antonio orationes suas comburat. Seneca notes that this could be seen as a mere fiction (haec inepte ficta cuilibet uideri potest), but that Asinius wants to make people think it is the truth (Pollio uult illam ueram uideri). Asinius’ intention to declaim on a fictional topic involving a historical figure without sticking to historical facts makes obvious that appropriateness cannot have weighed much with him. One would reasonably conclude that the further the distance from the features traditionally attributed to a figure, the less the power of the appropriate in the sophistical treatment of a declamatory theme. Seneca’s view on Asinius’ treatment (inepte ficta), along with the unpopularity of declaiming on the other side, suggest that the inappropriateness of one side of the argument would avert declaimers from taking it in their declamatory speech.

2.4.5 STOCK CHARACTERS IN DECLAMATORY METAFICTION

Declamation has properties which allow its interpretation as metafiction, that is a fiction which demonstrates a high degree of self-reflexive ‘secondariness’, as it appears to engage in a conversation with past literary tradition in a self-aware manner. This observation may come as no surprise to the scholar of Latin literature: there are hardly any literary compositions from Hellenistic times onwards which do not demonstrate an intense awareness of their belatedness. In fact, in order for any text to acquire any meaning its involvement in a wider matrix of textual worlds is essential. This is the case not only for literary (or para-literary as declamation has been called), but for any type of discourse. Any type of discourse is bound to be intertextual, if it is to have any meaning. This is particularly valid for typified types of discourse such as rhetorical speeches, either pragmatic or declamatory ones, as they are expected to abide by certain rules regarding their structure and subject matter, as they are dictated by the art of rhetoric. Declaratory speeches are bound to follow certain patterns and to stick to certain norms. In that sense the intertextual properties of declamation concern its participation in the rules of conventions of composition of a rhetorical speech.

115 Schmitz (1999) discusses the treatment of the historical past in the declamatory compositions of the sophists of the Second Sophistic.
116 Note the contrast with the non inepte which the declaimer in the pseudo-Quintilianian Major Declamation uses in reference to the son’s ethos.
118 As far as the paraliterary status of declamation is concerned, see Gunderson (2003), 15 where he likens declamation to ‘poetry slam’.
119 On intertextuality in rhetoric as a means of participating in a matrix of rhetorical technical conventions see Plett (1999).
120 Dingel (1988) and Winterbottom (1980) provide a detailed account of the rhetorical technical features of Roman declamation.
This study, however, is particularly interested in the intertextual relationships of declamation with the literary tradition as a whole.\footnote{This, of course, does not mean that pragmatic oratory does not use literary allusions. See Sussman (1994) on Cicero’s use of comic motifs such as miles gloriosus.} Technically speaking, there is not as such a declamatory manner of composing literary works. But whereas there is nothing particularly declamatory on a compositional level, a careful investigation into a meta-compositional level (in the level of re-enactment) reveals features which seem to be exclusively declamatory. To make my point clearer: the right question to ask in dealing with the description of ludism in declamation is not ‘how does a declaimer write?’, but rather ‘how does a declaimer ‘re-write’?’. Declamation, therefore, demonstrates a particular treatment of literary fictions, and the uniqueness of declamatory writing should be sought in that respect. In what follows I shall attempt to address this issue.

**Sophistopolis**, as the declamatory fictional world has been called,\footnote{Russell (1981).} is a universe populated by recurring characters who have been deprived of any particularity. The stock characters of declamation are the product of elaboration of commonplaces, that is, stereotypes about social roles which reflect popular ethics and ideology.\footnote{Connolly (1998), esp. 145ff. with particular reference to declamation.} They are not individualised figures but have standard recurring features. This recurrence reinforces their stock nature: in this way every stock character is used with certain expectations both for the declaimer who manipulates them and for the audience who is familiar with the type through previous declamatory performances, as well as through the rhetorical training they themselves underwent at an earlier age.

An important feature of declamatory stock characters is their evocative nature, that is, their capacity to recall literary figures which have contributed in the formation of the stock characters. The declaimer exploits the evocative capacities of the stock characters in order to engage in an agonistic relationship with previous manifestations of a particular stock character, and to promote the uniqueness or extremity of his own version of it. Eventually agonism takes the form of ‘antagonistic intertextuality’, with the stock characters functioning as channels which allow the declaimer to allude to other similar fictions and figures. The use of such stock characters as the stepmother and the stepson consciously evokes (although usually it does not explicitly mention) various mythological/historical figures such as Juno and Hercules, or Phaedra and Hippolytus. Adulterous wives (adultera) recall Clytemnestra, debauched husbands (adulter) suggest Theseus and Agamemnon, tyrants (tyrannus) hint at Lycus and Creon, and heroes (uir fortis) at Hercules, hostile brothers at Atreus and Thyestes, or at Eteocles and Polyneices, to name only a few figures which could be easily recognised from the literary tradition. Thus the declamatory stock characters function as a link to other literary fictions. The following examples will make my point clearer:

\footnote{This, of course, does not mean that pragmatic oratory does not use literary allusions. See Sussman (1994) on Cicero’s use of comic motifs such as miles gloriosus.}
Duo fratres inter se dissidebant. alteri filius erat. patruus in egestatem incidit. patre uetante adulescens illum aluit. ob hoc abdicatus tacuit. adoptatus a patruo est. patruus accepta hereditate locuples factus est, egere coepit pater; uetante patruo alit illum. abdicatur.

(Sen. Contr. 1.1)

This passage, the hypothesis of a declamation, provides in abstract terms an account of the situation on which the declaimer is required to base his declamation. The evocative qualities of this passage are clear. From the very first sentence we are introduced with the story of two brothers being at loggerheads. This introduction of the subject is given in a generalised and abstract manner, which is maintained throughout the hypothesis: any particular details, such as names, place or time are eliminated and what remains is given in terms of family roles (fratres, filius, patruus, pater). For all this abstraction, I would suggest that an educated audience would easily recognise the underlying myth of Atreus and Thyestes or of Eteocles and Polyneices, as the myths of the hostility between these pairs of mythical figures are basically cases of hostility between brothers.

Another similar example illustrates how declamatory speech based on this hypothesis makes references to these fictions, which are occasionally exploited by the declaimer in the course of his speech:

Colorem ex altera parte, quae durior est, Latr o aiebat hunc sequendum, ut grauiissimarum iniuriarum inexorabilia et ardentia induceremus odia Thyesteo more; aiebat patrem non irasci tantum debere sed furere. Ipse <in> declamatione usus est summis clamoribus illo uersu tragico: ‘cur fugis fratrem? scit ipse’.

(Contr. 1.1.21)

Porcius Latro gives instructions as to how the ethos of one of the brothers of the story should be constructed. He perceives this persona in terms of the mythical figure of Thyestes and advises on exploiting this association in the construction of the declamatory character. He also incorporates into his declamation the tragic verse cur fugis fratrem? scit ipse. Although the origin of the verse is uncertain, it presumably comes from a play dealing with the myth of Atreus and Thyestes. Despite our ignorance of its origin, it is reasonable to suppose that the audience of the declamation would have been in the position to identify it.

The abstraction which characterises the treatment of the declamatory theme, with the elimination of names, place and time, and the reduction of the characters to family roles, allows declamation to be open to a wider range of fictions to which the declaimer alludes. On this point the following passage is rather instructive:

124 Frag. Trag. Inc. 115 Ribbeck.
Adfectus nostri in nostra potestate non sunt. quaedam iura non scripta, sed omnibus scriptis certiora sunt: quamuis filius familiae sim, licet mihi et stipem porrigere mendico et humum cadaueri <inicare>.

(Sen. Contr. 1.1.14)

These are the words of the disinherited son of the same declamatory situation. He defends his decision to help his father by mentioning the unwritten laws. According to him, on certain occasions they are more powerful than the written ones. One such is throwing dust on a exposed corpse. The combination of the references to the unwritten laws and the duty to throw dust on a dead body makes a striking allusion to the fiction of Antigone and her brother Polyneices.

In another declamatory theme there are simultaneous allusions to a number of fictions:

Quidam alterum fratrem tyrannum occidit, alterum in adulterio deprehensum deprecante patre interfecit. a piratis captus scripsit patri de redemptione. pater piratis epistulam scripsit: si praecidissent manus, duplam se daturum. piratae illum dimiserunt. patrem egentem non alit.

(Contr. 1.7)

First a brother kills his brother, a tyrant. Second, the same brother kills his other brother because the latter committed adultery with his wife. Third, the assassination of a tyrant, and finally a father begging the (prospective) murderer of his son: the myths of Eteocles and Polyneices, of Atreus and Thyestes, of Hercules and Lycus (Hercules as tyrannicida) and of Priam, Achilles and Hector are among the ones which an audience would recognise behind the abstract description of the declamatory situation. It is clear that in this hypothesis we find a fusion of these original fictions, which results in a new fiction. Seneca’s anthology does provide quotations from the declamatory speech which demonstrate an exploitation of the myth of Hercules is alluded to:

Iratus, inquit, ob hoc ipsum fui, quod hoc scelere etiam tyrannicidium inquinauere; adparet te morbo quodam aduersus tuos furere.

(Contr. 1.7.14).

The passage can be interpreted as an allusion to Hercules, who killed his entire family after having been afflicted by the madness sent on him by Juno: especially the words morbo, furere and aduersus suos speak for the reading of this declamatory situation along these lines. Seneca also mentions the case of the declaimer Fuscus, who included the Homeric verse καὶ κύσε χείρας / δεινάς ἀνδροφόνους, αἲ οἱ πολέας κτάνον ύδας. (Il. 24. 478-9) in his declamatory speech on the same theme. In these lines Priam begs Achilles to allow him to ransom the body of his son, Hector. This is one more instance of exploiting the allusive capacities which a generalised declamatory theme provides, as Priam, Hector, and Achilles correspond to the father, the son, and the murderer of the son.
The use of anthropological stock categories such as the stepmother, the pious or the debauched son, the strict father, the tyrant, the hero etc. serves not only as links to other literary fictions, but also as poles of family or social conflicts. Their use helps articulate tensions with regards to what constitutes an acceptable or unacceptable behaviour for the Roman society. In any given declamatory theme, declaimers are required to negotiate the boundaries of the social norm as concerns such figures as the father, the mother, the son, the master or the tyrant, the subject or the slave.

2.5 LUDIC ETHICS IN DECLAMATORY CHARACTERISATION

In chapter 2.3 it was pointed out that the fluidity of seriousness identified in declamatory rhetoric as a form of cultural play manifests itself in declamation’s tendency towards the absurd, which scholars have associated with the adoxographic tradition of epideictic speeches (praise of ignoble or unexpected things). This section will attempt to describe how argumentation in declamatory rhetoric uses the sophistical notions of *kairos* (opportune moment), *prepon* (appropriate) and *dynaton* (possible), in order to contribute to the construction of declamatory characterisation with adoxographic tendencies. We will look at stock characters which relate to family or social relationships, such as family members (mothers, fathers, sons, stepmothers, stepsons, brothers, etc.), or characters socially related (masters, slaves, tyrants). The appropriateness of this category is suggested first, because this type of declamatory category is one of the most commonly used categories in the extant collections of Roman declamation. These categories will also contribute to the argument about Senecan characterisation in the second section of the thesis.

From chapter 2.2 onwards it has been shown that declamatory rhetoric is a ludic practice, a cultural game, in which the declaimers–players provide a social/moral commentary by re-enacting conflicts inspired from literary tradition. Familiarity with the literary tradition is the essential cultural pre-requisite, which every educated Roman citizen is expected to possess,\(^{125}\) and which functions as the necessary platform for reflection upon conflicts of an intense moral colour. These conflicts come about through the juxtaposition of conflicting views on the moral appropriateness of behaviours and actions. The challenge for the declaimer is to provide innovative ways of pushing the boundaries of the established morally appropriate. Stock characters are used in that process as mechanisms which enable the demonstration of one’s skills in rhetorical innovation. The outcome of this process is the promotion of the declaimer’s own version as capping all previous versions and setting a new precedent of the specific qualities of the stock character, and ultimately of the commonplace which it represents. In this way every declamatory speech seeks to break new ground in the way that the stock character was previously perceived, and thus to broaden the commonplace which the stock character represents.

\(^{125}\) Bloomer (1997).
2.5.1 DECLAMATORY STOCK CHARACTERS AS COMMONPLACES AND ARGUMENTS FROM PROBABILITY

Before proceeding to the analysis of passages from declamatory speeches, it is crucial to clarify the rhetorical value of stock characters. A stock character raises certain expectations in the audience. These expectations have been created by the audience’s familiarity with the literary tradition from which they are formed. In the case of declamations, and in the specific type of *declamationes ethicae*, where argumentation relies predominantly on character (*ethos*), the challenge to the declaimer’s skills of invention is to re-invent the content of those stock anthropological categories, the so-called declamatory stock characters. The *ethos* of a declamatory character becomes thus an issue of constant negotiation on the basis of possibility and appropriateness: it cannot be finally established, neither is it expected to be so. Instead it is constantly invented and re-invented, in an aporetic process which ultimately aims at engaging the audience, by challenging the boundaries of the socially acceptable regarding the moral qualities and values which stock characters represent. In other words re-inventing declamatory stock characters amounts to an attempt to renew a *locus a persona*.

As far as their rhetorical value is concerned, stock characters function as a summary of ideas, which are based on common beliefs about any particular character. For instance, the *tyrannus* (tyrant), a very common declamatory stock character, is by default a negative figure, and bears specific features which usually arise in one way or another in declamatory speeches, such as *crudelitas, luxuria, libido, suspicio, avaritia etc.* In technical rhetorical terms, the stock character *tyrannus* is an instance of a commonplace (more specifically an argument based on character, *locus a persona*) which summarizes these standard features. A similar process happens with the figure of the *uir fortis* (brave man) and with the *nouerca* (stepmother), which are both frequently recurring declamatory figures.

These arguments *a persona* are, more specifically, arguments on probability: for example, in the case of the rhetorical *tyrannus*, the argument which underlies this commonplace is ‘a tyrant most probably will demonstrate cruel, libidinous, or suspicious behaviour’. Lausberg classes arguments based on character (*a persona*) as a form of artificial proof in *argumentatio* (πίστις), and lists the following subdivisions of *argumenta* (or *loci*) *a persona*: *genus, natio, patria, sexus, aetas, educatio et disciplina, habitus corporis, fortuna*.

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126 For the stock features of the declamatory tyrant see Tabacco (1985); also Dunkle (1971) for the presence of this figure in Roman historiography.

127 See Lentano (1998) for an extensive treatment of the figure of *uir fortis* in Roman declamation; also Watson (1995) for the declamatory *nouerca* (stepmother).

128 See Innes (1991) on stock characters in the works of the First Sophistic functioning as arguments from probability.
Particularly relevant to this study are the arguments based on a person's condicio (nam clarus an obscurus, magistratus an priuatus, pater an filius, ciuis an peregrinus, liber an seruus, maritus an caelebs, parens liberorum an orbus etc.), as they broadly correspond to the instances of stock characters encountered most frequently in declamatory rhetoric.

2.5.2 LUDIC ETHICS AND DECLAMATORY STOCK CHARACTERS

Nothing is always virtuous, nor [always] disgraceful, but taking the same things the opportune moment made disgraceful and after changing [them made them] virtuous.

Δισσοὶ Λόγοι (2.19)

The passage above, a quotation from the work of unknown author, perfectly summarises a basic principle of the sophistic ethics, namely its situatedness. Situational as opposed to a universalised ethics was a fad which the sophists introduced and popularised in the fifth-century Athens. The notion of kairos (the opportune moment) was central to their ethics and to their approach to rhetoric. According to them, the opportune moment determined the moral colour of an act, a word, etc. Poulakos claims that the opportune moment (ὁ καιρὸς), together with the appropriate (τὸ πρέπον), and the possible (τὸ δυνατὸν), are three major notions which govern sophistical rhetoric.

According to Poulakos, the process of invention of sophistical arguments explored the area of the possible as the middle way between the actual and the ideal. While the actual deals with how things are (thought to be) in reality, and the ideal with how things should ideally be, the possible explores the various ways in which things can be. A rhetorical speech thus is the product of the opportune moment (καιρὸς), and is governed by the appropriate (πρέπον) of that particular moment. This is the area of actuality, upon the establishment of which the rhetor’s challenge is to propose to his audience new versions of reality, which will be the area of the possibility. As his duty is to provide his audience with innovative versions of reality, he has to rely on his capacities for innovation. It becomes obvious that the possible requires special skills in invention on the part of the orator.

By implication the sophistic conception of morality hinged upon nouitas, which was largely the reason for the sophists’ disrepute in antiquity. According to such an approach, an unprecedented situation could not be morally evaluated with the same ethical categories as any past situations, since what was ethically correct in a past situation could be wrong in the present one. The public speaker or ῥήτωρ, therefore, is expected to conceive of an innovative possible version of reality, and his duty is to introduce it to the audience. This

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130 Poulakos (1983).
process involves the departure from what has been established to be appropriate (πρέπον),
and the moving towards what is alternatively and innovatively possible (δυνατόν).

Declamatory rhetoric, which belongs in the sophistical tradition, is a type of sophistical
rhetoric which engages into a process of reworking of the literature of the past and,
therefore, it too is expected to be informed by similar principles. Indeed Breij has argued that
declamation, alongside its function as an exercise in rhetoric, also played the role of an
exercise in situational ethics.\footnote{See Breij (2009).} However, due to its non-pragmatic nature, declamation
demonstrates a special sophistical character, one which favours startling, even shocking
possible versions of reality. This means that it does not seek to resolve problematic
situations which arise in society as political rhetoric does and this is reflected in its pragmatic
inquiries. Instead it works with stock material of situations and characters which have been
inspired from literary fiction.

Stock declamatory material, however, can be treated in a manner which satisfies the
sophistic requirements of the appropriate, the possible and the opportune moment. This
becomes feasible by exploiting the multivalence of each stock character and situation as
itself a source of ready-made possibilities which compensates for its eliminated specifics.
The figure of a tyrant, for instance, is by tradition charged with such qualities as crudelitas,
and so is the figure of the stepmother. The expectations which the stock characters raise in
fact function on the level of probability: if a character is stock, then it is probable that it will
demonstrate a certain behaviour which the declaimer can exploit, and the declaimer will use
this probable behaviour as a way of treating the declamatory situation. For example, a
passage from Seneca’s collection of declamations describes how the declaimer Latro
appears to takes into account the declamatory tradition in the process of invention with
regard to a case of a debauched father: minime patri obici solere luxuriam, non magis quam
auaritiam, quam iracundiam; non uitia patris accusari solere, sed morbum (Contr. 2.6.5). In
this declamatory theme, a debauched son accuses his father of madness for becoming
debauched too: Quidam luxuriante filio luxuriari coepit. filius accusat patrem dementiae. As
Latro notes, the father is not traditionally charged with debauchery (luxuria), any more than
with avarice (auaritia), or irascibility (iracundia), and that it is a father’s sickness rather than
his faults to be criticised. He explores a number of possibilities, in which a father’s
debauchery may or may not be allowed: for instance, he points out that, if with something
other than madness, a father can not be charged with debauchery. If that should happen, a
son would be able to disinherit a father, thus going against the declamatory law which
enables fathers to disinherit sons, when they spend money belonging to someone else: sed
lex patri filium quia de alieno consumit abdicare permittit (2.6.5). The father, however,
spends money of his own, and the inversion of the declamatory law would not apply to his
case. Latro also considers the possibilities of the father’s drunkenness, his bad temper, his
intention to reprove his son by causing him embarrassment for his father, or the pretence of
debauchery. In sum, the Elder Seneca’s account of Latro’s treatment of the father’s ethos indicates the tensions between tradition and declamatory creativity and novelty, which Latro took into consideration while declaiming on this topic. When a stock character is exploited sophisticatedly, the ethos of the stock character will be treated in such a way as to promote startlingly new possible versions of itself (dynaton), meeting the requirements of opportune moment (kairos) and challenging what has been considered appropriate (prepon). Not only do such versions constitute a departure from the appropriate, but also they at times even defy it by promoting as a possible version one which normally would be considered to be impossible and inappropriate.132

2.5.2.1 Father-son versus poor-rich

In pseudo-Quintilian’s seventh Major Declamation a poor man, father of a son who was murdered in front of him, charges his enemy, a rich man, with the murder.133 In order to prove the truth of his charge, he offers to give testimony under torture, whereupon the rich man claims that this is against the law (liberum hominem torqueri ne liceat). The declamatory speech preserved in the collection is of the poor man grieving for his son. The tensions underlying this declamatory situation are defined by the relationships between father and son on the one hand, and poor man and rich man on the other. In this way the declamatory speech articulates a conflict which arises from the two social roles assumed by one of the characters, who is cast as both a grieving father and poor.

In a self-aware manner the character refers to his own status as a grieving father, and comments that the appropriate ethos for him would be to demonstrate the weakness of a grieving father (infirmitas) due to the murder of his son in front of his very eyes: non possum tamen, <ut> uelim, uobis approbare, quid patiar, quod mihi non est relicta miseri patris infirmitas (Decl. Mai. 7.1.8-10). The father seeks to justify his decision to demonstrate an ethos different from the stock one by means of the madness which has overcome him after his son’s loss. He thus contrasts the unexpected nature of the current situation, that is, the fact that he saw his son’s killer, with what would be a more usual one, that is, if he did not know who murdered him, to conclude that uultis, cum hoc uiderim, tantum testimonium dicam? ... insaniat necesse est pater, cum solus hoc sciat (5, 18-21). He also states that his initial plan was simply to plead his case against the rich man. However, since the circumstances are different from what he expected, he has come up with the idea right on the spot to plead his case under torture, in order to make it convincing: hic, hic ut torquerer inueni (7.1). The poor man, therefore, seeks to establish that his speech is an attempt to

132 Quintilian criticises this particular tendency of the declaimers who wish to present the impossible as possible: His ego comparandos existimo qui in declamationibus, quas esse ueritati dissimillimas volunt, aetatem multo studio ac labore consumunt (2.20.4).

133 See Tabacco (1978) and (1979) for a discussion on declamatory disputes between the poor and the rich.
meet the needs of the novelty of the situation: *o parentum misera condicio, quam nouis
insulisitisque patemus insidiis! nos exuisimus, nos offendimus, inimici tamen liberos
nostros oderunt* (7.2.). It is also worth noting that this statement can be seen as an allusion
to the myth of Atreus and Thyestes, in which the enmity between the two brothers affects
one’s children. Also the words *felices illos in mei comparatione patres, qui perisse liberos
suos nuntiis credunt!* (7.2), could be interpreted as an allusion to Theseus, who found out
about the death of his son Hippolytus through a messenger.

The construction of the speaker’s character (ethos) undergoes a process of antithetical
binarisation, which relies on the two roles which are assigned to him, namely the poor man
and the grieving father. This takes the form of playing with the expectations which he raises
as a poor man and as a grieving father. The poor man also points out that the best candidate
to murder a poor man is a rich enemy: *quim enim credibilior in caede pauperis quam diues
inimicu* (Decl. Mai. 7.9.1-2). The conflict which the declamatory theme articulates arises
from the fact that what is appropriate for a grieving father in terms of expectations
is presented as inappropriate for a poor man in relation to his enemy, the rich man, and at the
same time illegal (as the declamatory law forbids the torture of a free man).

Given the conventional enmity between the poor and the rich, the expected *ethos* of the
poor man would require him to be unwilling to subject himself to torture, while the expected
*ethos* of the father would require that he be eager to incriminate the rich man. The ultimate
question is whether a grieving father and poor man would be bold enough to incriminate the
rich man with the murder of his son, not because he truly was the murderer, but because of
their traditional enmity. The speech articulates this conflict of duties which the father appears
to experience in the phrase *nunc infelix ad nos, misera pietas, redi, quod fieri in ipsa orbitate
non potuit, et uires, quas inprouisus abstulit dolor, probatio restituet.* (7.13). The father here
intertwines the proof of paternal piety with his willingness to undergo torture. The
declamatory speech does not give any answers as to whether the motive in a father’s and
poor man’s willingness to be tortured is paternal love or social hatred. In this way it invites a
reconsideration of the appropriate *ethos* of a father and ultimately of the notion of piety,
in a situation of incredible and unheard-of nature (*cum inaudita, incredibilia passus sim* 7.2).

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134 The enmity between the poor and the rich is commonly exploited in declamatory themes.
This common topos can be traced as far back as the works of the first sophists.

135 Although the collection does not provide a declamation in the *persona* of the rich man, the
speech of the poor man involves possible objections which the rich man would raise to the
former’s willingness to undergo torture ‘*Sed,* inquit, ‘ideo torquei non debes, quia exigis, ut
torquearis*’ (Decl. Mai. 7.7.7-8). Given the traditional hostility between the two, the rich
man’s objection to the poor man being tortured is rather surprising.
2.5.2.2 Father-son-stepmother

In the first *Major Declamation* of pseudo-Quintilian, a blind son and his stepmother charge each other with the murder of the father of the family. The declamatory theme states that the father, after bringing the stepmother into the house, relegated his son to an isolated place of the house (*in secreta domus parte seposuit*). The blind son was also his father’s designated heir (*quem heredem instituerat*). The declamatory theme also states that the father was found murdered on the marital bed next to his wife, with the son’s sword plunged into the wound. The speech which we have is in defence of the son. I shall suggest that the speech reflects upon the question of how likely or unlikely it is for a father, a son and a stepmother to demonstrate certain behaviours. It also makes allusions to the son’s potential complicity in the father’s murder, or to the father’s rejective behaviour towards his son, instead of giving specific answers in order to promote reflection upon the characterisation of a stepmother, a son and a father.

The speech meets in an appropriate manner (*non inprobe*) the expected suspicions which the stepmother’s allegations must have caused to the judges’ minds: *quaes igitur, iudices, non inprobe spectauerim futurum, ut suspecta sint uobis quae tam inconsiderate ficta sunt contra miseram caecitatem* (1.2). In this manner the advocate/declaimer stresses the kairotic nature of his speech, which aims at meeting the requirements of the current situation. The blind son is presented as resenting the fact that his blindness can wipe off the charge, as he would prefer his morals alone to speak for his innocence: *cum ostendere innocentiam suam moribus malit quam aduersis, neque pietatis neque conscientiae suae grauem ferre contumeliam potest, ut parricidium non fecisse videatur beneficio caecitatis* (1.1). With this statement the declaimer claims to reject arguments from probability, that is, a blind man could possibly not have committed such a crime due to his physical impairment. In this manner the declaimer seeks to establish common ground between himself and his audience by means of the appropriate *ethos* for a son, which includes piety and a clear conscience.

He admits, however, that he cannot avoid resorting to the son’s blindness in his argumentation (*saepius uti necesse habeo argumento caecitatis, et hoc etiam loco, quo de illo uulnere disputandum est* 1.10), as the son’s blindness makes the stepmother’s allegations sound impossible: *reliqua, iudices, si fieri possunt aestimate*. It is worth noting that this statement in passage 1.10 can be seen as an instance of a meta-cognitive language which, in section 2.2.1. has been shown to relate to declamation’s ludic nature as an exercise or pre-performance. A similar argument is made a few lines later (*iungunt his multo incredibiliara, ut occiderit patrem, pepercerit nouercae*, 1.4), by which the declaimer seems to exploit the traditional hatred between a stepmother and a stepson. This stock feature of the characters renders the stepmother’s allegation unbelievable: if the son did kill his father, he would not have spared his stepmother’s life. This statement also creates suspicions as to who in fact committed the crime.
Next the declaimer states: *omnia priuignus illa nocte fecisse dicitur ad uotum nouercae* (1.5).

Interpretation of the phrase *ad uotum nouercae* as ‘according to the wish of the stepmother’ makes a hint at the son’s involvement in his father’s murder. In fact the declaimer now speaks of the stepmother’s complicity in the crime, rather than her guilt: *sed quam manifesta est conscientia, quae te ad hanc compellit necessitatem, ut, cum occisum a priuigno tuo patrem uideri uelis, cogaris dicere nihil sensisse* (1.9.). He even goes so far as to identify the blind son as the one and only murderer: *ille, qui erat in cubiculo suo solus, secum, opinor, secum deliberat, sufficit sibi: cur enim socium conscientiae quaerat? omnia potest scire* (1.7.22-25). This statement is an ironical exaggeration, which relies on the son’s blindness and subsequent incapacity to act on his own. Nonetheless, it may be interpreted as making an allusion to a possible conspiracy between stepmother and stepson. Such a charge was not expressed in a straightforward manner, but was only hinted at in the passage at 1.4.¹³⁶

According to the stepmother, whose argument is quoted by the declaimer in his speech for the son, the fact that the father banished his blind son to an isolated part of the house was the motive for his son to murder him: *sed causas, inquit, parricidii iste habuit, quem iratus pater in secretam domus partem relegauerat* (1.15). By means of a rhetorical question the declaimer seeks to interpret the intention behind the father’s act: *ista ergo sic intellegenda, quasi abdicas, quasi expelles?* (1.16). The way in which the question is phrased does not clarify whether the expected answer is positive or negative. Although the declaimer does provide an explanation for the son’s seclusion, this is done in rather ambiguous terms: *o praeclaram senis optimi singularemque pietatem! quam blando ille seposuit miserum suum, quam diligenter uxoris gaudentis exlusit oculos, quam multo caecum pudore donauit* (1.15).

Phrases such as *blando, seposuit* and *multo pudore donauit* can have a double meaning: in the first phrase, *blando*, alongside its positive meaning ‘in a caressing, soothing manner’, may also have negative connotations ‘in a seducing manner’, which would allude to the father’s deceptive attitude towards his son; in the second phrase, the double meaning depends on whether *donauit* is interpreted ironically or literally. If *donauit* is interpreted literally, the entire phrase acquires the meaning ‘he (the father) spared the blind son much embarrassment’, by not allowing him to be exposed to the stepmother’s derisive eyes. If, however, one is willing to identify irony in this phrase, then it acquires the meaning ‘he bestowed much embarrassment to the blind son’. The declaimer thus appears to allow a high level of obscurity regarding the content of the father’s *pietas* by obfuscating not only the son’s, but also the father’s motives.

The declaimer also declares his desire to treat his material in a different way from other declaimers: *transeo illum uulgarem et omnibus notum de comparatione personarum locum.*

¹³⁶ Pseudo-Quintilian’s second *Major Declamation* also refers to the stock features of the relationship between stepson and stepmother: *facinus est, iudices, quod bonos priuignos nouercae facilius decipiant nec leuius odorunt* (2.4).
His statement features the rhetorical technical term *locum de comparatione personarum* and reveals the intense rhetorical awareness of the narrator / declaimer, and constitutes an instance of meta-cognitive comment, the ludic characteristic of an exercise. He also claims that his own treatment relies on the expectations of a stepmother, that her advent would mean the displacement and exclusion of the son by his father: *decepta est, mulier, exspectatio tua.* (1.13) The ambiguity of the father’s attitude, however, makes it plausible to argue that the stepmother may have in fact been right in her expectations. It appears that the declamatory speech has succeeded in arguing as indirectly as possible what has been characterised as impossible and incredible regarding the blind son’s involvement in his father’s murder. The declaimer, however, does not provide any conclusive answer to the question of guilt, but only promotes an aporetic approach to ethical questions about the appropriate *ethos* of the characters.

### 2.5.2.3 Father-mother-son

Another situation of family strife appears in pseudo-Quintilian’s sixth *Major Declamation*. A father who was captured by pirates wrote to his family for ransom. The mother lost her sight due to constant weeping. The son decided to ransom his father by offering to take his father’s place without his mother’s consent. He died in captivity and his dead body thrown into the sea by the pirates was washed up on his native shores. His mother forbids his father to bury their son. The father presents his case against the mother’s attitude in the declamatory speech. The declamatory law applied to this declamatory theme prescribes that he who abandoned his parents in a time of disaster, should be left unburied: *qui in calamitate parentes deseruerit, insepultus abiciatur.*

In what follows it will be argued that the father’s speech articulates the tension between a son’s obligations, on the one hand towards his father and on the other towards his mother, when these are in conflict with each other. In spite of the son’s recognised attempt to balance the obligations towards his parents, he receives an unexpected response from them: his mother acts as if she were his stepmother, while his father wishes his son were not so pious. In this manner the speech questions established opinions of what constitutes pious behaviour for a son, as well as acceptable parental attitudes.

The father’s speech foregrounds the conflict of obligations with which the son was faced (*atquin miserrimus iuuenis quomodo magis temperare potuit officia?* 6.3). He claims that the

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137 I argue below that the occurrence of the technical rhetorical term *locus* in Senecan drama may be interpreted as indication that Senecan characterisation relies on declamatory ludism.

138 The motif of a son taking the place of his father occurs frequently in declamation, and can also be identified in Senecan drama, for instance in the exchange between Phaedra and Hippolytus, between Andromache and Ulixes over Astyanax’ sacrifice, and in the characterisation of Hercules and Oedipus. This and further similar instances of declamatory motifs in Senecan drama are describe in the second chapter of the second section of this thesis.
son, however, managed to strike a balance between those conflicting duties in a most ingenious manner, which combined both cleverness and dutifulness (inuenit tamen ingeniosa pietas et utrique subuenit dispendor su iui 6.3). The occurrence of the term inuenit is a meta-compositional comment which recalls the process of rhetorical invention in argumentation, and indicates the tendency of the narrator/declaimer to conceive of and present behaviours as products of invention.

In the light of the dutiful son’s efforts, however, the mother’s attitude defies any expectations. The father’s speech presents the mother’s response to the son’s act of piety as of a most incredible nature (quis hoc de ista credat 6.2), so much so that he compares it to that of a stepmother twice (ne quis tamen errat ignotus: non est filii mei nouerca, sed mater – o facinus, o cladibus nostris mutata natura 6.3, and mater...quamquam hoc nomen profanari nefas est: si perseverat esse filii sui nouerca 6.10). The significance of his point lies in the use of the stock figure of the stepmother to refer to the mother’s non-motherly behaviour. In this manner the mother’s grief is shown to lead her to react in such a way as to behave as a stepmother. It is also worth noting the allusion to the fiction of Bacchae in the line si quidem istis audeas, etiam dentibus lacera (6.9), which exemplifies the tendency of declamation to engage in an agonistic relationship with the literary tradition.

A rhetorical question articulates the disturbance of social roles caused by the mother’s stepmotherly behaviour, with the father doubting whether this is his wife and that their son (estne haec uxor mea, estne ille filius noster? liceat dubitare, si fieri potest 6.8), and the response to the question (filium agnosco; uxorem non agnosco 6.8). This statement is taken one step further, as the father casts doubts on whether the son is indeed his and his wife’s offspring (nisi forte non sumus parentes nisi palam 6.14). The father speaks of the mother’s incredible inversion of attitude (quae tanta mutatio est? quis hoc crederet? 6.20), which also results in the overall inversion of the ethical code which one would expect to govern the situation: the father now claims that his son was excessively more dutiful in loving his father than the father wanted him to (lucem libertatemque patri filius reddidit, et, quod ante inauditum est, magis me amauit quam uellem. 6.21), so much so that the father has doubts about his son’s virtue and piety (ubi uirtus, ubi pietas? 6.22). Eventually the father claims that such an inversion of the moral code results in him complaining about his son’s behaviour which others praise (haec ali laudant, ego quor. te quidem, iuuenis, omnia saecula loquentur, et admirabile exemplum tenaci memoriae traditum in ipsa astra sublimem pinnata Virtus feret; sed mihi ista laus tua caro constat 6.22). This last statement makes the case for the speech bearing the influence of the adoxographic tradition, which favours the praise of the unexpected or ignoble, and the censure of the noble.

139 The father’s questioning of the current status of identity and family roles is reminiscent of Seneca’s Medea and Thyestes. These issues will be explored in detail in the second section of the thesis.
2.5.2.4 Another father-mother-son case

The theme of Pseudo-Quintilian’s tenth Major Declamation is the case of a mother who accuses her husband of maltreatment because he, after consulting a sorcerer, put an end to the visits of their dead son’s ghost to her. The ultimate question that underlies the speech concerns the boundaries of acceptable forms of maternal love. The question eventually is not given a definite answer, but acts as a means for reflection upon such established roles, behaviours and relationships, as those of a mother and a son.

The novelty of the mother’s misfortune is foregrounded at the beginning of the speech:

\[
\text{haec tamen femina neque noto neque publico genere miserabilis non impudenter inter ceteras matres, quae aut unicos aut iuuenes pios filios perdiderunt, eminere et occupare quendam maerentium principatum differentia nouae calamitatis affectat, quae sola omnium supra fidem infelix in uno filio iam alteram patitur orbitatem. (10.1)}
\]

The declaimer’s words reveal an agonistic perception of the mother’s misfortune, and seek to promote her situation as being beyond belief (supra fidem).

The apparently understandable nature of the mother’s complaint is overshadowed by her comment that the father was jealous of the son (misereor feminae, cuius inuidiae totum facinus ascribitur 10.2, and inuidit matri, ne filio frueretur, nec hoc ideo fecit, quia uidere ipse malebat 10.3). The declaimer proceeds to describe the mother’s feelings not only as motherly, but also as of a woman: rogo, quid tam muliebre, quid tam maternum fieri potest? (10.6). Concerns about potentially inappropriate feelings for a mother which might resemble a wife’s or a matron’s are expressed in a straightforward manner: uidentur itaque mulier infelix a dignitatis dolore secedere, quod tam <quam> uxorias in forum querelas et tamquam delicata matronae desideria pertulerit? (10.9). However, these concerns are entertained with the assurance that her complaints befit a mother: ne timueris, quaecumque dignitas es magni doloris; nihil queritur misera nisi par orbitati, nisi matri dignum (10.9). In this mother’s case against what she sees as maltreatment, the declamatory speech appears subtly to fuse manifestations of her maternal love with moments of eroticism, thus promoting reflection upon the boundaries between maternal and erotic love.

2.5.2.5 Father-son

The fourth Major Declamation of pseudo-Quintilian is the case of a son who, according to an astrologer’s prediction to his father, after becoming a war hero will kill his father. The son

\footnote{The eighteenth and nineteenth Major Declamations exclusively deal with a case of a mother and son charged with incest. See Gunderson (2003), 191-226 for a commentary.}

\footnote{This eroticised attitude to maternal love to the extent of questioning the status of her role is also found in Seneca’s Troades, in the characterisation of Andromache and the description of her attitude towards her son Astyanax.}
presents his case for suicide, as a way to avoid parricide. The two declamatory laws which apply to this case are first, that a war hero can request any reward he desires (*uir fortis optet praemium quod uiol*), and second, that a man planning to commit suicide will have his body unburied, unless he provides reasons for his desire before the senate (*qui causas <uoluntariae> mortis in senatu non reddiderit, insepultus abiciatur*). It will be shown that the declamer exploits the conventional tense relationship between declamatory fathers and sons, in order to illustrate a son’s negotiation of his identity in his attempt to re-define his piety towards his father.

The conflict of obligations in the son’s case lies in the fact that, while the law permits suicide as long as he accounts for his decision, his father does not. As a result the son is faced with a situation in which he will be a bad version of a son not only if he defies his father’s wish against his suicide but also even if he obeys his father, since this will lead to the predicted murder of the father. In the usual manner of declamatory speeches, the son stresses the previously unheard-of character of his situation:

\[
dicam \text{ ‘miserimini’? dicam ‘succurrite’? nouo mihi inauditoque opus est ambitu: +malorum+ nisi morior, periclitor, ideo uideor causas reddidisse
\]

(4.21)

Alongside this external conflict, however, the main area of contradiction can be identified in that the son is presented in conflict with his heroic (*uir fortis*) side and the parricidal (*parricida*). The son recognises the contradictory nature of the two sides of himself, and points out that, despite such contradiction, the two sides share the element of violence:

\[
nonne habere tibi grande consortium praedicti uidetur ipsa diuersitas? uirum fortem dixit et parricidam: uicina sunt haec, etiam ut dissimilia, paria uribus, etiam ut mente dissentiant
\]

(4.17)

Their common feature, his warlike virtue, should make the astrologer’s prediction plausible (*fides sceleris virtus fuit* 4.18).

The son thus seeks to establish that his suicide will be one more manifestation of his heroism which will allow him to avoid losing his heroic status due to the predicted parricide. In other words, committing suicide is both a heroic act that will help him remain the war hero that he is, and also an act of disobedience towards his father’s wish, which will, however, allow him to remain a pious son: *ego dicar expugnasse constitutionem, fregisse uincula necessitatis, mea pietas, mea laudatur integritas*. (4.21). Through an aporetic dead end which faces the son, the declamer seeks to articulate the tensions which *patria potestas* creates in the relationship between a father and a pious son; the latter wishes to confirm the heroic status which the very father who helped establish it through the upbringing with which he provided his son, now threatens to shatter.
2.5.3 DECLAMATORY PERFORMANCES AS SPECTACLES OF THE ARENA

In this chapter I suggest that the reality of the arena provides apt metaphors for describing declamatory rhetoric and performances. The compatibility between imagery inspired by the spectacles of the arena and declamatory performances lies in the ludic character of both practices, combining agonism and theatricality.\textsuperscript{142} The feature of ludic displacement in the spectacles of the arena is also important, as the arena provided a sort of 'private space' for practices the natural environment of which was public space. Ultimately the argument developed in this chapter supports further the interpretation of declamatory rhetoric in the light of ludism: on the microscopic level of this section, it enables better comprehension of declamatory rhetoric as a form of play; on the macroscopic level of the entire thesis, it helps make a case for the interpretation of Senecan characterisation along the lines of declamatory ludism, given the high occurrence of gladiatorial imagery in Seneca’s dramas.

The work of the Elder Seneca provides instances of use of images inspired from the reality of the arena to refer to declamatory performances. Here I shall examine two relevant passages. In the last lines of the lengthy preface of the first book of his \textit{Controuersiae}, Seneca states that he will not delay any more the passage to the main section of his book with abstracts from declamatory speeches: \textit{sed iam non sustineo diutius uos morari: scio quam odiosa res mihi sit Circensibus pompa}. \textit{(Contr. 1 pr. 24)}. The last sentence involves an allusion to the spectacles of the arena, which can easily be missed: Seneca compares the delay of the passage to the actual declamatory content of his book with the delay which the processions \textit{(pompa)} cause to the main celebration of the games of the Circus \textit{(ludi Circenses)}. Another similar instance may be found in the preface to the fourth book of his \textit{Controuersiae}. There the Elder Seneca states that novelty is a quality that he wishes to obtain in the composition of his work. To that effect, he says, he will imitate the practice of the trainers of gladiators \textit{(munerarii)}:\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{quote}
Quod munerarii solent facere, qui ad expectationem populi detinendam noua paria per omnes dies dispensant, ut sit, quod populum et delectet et reuocet, hoc ego facio: non omnes ego produco. aliquid noui semper habeat libellus, ut non tantum sententiarum uos sed etiam auctorum nouitate sollicitet.
\end{quote}
\textit{(Contr. 4 pr. 1)}.

Seneca compares the declaimers which will be presented in the course of his books to gladiatorial pairs \textit{(paria)}, and himself to the trainer of gladiators \textit{(munerarius)}, who will present his gladiators \textit{(produco)} in such a way as to keep his audience engaged \textit{(populum et...}

\textsuperscript{142} Ameling (1987), Carter (1999), 122.

\textsuperscript{143} Carter (2006/2007), 105 on the use of gladiatorial metaphors in reference to rhetorical debates.
Both instances of use of gladiatorial images in reference to the practices of declamatory rhetoric appear in prefaces of books of *Controuersiae*. This confers a programmatic force on them inviting one’s understanding of the presentation of the declaimers and (abstracts of) their speeches in terms of a gladiatorial spectacle.

Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* also appears to parallel declamation with mock battles:

> adfici uero et ira uel luctu permoueri cuius est ludibrii nisi quibusdam pugnae simulacris ad uerum discrimen aciemque iustam consuescimus?

(2.10.8)

The broader context of the passage is a discussion on the preparatory role and pre-performative function which declamation should have, unless it degenerates into a meaningless activity. Quintilian describes declamatory performances as mock combats which he juxtaposes to the real battles of the law court. The mention of ‘mock battles’ recalls the highly theatrical nature of the spectacles of the arena, and refers to the character of a declamatory performance as a staged law court procedure.

### 2.6 CONCLUSION

The first section of the thesis has sought to describe declamatory rhetoric in the light of ludism. I have argued that the notion of ludism enables one to conceive of declamation as a displaced form of public discourse, a displacement occasioned by the diminishing freedom of speech under the Imperial regime. As a result, the capacity of pragmatic rhetoric to function as a platform for acting out one’s identity was reduced, and declamatory rhetoric increasingly undertook that function. And while pragmatic rhetoric acted as a means for performing one’s identity, the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric was proposed as providing a form of rehearsal or pre-performance of one’s identity, by which Romans reflected upon moral issues and articulated social anxieties.

I have also been concerned to indicate how declamatory rhetoric participates in the general tendency of Roman culture towards a self-perception and self-fashioning through the textual past. It was argued that declamatory rhetoric demonstrates a ludic approach to the literary tradition, by which it seeks to promote an agonistic re-enactment and ultimately an educative experience of it. The analysis of passages from declamatory speeches showed that their

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144 Note the theatrical connotations of the verb *producere*: *OLD produco*: I.b. of an actor, to present, perform: *nihil ab hoc* (Roscio) *prauum et peruersum produci posse arbitrabantur* (Cic. Rosc. Com. 10.30). The occurrence of the verb *delectare* in reference to the desirable effect of his book on his readers will recall the centrality of pleasing the audience in a declamatory performance.

145 Quintilian’s statement underlies the polarity ‘mock-genuine’ used to refer to the epideictic tendencies of declamation.
ludic nature lies in declamation's combined demonstration of the two aspects of ludism, agonism and theatricality. This combined occurrence of agonism and theatricality was argued to concern declamation both as a performance and as a fiction, whilst the moral reflection was identified mainly in its ludic properties on the level of fiction, the so-called second-level theatricality and agonism. It was finally shown that metaphors inspired from the reality of the arena encapsulate the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric.
3 SENECAN CHARACTERISATION IN THE LIGHT OF DECLAMATORY LUDISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on characterisation in Seneca’s dramas. It will propose that ludism, as it has been applied to declamatory rhetoric, can also be applied to character portrayal in Senecan drama. I aim to present ludism as a concept with the capacity to describe the ways in which declamatory rhetoric has influenced character-portrayal in the dramas of Seneca. Arguing, however, for the existence of ludic elements in compositions which are traditionally called ‘tragedies’ may come across as an oxymoron. It is indeed hard to associate a genre which literary tradition has associated with gravity of content with a term that denotes playfulness, but there are reasons to do so as will be suggested below.

Some sort of ludic features in Senecan drama have already been identified by scholars. For example, Dingel proposes the reading of Senecan drama as playful poetic compositions (ineptiae).\textsuperscript{146} As early as 1947, Marti also argued that Senecan drama belongs in the Cynic serio-comic tradition (σπουδαιογέλοιον).\textsuperscript{147} These interpretative approaches, however, neither capture the ludic nature of Senecan characterisation, as is described in this thesis, nor do they associate it with the popularity of declamatory rhetoric at the time when Seneca composed his dramas. Although playfulness may be identified in the so-called ‘serious’ genres, such as epic poetry and tragedy, it remains a generic feature of lighter poetic genres, such as elegiac and lyric poetry. For instance, the term ‘playfulness’ is consistently used to refer to short poetic compositions, such as those of Catullus or Pliny. As was pointed out in 2.2, however, rendering the term ludism simply as ‘playfulness’ may cause unhelpful misunderstandings. But this does not need to be so.

The concept of declamatory ludism has the capacity to describe the mechanisms by which Seneca’s characters investigate their identities, questioned as they have been by the crises they experience. This process of self-investigation will be shown to have ludic properties, and will be designated as the ‘ludic phase’ of characterisation. The ludic mechanisms in self-investigation is manifest in role-reversals, transgressions of social/family roles, moral inversions etc. The characters’ final course of action, although it defies the moral expectations of established social norms, reflects these ludic mechanisms as an unprecedented form of behaviour. In this way Senecan drama provides an illustration of the tension between conventional values and the new political environment of Imperial times,

\textsuperscript{146} Dingel (1974), 27.

\textsuperscript{147} Marti (1947).
which has rendered them obsolete and which necessitates their replacement by new more Stoic-orientated ones.

Agonism and theatricality, the two related and inter-related aspects of ludism, jointly contribute to the establishment of a ludic context for the process and specific mechanisms of self-investigation to take place and function. 148 Declamatory agonism will be identified with the characters’ negotiation of their identity in an intensely theatricalised environment. This involves the creation of an antagonistic, usually allusive relationship with similar mythological scenarios familiar from the literary tradition, 149 and is designated here as ‘antagonistic intertextuality’. The negotiation of the characters’ identity makes use of anthropological categories familiar from declamatory rhetoric. These categories appear in antithetical combinations which represent supposedly mutually exclusive family/social roles, such as *uir fortis–tyrannus, mater–nouerca* etc., and are used to map the identity of Senecan characters. Reflection upon these conflicting elements of the characters’ identity is articulated through the conception of the dramatic situations in judicial terms. 150

With regard to theatricality, the well-recognised meta-dramatic properties of Senecan drama provide the dramatic space for a self-reflective re-enactment of the characters’ myths. This re-enactment uses the anthropological categories of declamatory rhetoric as channels, by which the allusions to other similar events or figures from the literary tradition are made. 151 Senecan characterisation thus makes use of quasi-dramatic re-enactment of literary scenarios, which allows the characters of any drama to reflect upon their identity within a theatricalised agonistic environment, in order to promote themselves as creating a new and unheard of instance of cruelty, impiety etc. These mechanisms ultimately promote reflection on the content of moral values, such as piety, virtue, heroism etc.

Finally, scholars have drawn attention to the presence of gladiatorial images in Senecan drama. 152 The occurrence of the figure of the gladiator in declamatory rhetoric makes gladiatorial imagery particularly relevant to my argument here, as it provides a double-faced point of contact between declamation on the one side and Senecan drama on the other. The presence of gladiatorial imagery in Senecan drama, and especially in what is designated as

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148 Senecan characters have been interpreted as negative examples, which go against Seneca’s Stoic ethics, and which the student of Senecan drama struggles to integrate within Seneca’s Stoic background. Schiesaro (1997), 100.

149 Garton (1959) discusses the mythical and literary background which Seneca draws upon in the construction of his dramatic characters.

150 Wiener (2006) explores the issue of decision-making and of free will in Senecan characterisation.


the ludic phase of characterisation, will be interpreted as a manifestation of the ludic element which informs characterisation. The parallel between a declaimer and a gladiator, or between a declamatory performance and a gladiatorial spectacle attested in ancient rhetorical tradition, supports and justifies the use of declamatory mechanisms in Senecan characterisation, while the use of the gladiator as a metaphor for the Stoic sage also makes plausible a case for ludism having the capacity to highlight an educative strand in them.

Scholars such as Frank and Borgo have pointed out the emphatic use of family terms in Seneca’s dramas.\textsuperscript{153} Pratt seems to come close to the recognition of the function stock characters proposed in this thesis, when he points out that declamatory characters are ‘the forebears of the [Seneca’s] dramatic characters’, and that they are not delineated as living individuals but are created as voices of attitudes and emotions that serve the dramatists’ purposes.\textsuperscript{154} With regards negotiation in Senecan drama, Brandt has discusses the argumentative structure of \textit{Phaedra} and \textit{Agamemnon} following a formalistic approach,\textsuperscript{155} while Wiener points out the contribution of a judicial conception in the development of the characters’ passionate behaviours.\textsuperscript{156} None of those studies, however, identify any structured pattern with a specific function in the use of these declamatory anthropological categories. On the issue of the function of Senecan characterisation, Tietze argues that it is based on \textit{inconstantia} (inconsistency), which becomes manifest in expressions of uncertainty.\textsuperscript{157} I aim to take that argument one step further: the very mechanisms in which the characters’ inconsistency is articulated allow us to recognise declamatory ludism at work, as it creates dramatic space and exploits it for reflection upon the moral issues which these mechanisms help investigate.

### 3.2 PHAEDRA

The ludic properties of Seneca’s \textit{Phaedra} are to be seen in the characterisation of the three main characters, namely Phaedra, Hippolytus and Theseus. I will suggest that these characters are engaged in a process of investigation of their own and each other’s identity on various occasions throughout the drama, until their identity is fixed and the search for it is, therefore, finalised. Essential to the ludic treatment of Phaedra’s characterisation is the emphasis on her attitude and reaction to the events and circumstances, rather than on the events and circumstances themselves. This is reflected in the characters’ measurable awareness and knowledge of them. It is worth mentioning that in Euripides’ \textit{Ἱππόλυτος}, the


\textsuperscript{154} Pratt (1983), 152. See also the entire chapter 6, pages 150-163 entitled ‘Rhetorical drama’ for a general discussion of the role of declamatory rhetoric in Senecan drama.

\textsuperscript{155} Brandt (1986).

\textsuperscript{156} Wiener (2006).

\textsuperscript{157} Tietze (1987)
Euripidean play which treats the same myth, the dramatic characters do not take circumstances for granted: the nurse, for example, is not aware of the cause of Phaedra’s mental breakdown, and Phaedra is secretive about it at first.

Indeed the first scene in our play of the encounter between Phaedra and the nurse has both characters declaring explicitly their knowledge of the problematic situation: the nurse is already aware of Phaedra’s circumstances, and Phaedra’s words refer to these circumstances as something which does not require any clarifications. Phaedra’s words indicate her ability to place her inappropriate erotic passion for her stepson Hippolytus in a genealogy of misfortunes originating from her mother Pasiphae fatale misereae matris agnosco malum (113), who gave birth to Minotaur after having sexual intercourse with a bull. Line peccare noster nudit in siluis amor (114) demonstrates this self-conscious attitude of hers towards the specifics of her own and of other evils in her family.

The nurse’s words in lines 171-2 fatale malum are even more revealing than Phaedra’s, as she is also aware of Phaedra’s passion. She overtly explains the consequences of Phaedra’s passion, that is, throwing into confusion the beds of father and son, Theseus and Hippolytus, and conceiving in her impious womb the offspring of the confounded love between herself and Hippolytus: miscere thalamos patris et gnati apparas / uteroque prolem capere confusam impio? (171-2). Thus the encounter between Phaedra and the nurse takes place on the premise that they are both aware of Phaedra’s feelings for her stepson.

3.2.1 LUDIC ACTIVITIES AND CHARACTERISATION IN PHAEDRA

In the first section of the thesis I showed how the element of play can be traced in various cultural activities, which thus mark these activities as ludic, among them being as diverse practices as judicial procedures or spectacles of the arena. It was also indicated that declamatory rhetoric has features of play, which allow one to conceive of it as a form of cultural play. Our search for the ludic properties of Phaedra’s characterisation will start by identifying instances of the use of gladiatorial imagery and terms with judicial connotations.

The prologue of the drama establishes the figure of Hippolytus-as-a-hunter, thus paving the way for the introduction of gladiatorial imagery in the drama. As Casamento points out,
Hippolytus’ universe is ludic and serious at the same time. In the first act Phaedra describes how her passionate love for her stepson Hippolytus makes her want to become a huntress *iuuat excitatas consequi cursu feras / et rigida molli gaesa iaculari manu* (110-11). These words acquire special significance, as Phaedra’s speech follows Hippolytus’ hunting song (1-84) inviting the identification of gladiatorial imagery. With Hippolytus being presented as a hunter right from the beginning, Phaedra’s desire also to become a huntress, whose prey will turn out to be Hippolytus, suggests that the two become opponents in a agonistic encounter which echoes gladiatorial spectacles.

In the scene of Phaedra’s confession, Hippolytus uses the word *arbitrium*, when confirming (ironically) as she requests that there is no one else present. The judicial connotations of the word confer another sense onto what at first sight appears to be only a scene. It is as if we were in the presence of a judge, which provides a first instance of the characters’ judicialised conception of the circumstances. The lines preceding Phaedra’s confession add to the sense of the situation being presented in judicial terms: *PH. te te, soror, quacumque siderei poli in parte fulges, inuoco ad causam parem* (663-4). Being aware of the sinful character of her feelings, Phaedra attempts to suppress or disguise by invoking her katasterised sister Ariadne in support of her case. She points out that the similarity of their cases is due to Ariadne’s corruption by Theseus - just as Phaedra has been corrupted by Theseus’ son Hippolytus: *domus sorores una corrripuit duas / te genitor, at me gnatus* (665-6). The occurrence of judicial term *causa* (judicial procedure) deserves special attention here, as it shows that Phaedra conceives of her situation in a judicial manner. A few lines later, and after Phaedra has confessed her passionate love to Hippolytus, the nurse embarks on a monologue, trying to find a way to cover up the situation by falsely accusing Hippolytus of Phaedra’s rape. Her monologue features a number of judicial terms in reference to

Hippolytus’ hunting song, according to which the song establishes a relationship of the ‘hunter-hunted’ between him and Phaedra. In that sense, it prepares the audience for what follows. The interpretation of the drama in the light of declamatory ludism finds support in the views of both scholars: Hippolytus’ hunting song immediately followed by Phaedra helps establish a ludic relationship between them, which is articulated by agonistic imagery inspired from the reality of the arena. For the use of animal imagery in the drama see Paschalis (1994).


163 Note that the infinitive form *iaculari* recalls the term *iaculum*, which has a gladiatorial sense *TLL iaculum* vol. VII.i 77, 82-4 *rete gladiatorium: in gladiatorio ludo contra alterum pugnamentem retiarius ferebat occulte rete, quod iaculum appellatur* (Isid. orig. 18,54). Note also that *iaculator* is attested with the judicial sense of accuser in Juv. 7.193 *felix orator quoque maximus et iaculator*.

164 See the relevant entry in the *TLL arbitrium* vol. II 410, 19-20; 26-27 *disceptatio aequi (sententia vel iudicium arbitri); Cic. off. 3,70 Scaeuola summam uim esse dicebat in ... iiis arbitris, in quibus adderetur ‘ex fide bona’.*
Phaedra’s case. In the passage 719-24, judicial vocabulary is found in almost every single line: *deprenda* (719), *crimen* (720), *arguamus* (721), *testis* (724). These, together with the terms *arbitrium* and *causa* encountered earlier, invite a judicial understanding of the confession scene, and of Phaedra herself as the defendant.

3.2.2 INVESTIGATING PHAEDRA’S IDENTITY AND METATHEATRE

The second act (360-735) opens with the nurse describing the physical and psychological symptoms of Phaedra’s passion. Phaedra is introduced in this act in an intensely theatrical manner: the doors of the palace open (*sed en, patescunt regiae fastigia* 384), and Phaedra appears on stage reclining on the cushions of her gilded chair, marking the entire act as highly metatheatrical. The metatheatrical properties of the act are maintained further in the encounter between Phaedra and Hippolytus. Phaedra asks Hippolytus to make sure that they are alone, before she reveals her secret feelings for him, *si quis est abeat comes* (600), and Hippolytus confirms that there is no one to watch them, *en locus ab omni liber arbitrio uacat* (600). This statement can be interpreted as a metatheatrical comment on the particular occasion, since the scene has already been marked as theatrical by the nurse’s words (384). Within this framework of theatricality Phaedra embarks on an investigation of her identity. The following paragraphs will analyse the other aspect of ludism which is involved in characterisation in Seneca’s *Phaedra*, namely agonism.

3.2.3 PHAEDRA IN A MATRIX OF ABSTRACT SOCIAL ROLES

As was pointed out above, Seneca’s *Phaedra* demonstrates an emphasis on the characters’ attitude and reaction to the current circumstances and events, rather than on the circumstances and events themselves. This particular interest in the effect of the circumstances on attitudes and reactions ultimately on characterisation takes the form of stripping characters of their mythological specifics, and emphasising their social or family roles. One relevant example can be found in the dialogue between Phaedra and the nurse, which does not seek to expose Phaedra’s reasons for her mental state, as these are already known; it rather seeks to articulate the mechanisms of investigation of Phaedra’s identity, family and social status with regard to the current crisis.

This it does by placing emphasis on terms by which her identity is defined: the nurse addresses Phaedra as ‘Theseus’ wife’ and ‘Jove’s illustrious progeny’, *Thesea coniunx, clara progenies luis* (129). Only a few lines later (141-55), she mentions other members of Phaedra’s family without using their names, but with the same emphasis on their

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165 TLL *deprehendo* vol. V.i. 604, 60-1; 78-80 *capere eos qui clam scelestique agunt eoque conuincere, sed sensu modo opprimendi, modo detegendi patefaciendi*; Quint. *decl. 284*, p. 149,17 *an sacerdos adhuc fuerit deprehensus id est, an eo momento, quo deprehensus est, perdiderit ius sacerdotis.*

166 TLL *arguo* vol. II 551, 61; 65-66 *ostendere, patefacere, manifestare culpam*; Ulp. *dig.* 50,16,197 *indicasse est detulisse; arguisse accusasse et conuicisse.*
family/social roles. In this passage, which illustrates a preference for stripping Phaedra of her specifics, and for focusing on her status as member of a family, the nurse tries to persuade her against surrendering to her passion. She invokes Phaedra as daughter of Pasiphae, whom she will surpass in monstrosity with her love for her Hippolytus (superasque matrem); as someone whose absent husband will return to find out his wife’s mischievous behaviour (quod maritus supera non cernit loca); as a daughter whose father is the judge of people (quid ille, lato maria qui regno premit / populisque reddit iura centenis, pater); and finally as a grandchild whose grandfather (pater matris) sheds light on the world from above.

A similar tendency can be found in lines 242-5. In their encounter centred on Phaedra’s passion for Hippolytus, the nurse’s arguments and Phaedra’s counter-arguments rely upon terms which describe the social matrix which surrounds Phaedra, and the concomitant ethical expectations: when the nurse reminds her of her father (patris memento), Phaedra responds that she also remembers her mother (meminimus matris simul; Pasiphae’s sexual encounter with a bull has also been mentioned earlier). The occurrence of simul (at the same time) indicates that the two opposite courses of action available to Phaedra, the moral and the immoral, are presented in the light of her father and of her mother respectively, and suggest the aporetic situation in which Phaedra has found herself. Similarly, when the nurse warns her of her husband’s return (aderit maritus), Phaedra’s response (nempe Pirithoi comes) is an allusion to Theseus’ infidelity, in his endeavour together with Pirithous to abduct queen Proserpina from the Underworld. Again Phaedra’s role as a wife is determined by her husband’s contradictory attitudes, that is, conjugal piety as opposed to infidelity. Finally the nurse’s second invocation to Phaedra’s father (aderit genitor) is met with a response similar to the one about her husband (mitis Ariadnae pater). Phaedra’s response is an allusion to the myth of her sister Ariadne, who was abandoned by Theseus. This is also an indication of Phaedra’s ludic perception of her current situation as a repetition of a past event with Theseus being involved again. Since her father was lenient with Ariadne, then Phaedra can expect his leniency in her case too. In this way Phaedra’s passion is examined in the light of her being a character defined emphatically by her position within a social matrix.

The dialogue between the nurse and Hippolytus provides similar instances of emphasis on social roles. The nurse attempts to change Hippolytus’ views on mingling with people and on celibacy (553-65). Hippolytus, however, insists on the immorality of life in the civilised cities. In order to make his point stronger, he claims that every immoral action would find its example in cities, nullum caruit exemplo nefas (554): brother murders brother, child murders brother.

167 Note also the nurse’s comment on the importance of will to avoid passionate behaviour.
168 Casamento (2011), 163 also points out the use of family language ‘linguaggio familiare’.
169 Note the judicial connotation of aderit (adsum, to appear before a tribunal) cf. Cic. Verr. 2.1.1 C. Verrem altera actione responsurum non esse, neque ad iudicium adfuturum ... quod iste certe statuerat non adesse.
parent, the wife her husband and mothers their children. Hippolytus eliminates any specific details in a manner reminiscent of declamatory rhetoric, and with the mythical figures deprived of their mythological specifics (excluding their social roles), he accumulates mythological examples of family nefas. These involves allusions to the following fictions:\textsuperscript{170} the myth of Atreus and Thyestes or Eteocles and Polyneices (\textit{frater a fratre}), the myth of Clytemnestra and Orestes or Oedipus and Laius (\textit{dextera gnati parens cecidit}), the myth of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (\textit{maritus coniugis ferro iacet}), the myth of Medea (\textit{perimuntque fetus impiae matres suos}), and the myth of Helen and the Trojan war (\textit{huius incestae stupri / fumant tot orbes, bella tot gentes gerunt / et uersa ab imo regna tot populos premunt}).

3.2.4 NEGOTIATING PHAEDRA'S IDENTITY

This investigation employs the abstract social/family terms, so much so that characters Phaedra and other characters tend to be stripped of their specifics, and to only matter as social roles, and in relation to their attitude towards social power. I suggest that we can categorise these interactions as ludic when they engage the abstract social/family terms in an agonistic process of negotiating the characters’ involvement in establishing identities. When Hippolytus addresses Phaedra by the name ‘mother’, \textit{comitte curas auribus, mater, meis} (608), she denies the appropriateness of that name for the kind of feelings which she fosters for Hippolytus: \textit{matris superbum est nomen et nimium potens: / nostros humiliss nomen affectus decet} (609-10). The name which she proposes instead is striking for its implications for her social status: \textit{me uel sororem, Hippolyte, uel famulam uoca, / famulamque potius: omne seruitium feram} (611-2).\textsuperscript{171} Phaedra’s words demonstrate her willingness to be called Hippolytus’ sister or even slave, sacrificing thus her social status as queen. Her proposed slavery, as well as hinting at erotic subservience, is not without consequences for the entire house of Theseus either, as it puts into question Theseus’ \textit{patria potestas}.

Phaedra moreover raises doubts about Theseus’ \textit{patria potestas}, and her eagerness to undermine it may be gathered from her words in lines (621-23). There she appears to kindle Hippolytus’ desire to replace his father Theseus in power, \textit{ciues paterno fortis imperio rege}. Questioning and subverting his father’s \textit{patria potestas}, however, suggest Hippolytus’ own underlying tyrannical tendencies.\textsuperscript{172} At the same time her words further confirm the

\textsuperscript{170} See also Casamento (2011), 190-91 on these allusions.

\textsuperscript{171} Casamento (2011), 195-6 argues that this scene is modelled on Ovid’s episode of Byblis who fell in love with her twin brother Caunus (\textit{Met. 9.454-665}), hence Phaedra’s reference to the possibility of her being called sister (\textit{soror}) by Hippolytus.

\textsuperscript{172} Roisman (2000), 77-83 points out that Hippolytus’ words in the prologue and in his encounter with the nurse suppressed violent urges. This point will be developed further in the section on the negotiation of Hippolytus’ identity.
subversion of her own status, since she will now become a slave, *sinu receptam supplicem ac seruam tege*, with Hippolytus becoming the master.

Phaedra also attempts to explain to Hippolytus the misfortune which has been inflicted on her. She recognises that it is of such a nature as one would not expect to afflict a stepmother, *quod in nouercam cadere uix credas malum* (638). The juxtaposition of these two passages suggests that the binary upon which the investigation of Phaedra’s identity relies is *mater–nouerca*, which has been shown in the first section of the thesis to describe the appropriate or inappropriate behaviour of a *materfamilias* in declamation. In our case Phaedra is actually Hippolytus’ stepmother, and consequently not his mother. The nature of her feelings for Hippolytus, however, fails to meet the expectations of (and is therefore inappropriate for) either a mother or a stepmother. Neither of the two roles justify her feelings towards him: her passionate love is not appropriate for a mother on the one hand, and on the other, love (of any sort) is not appropriate for a stepmother either. As a result Phaedra’s portrayal is that of a character trapped in between irreconcilable roles with conflicting expectations. At the same time, her statement, a comment on the incredible nature of Phaedra’s passion, invites an approach to Phaedra’s characterisation and the broader context of her circumstances along the lines of the adoxographical tradition.

3.2.5 PHAEDRA’S TRANSGRESSION OF THE ROLE OF MOTHER

The ludic properties of the process involve the element of agonism. This section will identify and analyse aspects of agonism in the antagonistic allusions to other similar mythological figures and fictions. \(^{173}\) The nurse points out that Phaedra may even overcome her mother in monstrosity by the impious relationship with her stepson: *quo, misera, pergis? quid domum infamem aggraus / superasque matrem?* (142-3). The occurrence of the abstract family term *matrem*, however, combined with the verb *supero* can yield the meaning ‘you transgress the role of the mother’. Such an interpretation may find support in the first allusion to a mythological mother, Jocaste, as will be explored in what follows.

Indeed this antagonistic attitude is further pursued, as Phaedra’s words indicate, when she is in search of the appropriate form of death to inflict on herself: *decreta mors est: quaeritur fati genus. / laqueone uitam finiam an ferro incubem / an missa praeceps arce Palladia cadam?* (258-60). The alternatives which are available to her are presented by means of allusions to figures who committed suicide: killing herself with a rope can be an allusion to Jocaste’s suicide, when her incestuous relationship with her son was revealed; throwing herself onto a sword may be an allusion to Lucretia, who committed suicide following Sextus Tarquinius’

\(^{173}\) Olechowska (1979) discusses the echo of the Livian Lucretia in the characterisation of Seneca’s Phaedra. See Grimal (1963) on the place of Seneca’s portrayal of Phaedra in the literary tradition. See also Gahan (1987) on imitation and emulation in Seneca’s treatment of the last scene of the drama, which echoes the end of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. 
sexual advances. Finally throwing herself from a citadel may be an allusion to the myth of Astyanax, who was thrown down the citadel of Troy by the victorious Argives. The allusions to these exemplary figures articulate Phaedra’s ambiguous moral status, and they reflect the various ways in which her morality can be evaluated, namely as an incestuous mother as Jocaste was, as a death-defying figure as Astyanax, or as a chaste wife as Lucretia etc. I suggest that these allusive statements are instances of meta-cognitive regulation seeking to establish Phaedra’s identity. These instances of meta-cognitive regulation encountered while Phaedra’s identity has not been established indicate that her portrayal before her identity has been fixed is a ludic pre-performance of herself.

3.2.6 THE NON-LUDIC INVESTIGATION OF HIPPOLYTUS’ AND THESEUS’ IDENTITIES

As has been noted, although the drama illustrates primarily Phaedra’s ludic process of investigation of identity, this is accomplished in relation to the investigation of Theseus’ and Hippolytus’ identities. This means that the process of establishing her own identity relies on establishing their identity first. Precisely because Hippolytus and Theseus are not themselves in the process of investigating their identity, but rather undergo this as a result of Phaedra’s own search for establishing her identity, the process of investigation of their identity is not ludic. In other words, they engage in a process of enquiring their identities not voluntarily, but externally imposed. Hippolytus and Theseus’ investigation of identities may use declamatory anthropological categories as mechanisms of classifying behaviour, as we shall see. The manner in which these mechanisms are manipulated, however, does not add up to a ludic approach to the process of establishing their identities.

The exchange between Phaedra and Hippolytus introduces the investigation of Hippolytus’ identity, which relies on the antithetical binary filius pius–filius luxuriatus. In the declamatory universe, a filius pius is one who reproduces his father’s patria potestas, whereas one who does not can be represented by the negative figure of the filius luxuriatus. Phaedra’s words imply that Hippolytus may act as someone desiring to subvert patria potestas by taking the place of his father. Hippolytus, however, rejects her propositions and responds to Phaedra’s approach in terms recalling rhetorical invention: scelerique tanto uisus ego solus tibi / materia facilis? (685-6). With these words Hippolytus refuses to act as a filius luxuriatus, seeking rather to remain a filius pius. He also uses the word materia to refer to himself, as he accuses Phaedra of seeking to exploit him as easy material for her incestuous desires to come true. The term materia recalls the process of rhetorical invention, and refers to the

174 Our declamatory collections preserve the theme of a woman being thrown down a precipice to prove her chastity by whether or not a god would save her from the fall (Contr. 1.3). It is tempting to see Phaedra fitting in the role of the woman, particularly because the context of this passage concerns her lack of chastity that should be punished.

175 Fantham (1975) identifies elements of Virgil’s Dido in several Senecan female characters, among them being Phaedra.
subject matter upon which one exerts his skills in invention.\textsuperscript{176} In this manner, he also seeks to establish himself as a pious son.

A number of passages, however, make a case for ‘reading’ Hippolytus as a \textit{filius luxuriatus}, with the nurse’s plot aiming at presenting him as a \textit{raptor}. When Hippolytus threatens to kill Phaedra after the confession of her passion, and then runs away, the nurse summons the people of Athens, falsely accusing him of Phaedra’s rape: \textit{nefandi raptor Hippolytus stupri / instat premitque} (726-7). To this may also be added Theseus’ response to the news of his son’s death: \textit{gnatum pares obisse iam pridem scio; / nunc raptor obiit} (998-9). This articulates most clearly the binary underlying the negotiation of Hippolytus’ identity: on the one hand Hippolytus is presented as a rapist (\textit{raptor}), an instance of \textit{luxuria}, and, therefore, providing a negative illustration of a son, and on the other, as a pious son (\textit{gnatus}). We should also note the ambiguity of Hippolytus’ words a few lines later (632-3), where he seems to second Phaedra’s encouragement (\textit{te merebor esse ne uerum putes / ac tibi parentis ipse supplebo locum}) or at least this is how his words are perceived by Phaedra due to her passionate state of mind.\textsuperscript{177} Nonetheless, Hippolytus does not explore his own identity in a ludic manner; rather, he resists Phaedra’s attempts to render him ludic.

Finally Theseus’ identity is also entangled in Phaedra’s investigation of identity. He promotes the image of a father and husband who seeks to maintain the balance of his family. Phaedra, however, points out the destructive effect which Theseus’ behaviour has had on his family, as both his father and his son have paid for his return with their lives: \textit{gnatus et genitor nece / reditus tuos luere} (1164-7). Also his love or hatred for his wives have overturned his house: \textit{peruertis domum / amore semper coniugum aut odio nocens}. There are here allusions to the death of Aegeus, and to Theseus’ relationships with Hippolyte and Ariadne. The ‘situational proximity’ of all these instances makes him a bad \textit{paterfamilias}, as they indicate his part in the subversion of the balance of his family structure.\textsuperscript{178} Interestingly, he as Hippolytus’ father is juxtaposed to that of Hippolytus’ stepmother, Phaedra: \textit{audite, Athenae, tuque, funesta pater / peior nouerca} (1191-2). According to Phaedra, Theseus’ treatment of his son is so

\textsuperscript{176} See \textit{TLL materia vol. VIII} 459, 36-8; 52; 65 \textit{de ea re, quae uerbis uel scriptis tractatur; a in omni arte rhetoric\ae} Cic. \textit{Inu. 1,5 dicendum de genere ipsius artis rhetoric\ae, de officio, de fine, de materia, de partibus; b in declamationibus earumque partibus; Quint. \textit{Inst. 1,10,33 ad declamandum ficta materia}. Note also two further passages from Quintilian’s \textit{Institutio Oratoria} 7,5, 13, \textit{luctari cum materia} and \textit{paene repugnante materia}, which both involve agonistic imagery in reference to the process of invention.

\textsuperscript{177} Casamento (2011), 197 also notes the ambiguity of Hippolytus’ words. The motif of the son replacing his father reflects the traditionally tense relationship between declamatory fathers and sons.

\textsuperscript{178} Casamento (2011), 247 ‘prossimità situazionale’.
cruel that it would suit a stepmother.\textsuperscript{179} Even Theseus himself seconds her words in an ironic manner. Despite being the parent of Hippolytus, he learns how to treat his dead son from a stepmother: \textit{quid facere rapto debeas gnato parens, / disce a nouerca.} (1199-200).

Theseus’ portrayal as a cruel tyrant in a number of instances establishes his status as a bad \textit{paterfamilias}. One such instance is when he threatens to torture the nurse, in order to force Phaedra to reveal the reasons of her suffering: \textit{uerberum uis extrahat / secreta mentis} (884-5). It may also be no coincidence that in Seneca’s treatment of the myth there is not any interaction between Theseus and Hippolytus prior to Theseus cursing his son. Theseus’ tyrannical disposition and his portrayal as a tyrant may have contributed to the absence of any dialogical scene between father and son: unlike in Euripides’ version of the myth, where Hippolytus defends himself in front of his father, Seneca’s depiction of Theseus as a tyrant explains the lack of interest in what the \textit{altera pars} – that is, Hippolytus – has to say regarding the current crisis.

3.3 HERCULES FURENS

Seneca’s treatment of Hercules’ madness provides a new take on the role of the hero’s labours. The mythological tradition usually presents the labours as a means for Hercules to expiate himself for slaughtering his family, while under the influence of madness which was sent on him by Juno. In Seneca’s version of the myth, however, the labours precede Hercules’ crime, and are the result of Juno’s hatred for Hercules.\textsuperscript{180} Seneca’s treatment of Hercules’ madness relies on this deviation in order to provide a ludic re-enactment of Hercules’ myth.

3.3.1 HERCULES’ MADNESS AS A SPECTACLE OF THE ARENA

The ludic nature of Seneca’s \textit{Hercules Furens} relies on the expressed ambiguity of his identity, and gladiatorial imagery is exploited to articulate the process of investigating his identity. Juno appears to act as a directorial character in the drama: her speech which opens the drama establishes a framework of intense metatheatrical properties, within which Hercules’ myth is re-enacted. The agonistic element is introduced through Juno’s portrayal as being in search of the appropriate opponent with whom to pair Hercules: \textit{quaeris Alcidae parem? / nemo est nisi ipse: bella iam secum gerat.} (84-5). The word \textit{parem} recalls the neuter noun \textit{par} which refers to a gladiatorial pair.\textsuperscript{181} Moreover, the reference to the agonistic

\textsuperscript{179} Note \textit{Decl. Mai.} 6, where a mother is compared with a stepmother on account of her harsh attitude towards her dead son’s body.

\textsuperscript{180} A stepmother’s hatred for her stepson is a recurring motif in the tradition of declamation, which was also identified in Seneca’s treatment of Phaedra’s passionate love for her stepson Hippolytus. See Watson (1995) on the figure of stepmother in declamation.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{OLD ecce tibi geminum in scelere par} (Cic. \textit{Phil.} 11.1.2).
element of Hercules' encounter with himself *(bella secum gerat)* suggests that Juno perceives Hercules' battle with himself as a gladiatorial duel.

Not only Hercules but also Juno appears to be involved in the gladiatorial imagery of the play. Juno's directorial role can also be interpreted in the light of gladiatorial imagery, and Juno herself can be seen as the producer of gladiatorial spectacles *(munerarius)*, as her words suggest: she complains about the fact that she is running out of monsters with which to attack Hercules, since he always conquers whichever she sends onto him: *monstra iam desunt mihi / minorque labor est Herculi iussa exsequi, / quam mihi iubere* (40-2). The quotation from Juno's speech cited in the last paragraph also provides another instance of Juno being portrayed as a *munerarius*, as she appears to wonder with whom she should pair Hercules, in order to achieve his defeat. These statements are made within the ludic context of theatricality and agonism with Juno being presented in such a manner as to resemble the co-coordinator of a spectacle of the arena, and with Hercules engaging in a gladiatorial battle with himself.  

3.3.2 KNOWING HERCULES?

Seneca's *Hercules Furens* demonstrates an emphasis on Hercules' identity, and more importantly on the other characters' claims of awareness of it. Throughout the drama the various characters assert their knowledge of Hercules' identity, with the frequent use of the verb *nosco* (or its compounds) suggesting the significance of the issue. This asserted knowledge concerns the ambiguity of Hercules' identity, of which these characters do not appear to always be aware, and which nonetheless crops up in their words.

It is interesting to note here that when Megara prays for Hercules' return she uses words which also suggest Hercules' violent nature:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{talis, parentes liberos patriam petens,} \\
\text{erumpe rerum terminos tecum efferens,} \\
\text{et quidquid auida tot per annorum gradus} \\
\text{abscondit aetas rede et oblitos sui} \\
\text{lucisque pauidos ante te populos age}
\end{align*}
\]

(289-93)

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182 It is worth mentioning that Henry-Walker (1965), 18 characterise the scene of the murder of Hercules' children by their own father as 'ludicrous', although their interpretation is only remotely related to the ludic interpretation proposed in this thesis.

183 For instance (622-5) AMPH. *O nate, certa at sera Thebarum salus, / teneone in auras editum an uana fruur / deceptus umbra? tune es? agnosco toros / umerosque et alto nobile in trunco caput. (642-3) TH. si noui Herculem, / Lycus Creonti debitas poenas dabit.*
In particular the phrase *erumpe rerum terminos tecum efferens* which literally means ‘burst forth taking with you the boundaries of nature’, could also be interpreted as an allusion to Hercules’ shattering the boundaries of the roles which literary tradition has assigned to him as a *uir fortis* and a *tyrannus/affectator tyrannidis*, and upon which the negotiation of his true identity relies throughout the play, thus resignifying himself. In that sense Megara’s words can be seen as an instruction to Hercules for meta-cognitive regulation in the ludic performance of his identity.

The dramatic characters in *Hercules Furens* are also presented as aware of Juno’s hatred for Hercules, and they demonstrate this knowledge on several instances, such as when Amphitryo defends Hercules’ divine birth (*mentimur Iouem? / lunonis odio crede, 446-7*), and at the end of the play when he defends Hercules for his slaying his family (*luctus est istic tuus, / crimen nouercae, 1200-1*). Even Hercules demonstrates an awareness of his situation:

> in poenas meas
> atque in labores non satis terrae patent
> lunonis odio

*(608-10)*

In Euripides’ treatment of the myth, Hera’s wrath is only introduced in the middle of the play, and only through the presence of Lyssa and Iris, as Hera herself never appears on stage. Seneca’s version of Hercules’ myth can be seen as presenting a ludic repetition of Juno’s hatred in her ultimate attempt to conquer Hercules, as her words reveal:

> uota mutentur mea:
> natos reuersus uideat incolumes pater
> manuque fortis redeat

*(112-4)*

The word *mutentur* suggests that her original plans were different, possibly with the agent of destruction of Hercules’ family not being himself, and the challenge would have been for Hercules to deal with his loss. In that sense the change of her plans requires that the children remain safe, and that Hercules himself be *fortis manu*. In the light of the declamatory binary *uir fortis* (hero)–*affectator tyrannidis* (one who strives for tyranny)/*tyrannus* which helps in negotiating Hercules’ identity, the use of the phrase *fortis manu* by Juno is a clear association of with that binary, and may also have a certain degree of irony. This last requirement is essential, since Juno states that she will employ the best opponent for Hercules, namely himself *quaeris Alcidae parem? / nemo est nisi ipse: bella iam secum gerat. (84-5)*.
The metatheatrical qualities of the drama rely on Juno’s claims of a change in her plans: she now stages a play in which Hercules will perform what his mythological identity demands. Passages from Juno’s monologue (Herc 92-104) are rather indicative: the directorial instructions abound in this passage. Starting with reuocabo...discordem deam (call back) and educam ... et imo extraham quidquid relictum est (bring on), which suggest an intense metatheatrical awareness, other terms such as incipite, famulae Ditis, hoc agite compose a picture of Juno as a director of the play, which we will watch in its full effect from the second act onwards.\(^{184}\) The verb re-uocabo introduces the feature of repetition, thus suggesting that the drama illustrates a ludic characterisation of Hercules.

Declamatory ludism in Hercules’ characterisation also manifests itself in antagonistic allusions to other mythological fictions and figures. Let us look at two such instances. The first one is far from obvious, and the relevant passage has puzzled commentators. At the end of the second act, after his exchange with Amphitryo and Megara, as he is about to depart Lycus says: ego, dum cremandis trabibus accrescit rogus / sacro regentem maria uotiuo colam (514-5). Lycus’ exit in order to offer a sacrifice to Neptune has been associated with the traditional ending of a scene with a sacrifice in tragedy. However, as Fitch points out ‘it is unclear what debt Lycus is paying with this sacrifice’.\(^{185}\) He concludes that the reason behind this sacrifice is the traditional relationship between that god and figures of that name, and mentions Hyginus who calls this Lycus a son of Neptune (Fab. 31,32). Such an interpretation is very close to the tendency in declamatory rhetoric to fuse mythological figures on the basis of the elimination of their specifics.

In the light of the declamatory fusion of figures, these lines also promote the fusion of Neptune’s son, Lycus, killed by Hercules, and Neptune’s son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, blinded by Odysseus. Ultimately this fusion promotes an allusion to Odysseus, with whom Hercules is compared on the basis of the return to the homeland, in order to re-establish the lost social and family status quo, the former by killing Lycus, and the latter by killing the suitors of Penelope. There is clear irony, however, in these antagonistic allusions, since Odysseus did re-establish the lost social and family balance, whereas Hercules undermined it murdering his wife and children. This interpretation finds support by Amphitryo’s words a few lines earlier, when in defending Hercules’ heroism he points out: qui tamen nullo stupro / laesere thalamos (488-9). This point makes sense in the light of the binary uir fortis-tyrannus/affectator tyrannidis, on which Hercules’ identity is mapped. Since sexual licence is a tyrannical feature, Amphitryo’s statement about Hercules’s marital loyalty seeks to promote him as a uir fortis. His statement, however, may well be taken as an allusion to Odysseus, who, while away from his marital chambers, was not faithful to his wife Penelope, as Homer

\(^{184}\) Shelton (1975) has argued that the temporal frame of Juno’s prologue partly overlaps with the acts of the drama, so that Juno is the internal audience of what the rest of the drama illustrates. This further confirms Juno’s directorial role.

\(^{185}\) Fitch (1987), 250. A similar view is also expressed by Billerbeck (1999), 376.
relates that he slept with Circe, when he strayed on her island, as well as Calypso on hers. Again, irony underlies this statement, since Hercules may have been faithful to Megara, but murdered her upon his return, whereas Odysseus, who was not, returned to a happy married life. Furthermore, these words may serve as an allusion to other mythological unfaithful husbands, such as Theseus or Jason, who also had a destructive effect on the structure of their family similar to that of Hercules.

3.3.3 HERCULES’ AMBIGUOUS IDENTITY

The ambiguity of Hercules’ identity is initially exploited in Juno’s opening monologue. Juno, who seeks to conquer Hercules, complains that he has carried out every sort of labour she has assigned to him, in such a way as to turn them into sources of glory for himself: *dum nimis saeua impero, / patrem probau, gloriae feci locum.* (35-6). Hercules’ moral ambiguity though arises from the mutual exclusiveness of the categories *uir fortis* (hero)—*affectator tyrannidis*/*tyrannus* (tyrant), a declamatory antithetical binary, on which his identity is mapped.

Juno’s opening speech illustrates her hostility towards Hercules, and provides an insight into the negative side of Hercules. Her words describe Hercules as someone who aspires to obtain a place in the heavens (*quaerit ad superos uiam*, 74), thus threatening to throw into disorder the social and political status quo: *timendum est, regna ne summa occupet* (63-4). Furthermore, according to Juno, Hercules also seeks to overthrow Jove’s *patria potestas*: *sceptra praeripiet patri* (65). These remarks compose a negative picture of a haughty Hercules *magna meditantem* (75) with a strong political colouring which can be well summarised by the declamatory category of the *affectator tyrannidis*. Indeed Hercules’ words confirm such an interpretation: when he has been inflicted by the *furor* sent by Juno,186 his desire to undermine the heavenly *patria potestas* comes to the fore: *contraque patris impii regnum impotens auum resoluum* (966-7). Hercules is thus portrayed as an aspiring usurper of his father’s reign, who takes the lead in a campaign against the current political leader of heavens, *Jove bella Titanes parent, me duce furentes* (967-8).187

Alongside the properties which create a tyrannical portrait of Hercules, there are also other qualities which allow one to perceive him as a hero (*uir fortis*). This can be seen in a number of instances, most prominently in the encounter between Lycus and Amphitryo (464-76). In this passage, the exchange between the tyrant Lycus and Hercules’ foster-father Amphitryo revolves around Hercules’ heroism or lack thereof, with frequent occurrence of the adjective *fortis*: *quemcumque fortim uideris...* (464) *fortem uocemus...?* (465) and (468), and of the

186 On Hercules’ *furor* from a Stoic perspective see Auvray (1989).

187 In *Phaedra*, Phaedra’s propositions to Hippolytus involves him taking the place of his father. This has been interpreted as a reference to Phaedra’s attempt to undermine Theseus’ *patria potestas*. Hercules’ behaviour can be interpreted along the same lines, but by his own words now, rather than those of another.
word *virtus* and its cognates (or antonyms) *non uirilem* (470), *moll* (473), *virtus* (476). Amphitryo pursues his defence of Hercules’ heroism (481-8) by enumerating examples which demonstrate his heroism. Nonetheless, this heroism is a bloodthirsty one. Indeed his defence of Hercules’ heroism is tarnished by the use of vocabulary of violence:

hospitali caede manantes foci
bibere iustum sanguinem Busiridis,
ipsius opus est ulnieri et ferro inuius
mortem coactus integer Cycnus pati.

(483-6)

This brings up the issue of Hercules’ ambiguous identity, and his negative side of affectator tyrannidis/tyrannus, and paves the way for the murder of his family in the subsequent acts.

Indeed, while under the influence of Juno’s madness, Hercules’ encounter with and attitude towards his family suit the portrait of a tyrannical Hercules. His tyrannical features may be identified in that he is overwhelmed by suspicions about his relatives attempting to undermine his own patria potestas, in a way which is typical of tyrants constantly being anxious over their social circle plotting against them. In Hercules’ case this takes the form of questioning the paternity of his children, by bringing up Lycus’ advances to Megara. A first interesting passage is *sed ecce proles regis inimici latet, / Lyci nefandum semen* (987-8), where the mad Hercules refers to his children as offspring of the hateful king Lycus.

One will be reminded of Lycus’ propositions to Megara, and of Amphitryo’s words to him, when he was trying to warn Lycus of Hercules’ heroic deeds, and of the fate of his enemies who had nonetheless brought no dishonour to Hercules’ conjugal chambers (*qui tamen nullo stupro / laesere thalamos* 488-9). Amphitryo’s words may be interpreted as an insinuation to a possible (or even an accusation of) sexual relationship between Megara and the new king Lycus, the offspring of which are the children whom Hercules now murders. The way in which Hercules uses the word ‘stepmother’ (*nouerca*) in 1018 may corroborate such an interpretation: Hercules has captured his wife Megara, who begs him to recognise her (*agnosce Megaram*, 1015) and his child who bears a strong resemblance on himself (*gnatus hic uultus tuos / habitusque reddi*, 1016-7). He responds, however, to say that he has captured the stepmother (*teneo nouercam*, 1018). Within the wider context of the drama, and due to the lines which immediately follow this passage (*sequere, da poenas mihi / iugoque pressum libera turpi Io lue*, 1018-9), one might reasonably argue that by ‘stepmother’ Hercules refers to Juno, whom he believes he slaughters, thus setting Jove free of an unpleasant conjugal yoke.\(^{188}\)

\(^{188}\) In *Euripides’* play, when Herakles kills Megara, he is under the impression that he is killing Hera.
These lines, however, are followed by two lines which can be interpreted as referring not to Juno, but to Megara. The first line *sed ante matrem paruulum hoc monstrum occidat* (1020) suggests that Hercules may in fact be referring to Megara and not to Juno, as the mother of the children whom he kills. The mention of the little child cannot support the interpretation of the word *matrem* as concerning Juno, since she is clearly not a mother of little children. In confirmation of this point may come the line in which Hercules dedicates his crime to Juno (*maximi coniunx louis* 1036). This contradicts lines 1018-19, which were originally interpreted as suggesting that he believes he slaughters Juno. In further confirmation of this argument comes the fact that in traditional Roman ethics, the term ‘stepmother’ was applicable to cases of a *materfamilias* who had undermined the family balance and structure in any way which put into question the *patria potestas* of the *paterfamilias*. Her actions automatically relegated her to the status of a stepmother. The scene of the crime in *Hercules Furens* articulates such questioning of Megara’s status by the mad Hercules: is she a *mater* or a *nouerca*? According to Hercules’ flawed logic, she is the latter, since her relationship with the usurper of Hercules’ throne has questioned his own *patria potestas*. The scene of Hercules’ madness and murder of his wife and children is therefore involved in the process of investigation of his own identity. Exploiting the ambiguity of Hercules’ identity, the drama presents the murder as an action of equal ambiguity, as far as the motives behind it are concerned: the questions raised are whether this a heroic action of a *paterfamilias*, who endeavours to defend the balance and structure of his family; or whether this is a tyrannical action of a harsh *paterfamilias*, who murders his next of kin, overwhelmed by fear of losing his social status.

### 3.3.4 HERCULES’ SELF-INVESTIGATION AND THE RHETORIC OF MORAL INVERSIONS

Reworking stock material is an essential part of the process of rhetorical invention in declamatory rhetoric. This contributes to the agonistic side of declamatory ludism, which can also be identified in Seneca’s *Hercules Furens*, further confirming the argument that declamatory ludism is a important mode of Senecan drama. Juno’s speech provides two passages which indicate that in searching for the proper opponent for Hercules she is in the process of rhetorical invention. Juno’s remarks suggest that she seeks to re-invent the myth of Hercules’ madness. This seems to be confirmed by the first passage (34-6) with the occurrence of the rhetorical technical term *locus*, suggesting Juno’s rhetorical conception of the myth: Hercules’ constant overcoming of the obstacles that she set for him is seen as her just creating a commonplace of glory (*gloriae feci locum*). Juno, therefore, is not happy with the outcome of her rhetorical actions, which have helped establish Hercules as a

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189 Noy (1991), 348 interprets the term ‘stepmother’ as referring to Megara, the mother of Hercules’ children.

commonplace of glory.\textsuperscript{191} She thus seeks to re-invent that myth in order to conquer Hercules. The second passage, \textit{inueni diem, / inuisa quo nos Herculis virtus iuuet} (114-5), features the verb \textit{inueni}, which recalls the process of rhetorical invention.

In order to defeat Hercules, Juno is now intent on taking an innovative approach. She states that she will involve \textit{Scelus, Error, Impietas} and \textit{Furor} in her attempt to conquer Hercules:

\begin{quote}
ueniet inuisum Scelus
suumque lambens sanguinem Impietas ferox
Errorque et in semper armatus Furor
\end{quote}

(96-8)

These abstract agents relate to the ethics of the ludic process in which she wants Hercules to engage: the invocation of \textit{Error} (erroneous judgment) concerns the mental state of confusion, in which Hercules will face the new challenge sent by Juno, whereas \textit{Scelus, Impietas} and \textit{Furor} describe an inversion of the moral code which will govern Hercules' battle. It thus appears that Juno deliberately debilitates Hercules' judgement, so that he will not be in a position to realise the destruction which he causes to himself and his family. As a result, overwhelmed as he is by \textit{Scelus, Impietas} and \textit{Furor} while slaughtering his family, Hercules believes that he acts in an appropriate manner. Speaking in terms of ludism, the moral code governing the battle in which Hercules is involved has been reversed – so that the murder of his family seems justified - with him being unaware of it.\textsuperscript{192} In this way his ambivalent nature is provided with the necessary conditions which allow its negative side to be expressed, and to seem to be morally justified within its own point of view.

\subsection*{3.4 MEDEA}

Medea’s passionate murder of her children, as is known through literary tradition, particularly offers itself for a declamatory treatment: it involves controversy, not only between Medea and the other dramatic characters, but also, and more importantly, within Medea’s soul. This makes it inherently (that is, without the need on the dramatist's part to intervene radically with the myth) compatible with the requirements of ludic mechanisms of declamatory rhetoric. Seneca's \textit{Medea} articulates the investigation of the identities of the two major characters, namely Medea and Jason. However, the primary interest of the drama is

\textsuperscript{191} One might be able to identify in Juno's statement \textit{gloriae feci locum} a pun on Hercules’ name (\textasciitilde{Hrakлеоς} > \textasciitilde{Hrα+κλέоς} = glory of Hera). Juno’s words thus suggest that Hercules enacts the prescriptions of his name.

\textsuperscript{192} Divine paternity might be expected to contribute to the appraisal of a character’s moral attributes. Here, however, there is an ironic reversion of the recognition which Hercules’ descent from Jove will confer on him: Juno exploits Jove’s paternity of Hercules as a means to humiliate him, as she is intent on turning a figure of heroism, as Hercules is, into one of humiliating anti-heroism.
Medea’s characterisation, while Jason’s is only investigated secondarily, and in relation to how it is perceived by Medea. As will be explained in what follows, the investigation of Medea’s identity is carried out within a framework defined by such terms as *mater pia* and *nouerca*, while Jason’s by such terms as *pater impius/pius, tyrannus, pater luxuriatus, maritus infidus* etc. As in *Hercules Furens* and *Phaedra*, these abstract terms (and the way in which these are employed) confer declamatory colour on the ludic nature of Medea’s and Jason’s characterisation.

In a manner similar to Phaedra’s case, Medea’s circumstances are presented as known to the nurse, while Medea also refers to them openly without any attempt to conceal her feelings. The fact that Seneca’s drama opens with Medea reflecting on her situation openly and in a self-aware manner suggests that her attitude and response to the events, rather than the events themselves which are already known, is the main theme of the drama. Her high levels of awareness correspond with the metatheatrical signs, which are widespread throughout the drama, and which satisfy one of the two aspects of the ludic element in her characterisation. Such signs can be identified right from the beginning with an emphasis on spectatorship:

spectat hoc nostri sator

Sol generis, et spectatur, et curru insidens

per solita puri spatia decurritt poli?

(28-30)

Another instance can be found at the end of the drama in reference to the murder of her second son (*gnatus hic fatum tulit, / hic te uidente dabitur exitio pari*, 1000-1): spectatorship at the time of her son’s murder is essential for Medea, who seems to perceive the situation as a spectacle which requires spectators as a condition for its success. Presenting circumstances which contribute to Medea’s characterisation as spectacles foregrounds the element of spectatorship and creates dramatic space for Medea to act out what the literary tradition dictates, so that she can become herself.

3.4.1 MEDEA INVESTIGATING HER IDENTITY

Seneca’s *Medea* provides an investigation of Medea’s identity, by which she seeks to accomplish her true potential, leading up to her becoming her true self. The drama illustrates the process by which Medea will become her true self, as is clearly expressed a few lines later *NUT*. *Medea – ME. Fiam.* (171). The way to self-accomplishment goes through the

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193 Hine (2000), 21-2 also points out that Medea’s situation is straightforward, ‘so it may seem that after such a beginning there is not much scope for her intentions or her character to develop’.

194 See Petrone (1988) on the function of characters’ names in Plautus, Seneca and Petronius as determining their fate.
negotiation of the elements which comprise her identity.\textsuperscript{195} Within this context Seneca’s drama embarks on the elaboration of Medea’s identity by means of a negotiation between family roles whose applicability to Medea is examined on the basis of the circumstances. These roles are represented by the abstract anthropological categories of mother and wife (\textit{mater–coniunx}).

Firstly we encounter the tendency to strip characters of their specifics, and to reduce them to their social roles, in the way which recalls the mechanisms of declamatory rhetoric. In a first passage from Medea’s opening speech of the drama (23-5), Medea curses Jason for his desire to have her as his wife, whom he now abandons (\textit{me coniugem optet}),\textsuperscript{196} and also to desire to have children, who will resemble their mother and father (\textit{liberos similes patri similesque matri}) – insinuating the loss of their own children, who bear that resemblance. Another relevant passage comes from the exchange between Medea and the nurse, who tries to avert her from allowing her wrath to manifest itself. The nurse’s arguments are based on Medea’s attitude with regards to her social status: under the circumstances her husband’s loyalty is missing (\textit{coniugis nulla est fides}, 164), while she is subject to a fearful king (\textit{rex timendus est}, 168). Medea’s response, \textit{rex meus fuerat pater} (168), emphasises her own place within a matrix of family and social roles and relationships. As has been the case with Phaedra, Medea is stripped of any other specifics of her identity, with the exception of those which define her as part of a social network.

Already at the beginning of the drama, Medea describes her mental state with the words \textit{incerta uecors mente non sana feror / partes in omnes} (123-4). These words clearly communicate the sense of uncertainty with which Medea is overcome. Her uncertainty indicates that she is in search of the appropriate course of action for her. At the same time, these words suggest that the emphasis in Seneca’s treatment of the myth is not on the events or the circumstances themselves, but rather on Medea’s attitude and reaction to them. This provides the essential platform for Medea’s ludic characterisation, as it foregrounds the fact that Medea is engaged in a process of investigation which will ultimately lead to the accomplishment of her mythological identity as a murderous mother. In particular,

\textsuperscript{195} Henry-Walker (1967) see the process of negotiation as Medea’s loss of identity. There is certainly some truth in that argument, given that negotiation involves uncertainty regarding Medea’s identity. Such an interpretation, however, does not do full justice to the declamatory ludic mechanisms which this thesis argues to inform Senecan characterisation, which certainly provides a framework within which Medea perceives herself. On these grounds, Tietze’s use of the term ‘uncertainty’ (rather than ‘loss of identity’) may be more appropriate to describe Medea’s characterisation.

\textsuperscript{196} opto, which Zwierlein accepts in his text, is a conjecture by Axelson, the manuscript reading being optet. Although the passages in this study are drawn exclusively from Zwierlein’s edition, here I follow Fitch’s edition of the Loeb series who prefers optet, as I think that the third person optative subjunctive suits the wider context with Medea cursing the newly-married couple.
the phrase *feror in partes omnes*, which echoes the sophistical type of argumentation of *in utramque partem* underlying declamatory rhetoric, indicates that at this stage Medea is unclear as to who is to blame for the situation she is in, and how she should act accordingly.

Technically speaking, the stepmother of Medea’s children is Creusa, as Jason’s new wife replacing Medea. In the light of Medea’s mythological identity, however, the word can be seen as an implicit reference to Medea herself due to its negative connotations and the audience’s knowledge of the myth, making Medea the stepmother of her own children. The next passage follows in the same manner: *ira discexit loco / materque tota coniuge expulsa redit* (927-8). In these lines Medea deliberates whether to proceed with the murder of her children. Once again her deliberation is articulated through abstract terms: she claims that the prospect of killing her children strikes her heart with horror, and makes her limbs freeze as the mother within her returns and banishes the wife. Medea appears to be split between the roles of mother and of wife. Their juxtaposition highlights the tension and mutual exclusiveness which the current circumstances have caused to develop. At the same time, the word *coniunx* may refer not to Medea, but to Creusa, in which case the antithetical structure of line 928 describes not only Medea’s internal battle, but also the actual external circumstances which trigger her mental state.

### 3.4.2 THE RHETORIC OF MEDEA’S SELF-INVESTIGATION

Seneca’s *Medea* demonstrates a tendency towards conferring judicial nuances on the stages which lead up to Medea’s self-accomplishment. This further supports my argument that her characterisation possesses ludic features, since judicial procedures are seen by Huizinga as types of ludic activities. In what follows we shall look at instances which add such a judicial colour to the process of Medea’s self-investigation and invention.

A first example comes from the dialogue between Medea and Creon: *potest lason, si tuam causam amoues, / suam tueri* (262-3). In these lines Creon argues that Jason can defend his case, if it is separated from Medea’s.197 He refers to the controversy between Medea and Jason as a *causa*, a law court procedure. Another important passage comes from the dialogue between Medea and Creon at 192-202: their exchange concerns Creon’s pronouncement of exile on Medea. There she tries to convince Creon of the unjust nature of his order, by questioning the culpability of her actions. These lines abound in terms and phrases which create the framework for an agonistic understanding of the entire drama. Her words *crimen, culpa* and *multatur* add a judicial colour to the situation. In a similar manner, Creon’s ironic response *quae causa pellat* reveals his own perception of the situation as a *causa* (judicial procedure), which requires that Medea be banished from the city. Medea continues by stating that a judge should investigate a case in law (*si iudicas, cognosce*), in

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contrast to a king (which should probably be taken here to mean a tyrant), who gives orders (si regnas, iube). She thus distinguishes between a fair king and an unfair one, a distinction which Creon recognises, but is not willing to apply to Medea’s case (aequum atque iniquum regis imperium feras). Indeed he states that her pleas are in vain as the judgment has been made: his words constituto decreto (passed judgment) with their strong judicial connotations, invite a judicial understanding of Medea’s situation, one which suggests that her situation is the outcome of law court proceedings with Creon playing the role of the judge.

Medea continues by elaborating on what constitutes an unfair judge, that is, not hearing both parties: qui statuit aliquid parte inaudita altera. Her views can be seen as a manifestation of the antilogical argumentation. Creon’s ironic response concerns Medea’s self-contradiction in not having practised what she now preaches, when she did not listen to Pelias before killing him auditus a te Pelia supplicium tulit? The word auditus (‘examined’, more than just ‘heard’) will remind one of a process of judicial investigation.

In her exchange with Jason a few lines later, Medea puts the blame for all her crimes on Jason (500–3): tua illa, tua sunt illa: cui prodest scelus, / is fecit. Since Jason was, according to Medea, her reason for committing those crimes, he should be held responsible for them, as he should also defend her innocence even now, when all the others condemn her: omnes coniugem infamem arguant, / solus tuere, solus insontem uoca. Medea’s use of the verb arguant with its judicial connotations together with the insontem, innocens and nocens help establish an intensely judicial understanding of the myth. A final example provides an illustration of Medea having reached her final decision as to how Jason should be punished: placuit hoc poenae genus, / meritoque placuit (922–3). She refers to the process of her decision-making in terms such as placuit... meritoque placuit, which echo judicial contexts. Once again her deliberation on the murder of her children as a means of punishment for Jason’s infidelity is presented in an judicial manner.

Medea’s deliberations concern not only her own, but also Jason’s identity, while the investigation of her own identity appears to be intertwined with his. This process involves fluctuations regarding his innocence or guilt for the situation in which she currently finds herself, and the passage 137–46 is a clear illustration of her fluctuating judgment. In lines 137–8 she recognises Jason’s inability to act otherwise, being subject to Creon’s political power.198 Her words alieni arbitri iurisque factus pose the question of Jason’s guilt or innocence, as they suggest the role of judge which Medea recognizes in Creon: the latter is the umpire (arbiter) who would influence Jason’s actions. Immediately after this statement, however, she wishes his death (138–9), and instantly again regrets her words (139–42). Finally she blames Creon for her situation (culpa est Creontis tota, 143), as she perceives

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198 Hine (2000), 18 notes that Seneca’s Jason appears to have ‘less independence than Euripides’ Jason’, perhaps hinting that he is presented as an honourable man. However, Hine continues to say that Medea sees the options with which she provides Jason as meaning that ‘he is not limited to the options he recognises’.
her situation as caused by an illegal breaking, carried out by Creon, of a valid marriage (sceptro impotens coniugia soluit 144). The use of judicial language allows us to argue for the establishment of a ludic context within which identities are investigated. Medea will change her mind again a few lines later, and will finally put the blame on Jason (415-9).

Indeed, in the dialogue between Medea and Jason he asks her to overcome her wrath and reconcile herself with their sons: quin potius ira concitum pectus doma, / placare natis (506-8). Her response raises again the issue of her identity, as she states that she disinherit (abdico) and rejects them (eiuro abnuo). The significance of her words is double: first, by rejecting her children she declares her loss of status as a mother. We are here reminded of the passage quoted earlier, in which Medea, deliberating whether to kill her sons, describes her feelings with the words materque tota coniuge expulsa redit (928). The two passages seem to correspond to the process of internal negotiation which Medea experiences. The loss of her maternal role declared in line 507 has not yet become definite, as line 928 suggests. Of equal significance is also the judicial tone which the occurrence of the three verbs abdico, eiuro, abnuo confer on the passage, since they feature regularly in judicial contexts. In fact judicial terms are frequent in the entire drama, and they enhance the ludic treatment of Medea’s characterisation.

3.4.3 GLADIATORIAL IMAGERY IN MEDEA’S CHARACTERISATION

Instances of gladiatorial imagery can be identified in Seneca’s Medea during the ludic phase of Medea’s characterisation. The occurrence of the word paria (referring to repudia) suggests that she wishes the events of her marriage and her divorce to compete with each other. Paria, however, echoes the gladiatorial couples of the arena. Medea appears to perceive the narratives of her wedding and of her divorce as opponents in a gladiatorial duel. On this point one should note that there is no specific indication of antagonism in this clause that would justify the interpretation of paria as an instance of gladiatorial imagery. Nonetheless the fact that Medea’s investigation and re-invention of herself involves an antagonistic conception of her future actions in relation to her past actions, a conception which permeates the entire drama, makes it plausible to argue that in paria one can find the essential traces of antagonism.

Even more significant is prolusit dolor / per ista noster (908). The key word here is prolusit. Medea appears to speak of her past actions as a form of preparatory exercise or gladiatorial foreplay (in the sense of preparatory/pre-military) for what she is intent on doing in the future.

199 Hine (2000), 20 points out that Medea’s confrontation with Creon ‘takes on the aspect of a trial’.

200 TLL eiuro vol. V.2 314, 67 negotiatores sibi putant esse turpe id forum sibi iniquum eiurare, ubi negotientur: praetor prouinciam suam sibi totam iniquam eiurat. (Cic. Ver. 2,3,137); TLL abnuo vol. I 114, 17-18 id ... quidam abnuentes iuratus se (Liv. 10.38.11).
which will be the the actual play. The declamatory mechanisms of the drama can be associated with Medea’s gladiatorial understanding of both the past and the future. 

3.4.4 MORAL INVERSION AND MEDEA’S SELF-ACCOMPLISHMENT

Medea’s high levels of awareness allow her to recognise the fictional nature of the events, and to seek to manipulate them. An essential part of this manipulation is an aesthetics of innovation, which plays with the fictionality of the events in an ironic manner. A passage which appears early in the drama (48-53) may also help us approach the rhetorical aspect of Medea’s process of self-accomplishment. The passage introduces a metafictional conception of the circumstances with the subjunctive narrentur (let them be related/they should be related), which implies that Medea is able to see that her actions will become the topic of future narratives. The comparative forms grauior, maiora reveal the antagonistic approach which she takes to any previous instance: those were light (leuia) ones, whereas now greater and more serious ones suit the current circumstances.

The literary tradition provides Seneca with precedents which in most cases are not available to us, with the few exceptions of Pindar’s Pythian 4, Euripides’ famous play, Apollonius’ Argonautica, Ennius’ Medea, and Ovid’s Heroides. Even though there appear to be no clear allusions to any specific surviving literary portrayal of Medea, it is fair to assume that Medea’s statement ‘I will become Medea’ encompasses any and all of them to the extent that they correspond to the various stages leading up to her self-accomplishment. For instance, her reference to her leaving her homeland with Jason as a maiden must recall Apollonius Rhodius’ account of that aspect of her mythological identity; even her reference to becoming Medea can be seen as an allusion to any literary accounts of her murdering her children to take revenge on Jason, Euripides’ play being the most prominent among them.

The verb decent (50) introduces the issue of moral appropriateness of Medea’s future actions, and creates a striking oxymoron between the notion of moral appropriateness (decet) and that of crime (nefas). The aesthetics of nouitas which informs declamatory ludism requires that one should go beyond the boundaries of what is commonly considered

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201 Medea’s language in her encounter with Jason echoes Ulixes’ language in his encounter with Andromache, more specifically the frequent occurrence of the verb peto which has military connotations: ad quos remittis? Phasin et Colchos petam / patriumque regnum quaque fraternus cruor / perfudit arua? quas peti terras iubes? (451-3). Note also the judicial sense of remitto (to dissolve a marriage). This is another instance of linking agonistic language with the negotiation of one’s identity and social status.

202 See Hine (2000), 36 on Medea’s statements as metadramatic pointers.

203 Were Ovid’s drama Medea available to us, it would provide an invaluable insight into a possible application of declamatory mechanisms to a dramatic work, given Ovid’s apprenticeship at the schools of declamation. See Jacobi (1988). Ovid’s influence on Seneca’s dramatic compositions has been recognised. See Stein (2004) on the roles of mother-daughter-concubine in Ovid and the conflicts arising from them.
possible or appropriate in relation to behaviour and actions within the family. Indeed, in lines 562-7 Medea strives to go beyond even her own self: *quidquid potest Medea, quidquid non potest*. To that effect she urges herself to invoke her powers and arts (*omnis aduoca / uires et artes*). This statement inscribes the events and behaviours portrayed in the drama in the area of the implausible. Medea searches for the possibility which goes beyond anyone’s horizon of expectations, as her words indicate: *hac aggredere, qua nemo quicquam potest timere*. She recognises that in the current state of affairs, there is no place for fraud (*uix fraudi est locus*). The occurrence of the rhetorical technical term *locus* suggests rhetorical awareness, and can be seen as a comment addressed to a rhetorically self-conscious Medea urging herself on to a creative process of invention which will involve renewing herself as a commonplace for fraud. This commonplace concerns the fraudulence which has been attached to her mythological identity.\textit{204} Put in another way, Medea seeks to renew her self, which has acquired the status of a rhetorical common topos, in order to achieve her goals.\textit{205}

Within this context of Medea’s aspirations for re-inventing herself, two passages come in support of the agonistic side of declamatory ludism which informs her characterisation.

\begin{quote}
\textit{quaere poenarum genus}
\textit{haut usitatum iamque sic temet para.}
\textit{(898-9)}
\textit{quaere materiam, dolor:}
\textit{ad omne facinus non rudem dextram afferes.}
\textit{(914-5)}
\end{quote}

Starting with the imperatives *quaere* (search) in both passages, the occurrence of the words *genus* in the first passage and of *materiam* in the second imply that she perceives the situation in rhetorical terms.\textit{206} Her aspiration is to invent an unusual form of punishment for

\textit{204} Note, for instance, Creon’s words when he appears for the first time (I know what you are...)

\textit{205} The term *locus* is also encountered in Medea’s exchange with the nurse, *locus uirtuti*. In that context it concerns Medea’s intention to reverse the moral code, in order to enhance the criminal nature of her future actions, which nonetheless are morally appropriate, and in that sense will confer virtue upon Medea. The use of *locus* here articulates the same anxiety of Medea only expressed in the opposite way, that is, the identification of new courses of criminal action, which will break new ground.

\textit{206} The word *materia* can be used in reference to the literary or rhetorical material on which an author or an orator works. Its occurrence here is an indication of Medea’s rhetorical consciousness. It is also worth remembering that the term appears in Seneca’s *Phaedra*, in Hippolytus’ rhetorical question to Phaedra regarding her manipulation of him as rhetorical material.
Jason (haut usitatum, 899).207 Her wish not to appear inept in the sort of crime she will invent in line 915 is also expressed in terms which allude to her conception of the situation as a fiction-in-creation, with non rudem (915) suggesting erudition as a condition for successful rhetorical invention (an educated game). Medea’s words evoke an antagonistic attitude between her past and future actions: in the same way that Medea’s marriage with Jason has turned into a narrative, so she wishes her divorce from him to be narrated (narrentur, 52).

Line 508 provides a striking similarity with declamatory themes, since a very common practice for declamatory fathers who did not approve of their sons’ actions was to disinherit them. Disinheritance (abdicatio) was a popular declamatory theme, which was associated with the figure of the father. There is no evidence of a mother disinheriting her children in the surviving collections of declamations despite their fictional character, with the right to disinherit belonging exclusively to the paterfamilias. Consequently, Medea’s disinheritance of her children is an act of nouitas, interpreted in the light of declamatory ludism: while declamatory tradition dictates that fathers disinherit their sons, Medea’s innovation lies in the fact that a mother (herself) becomes a stepmother by disinheriting her children. She thus sets a new precedent for the role of a materfamilias.

3.5 OEDIPUS

Oedipus’ myth revolves around issues of identity, and of the guilt or innocence of Oedipus, and Seneca’s Oedipus provides a dramatisation of these issues. In Sophocles’ Οἰδίπος Τύραννος, a major subtext for Seneca’s dramatic composition which tackles the same issue, Oedipus too is presented as seeking to establish his identity, and determine the nature of his relationship with queen Jocaste and their children. In that sense Seneca’s drama does not differ from Sophocles’. A significant difference between the two works, however, lies in the development of the plot. The plot of Sophocles’ play is entangled with the gradual process by which Oedipus gets to find out that not only is he the brother of his own children, due to his incestuous relationship with his mother, but also the usurper of his father’s throne. Unlike Sophocles’ version, however, Seneca shows little interest in plot development: already at the beginning of the drama, the Senecan Oedipus possesses some sort of intuitive knowledge of what is in store for him, which is the cause of his incessant fear and guilt.208 This knowledge suggests that the emphasis of the drama is on Oedipus’ attitude towards his circumstances, rather than on the revelation of the circumstances themselves.

207 Note the occurrence of non usitata nec tenui ferar / penna biformis per liquidum aethera uates (Hor. Carm. 2.20.1-3) in a context of transgressive novelty.

208 Mastronarde (1970) points out the static situation of Seneca’s Oedipus. This adds to the argument that Seneca’s treatment of the myth focuses on the reflection upon his situation rather than on the presentation of the events, as Oedipus already has an intuitive knowledge of them. Motto-Clarke (1973/4) also point out that Seneca’s Oedipus is interested not in plot development, but in the character’s reaction to his fate.
The ludic phase of Oedipus’ characterisation occupies Oedipus’ quest to establish his mythological identity. The moment when Oedipus accepts his fate and flees Thebes marks the establishment of his identity as a uir fortis and therefore the cessation of the ludic phase. What makes ludism a useful interpretative category is the fact that Seneca’s drama portrays the process by which Oedipus examines the elements of his identity and invents himself in such a way as to become who he is meant to be by fate/literary tradition. Imagery inspired from such ludic activities as the spectacles of the arena or judicial procedures are used to refer to Oedipus’ process of self-investigation. Moreover, his identity is mapped on such anthropological categories as filius pius, maritus, uir fortis, tyrannus. These are involved in the process of Oedipus’ characterisation in ways which resemble the mechanisms employed by declamatory rhetoric, conferring thus a declamatory colour on the ludic phase of his characterisation.

3.5.1 LUDIC ACTIVITIES AND THE LUDIC PHASE OF OEDIPUS’ CHARACTERISATION

Even though not as extensive as in other dram as of the Senecan corpus, the use of gladiatorial imagery as a manifestation of ludism is present in Seneca’s Oedipus. A particularly interesting example indicates that gladiatorial imagery is intertwined with the declamatory binary on which Oedipus’ identity has been mapped. The following lines, which are spoken by Jocaste, suggest that the problematic situation with which Oedipus is faced is perceived in gladiatorial terms: concurrit illinc publica, hinc regis salus, / utrimque paria (830-1). Note, for instance, the word paria, introducing a nuance of ‘gladiatorial pair’, the verb concurrit, which introduces the element of agonism, and the illinc ... hinc, which emphasises the spatial conception of the two sides fighting each other. The element of declamatory ludism of the lines concerns the binary upon which Oedipus’ identity is mapped.

More specifically, the two sides correspond to the two parts of the binary, which the drama uses in the negotiation of Oedipus’ identity: Oedipus’ struggle to define himself is articulated through a battle between publica salus and regis salus, each of them referring to the binary uir fortis–tyrannus respectively. The heroism of a uir fortis is recognised on the basis of his contribution towards the salvation of the people (publica salus), whereas a tyrant is typically expected to have his own safety as his priority, to the detriment of the salus publica. The gladiatorial metaphor helps articulate precisely this contradiction in Oedipus’ characterisation, in which two social roles/attitudes are in conflict with each other. At the same time, the use of illinc ... hinc carries nuances which are related to the antilogical type of argumentation (in utramque partem).

209 The same binary was identified earlier on as defining Hercules’ identity, which, I suggest, can explain the common features which characterise Oedipus and Hercules in Seneca’s dramas.

210 Boyle (2011), 301 points out that this dilemma is not found in Sophocles’ play.
The ludic phase of Oedipus’ characterisation also demonstrates a tendency to describe his circumstances in judicial terms. For instance, in his opening speech in the drama Oedipus refers to the position in which he has found himself: *inter ruinas urbis et semper nouis / deflenda lacrimis funera ac populi struem / incolumis asto – scilicet Phoebi reus* (32-4). It should be noted that as these words are spoken by Oedipus he is demonstrating a foreknowledge of his fate. Oedipus refers to himself as a defendant (*reus*) of Phoebus, thus establishing a judicial mode of perceiving the events which contribute to clarifying his identity. Later on again Oedipus refers to his circumstances in similar terms, when Creon gives an account of the Delphic oracle charging Oedipus with parricide and incest: *quidquid timebam facere fecisse arguor - / tori iugalis abnuit Merope nefas / sociate Polybo; sospes absoluit manus / Polybus meas* (660). The occurrence of *arguor* (I am accused) and *absoluit* (he acquits) suggest the understanding of Oedipus’ situation as a law court case, maintaining the judicial mode. A final example is encountered only few lines later, where Oedipus refers to his situation as a law court case: *num audita causa est nostra Tiresiae* (697).

### 3.5.2 OEDIPUS IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSGRESSION OF ROLES

In Seneca’s treatment of the myth, there is a clear emphasis on the blurring of social roles as a result of Oedipus’ yearning for paternal power. Laius’ ghost stresses that Oedipus has taken his father’s place in the throne of Thebes as well as in his marital chambers, thus overthrowing the *patria potestas*. The consequence is of a complex misfortune (*implicitum malum* 640), which concerns both the family and the city. On a family level, Oedipus becomes the new father of the family (*nefandos occupat thalamos patris* 635), by breeding new children, who, at the same time, are his siblings (*fratres sibi ipse genui* 640) – while maintaining his initial identity as the son. On the broader social level, he is the usurper of his father’s political power (*sceptr a [sc. occupat patris]* 635). The outcome of that confusion is that Oedipus’ impious behaviour implicates his mother (*egitque in ortus semet et matri impios fetus reessit*, 639). Oedipus is the son who becomes the new *paterfamilias* in the place of the actual one, with the destructive consequence of Laius threatening the new incestuous household: *incestam domum / uertam et penates impio marte obteram* (645-6).

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211 Henry-Walker (1984), 132-4 point out the judicial colour of the scene.

212 In that respect Laius does not differ from Theseus or Medea or Juno: all of them are the members of a family (*paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* respectively), whose place has been threatened by another member (Hippolytus in Theseus’ case, and Jason in Medea’s), causing them to wreak havoc in their family. Compare, for instance, Laius’ words *traham ... traham ... uertam ... obteram* (644-6) with Medea’s words when she urges herself to take revenge on Jason, *sternam et euertam omnia* (*Med.* 414). These statements may be interpreted as instances of meta-language, in Medea’s attempt to direct herself in the pre-performative conception of herself. Note also Medea’s invocation of the the Furies (or Erinys) as guests to Jason’s wedding: *nunc nunc adeste sceleris ultrices deae / ... / adeste, thalamis horridae quondam meis / quales stetis* (*Med.* 13-7); Laius - as the replaced
The confusion caused in family roles and the fluidity of the characters’ position is also expressed in the emphasised use of family terms, which are misapplied in certain instances such as the following: OE. _germane nostrae coniugis_ (210), and most assertively IO. _quid te uocem? / gnatumne? dubitas? gnatus es: gnatum pudet_ (1009-10). One final passage which illustrates an acknowledged confusion in the boundaries of family roles is 1032-6: according to Jocaste the current state of affairs in the family indicates a confusion with regard to the distinction between a husband and a father-in-law (_coniunx - socer_). Laius, who is Jocaste’s husband, has now become her father-in-law, because of her carnal relationship with Laius’ (and her) son, Oedipus _hoc iacet ferro meus / coniunx – quid illum nomine haud uero uocas? / socer est_ (1034-5).

### 3.5.3 OEDIPUS’ NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY

Identifying elements of agonism in the characterisation of Seneca’s _Oedipus_ will help us analyse the tensions in his motives in a more explicit manner. The controvresiality of Oedipus’ elements of identity is articulated in military terms: _tecum bella geres, natis quoque bella relinques_ (237). Here Creon relates to Oedipus the oracle which he received at Delphi. Relevant to my point is the claim that the murderer of Laius, who is not yet identified with Oedipus, will be at war with himself (_tecum bella geres_). This lines clearly indicate the antithesis in the elements which structure Oedipus’ identity. The antithetical pair _uir fortis_ (hero)–_tyrannus_ (tyrant) is explored in this instance, and the following passages offer some clarification.

A first instance (81-7) comes from the dialogue between Jocaste and Oedipus, which revolves around the latter’s virtue or lack thereof. Jocaste’s words draw attention to Oedipus’ unkingly (_regium hoc ipsum reor_) and unmanly (_haud est uirile_) behaviour, whereupon Oedipus defends his virtue (_uirtus nostra nescit ignauos metus_) by mentioning his courage in confronting the Sphynx (92ff). Establishing Oedipus’ virtue is based on the presence or not of fear. Jocaste, in fact, admonishes Oedipus for this (_haud est uirile terga Fortunae dare_), and Oedipus’ self-defence focuses on the exact same issue: _abest pauoris crimen_. It is

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213 Frank (1995) points out the emphasis on family terms in Seneca’s _Oedipus_.

214 A similar statement has been encountered in Seneca’s _Hercules_ spoken by Juno: _bella iam secum gerat_ (85).

215 A few lines earlier, however, Oedipus stated that he is overwhelmed by fear and cannot trust himself _cuncta expauesco meque non credo mihi_ (27). This implies that his claims for courage in lines 92ff. are not valid, and that fear is a key element in Seneca’s characterisation of the mythical hero. Boyle (2011) suggests that fear is not a feature of Sophocles’ Oedipus, so much as anger.
worth remembering here that suspicious fear is a stock feature of the declamatory tyrant, while it has been noted that Seneca’s portrayal of Oedipus is that of a tyrant.\textsuperscript{216}

The figure of the tyrant is also commonly associated with actions which compose a portrait of cruelty. Of particular interest here is a tyrant’s hostility and murderous disposition towards his relatives, as a way to secure political power for himself. Oedipus is unable to escape his yearning for political power, as the passages 12-14 and 678-9 demonstrate. In the first passage he declares his attempt to avoid the political power which belongs to his father (\textit{quam bene parentis sceptr\ae\ Polybi fugeram}), an attempt which has failed since he eventually fell upon kingship by accident (\textit{in regnum incidi}). The second passage, however, raises doubts as to his actual disposition towards political power. Creon returns from Delphi and announces the oracle to Oedipus, according to which Oedipus is responsible for the plague that afflicts Thebes, and the only means for recovery is by Oedipus relinquishing his political office.

Oedipus’ response provides a clear illustration of his yearning for power, as he appears reluctant to lay down his kingship of his own free will (\textit{hortaris etiam sponte deponam ut mea / tam grauia regna? 678-9}). He even suspects Creon and Tiresias of conspiring against him: \textit{iam iam tenemus callidi socios doli: / mentitur ista praeferens fraudi deos / uates, tibique sceptra despondet mea} (668-70). The words \textit{sceptra...mea} of the final line are one more indication of his passion for power. In his oracle to Creon Laius’ ghost also referred to Oedipus with the words \textit{rex cruentus} (634-40), pointing to cruelty which is standard feature of the figure of a tyrant. The fact that these words are spoken by Oedipus’ father, Laius, adds to their gravity: the situation starts to resemble a controversy between a father and a son, which is a common theme in declamatory cases. This was further confirmed a few lines earlier when Oedipus tried to exert his absolute power over Creon (\textit{audita fare, uel malo domitus graui / quid arma possint regis irati scies}, 518-9).

3.5.4 THEATRICAL PROPERTIES OF OEDIPUS’ CIRCUMSTANCES

In Seneca’s drama Oedipus is presented as having intuitive knowledge that his current circumstances are of an intense theatrical nature. Let us look at passages 1-5 and 1052-4. Both are spoken by Oedipus, the former at the beginning and the latter at the end of the play. One should not fail to notice the metatheatrical nuances which they involve, such as the reference to the sun as spectator (\textit{lumenque ... prospiciet}), and to the day that has arrived (\textit{iam nocte Titan...}) revealing the destruction which took place during the night (\textit{stragemque quam nox fecit ostendet dies}): Oedipus thus demonstrates an awareness of the spectatorial qualities of the situation and stresses their visuality.

The second passage provides a particularly striking instance of a metatheatrical comment, with Oedipus announcing his flight from Thebes after the revelation of his double crime, \textit{en}

\textsuperscript{216}See Mader (1993) and (1998-9) on the tyrannical element in Seneca’s characterisation of Oedipus.
The literal use of the verb *exeo* in this context is not unexpected, as Oedipus is in fact leaving Thebes. Such use of the verb in the final monologue of the drama, however, invites also an interpretation, which relates to its intense self-awareness. It is plausible to suggest that the presence of the verb *exeo* in Seneca’s play is a metadramatic comment and an indication of Oedipus’ self-awareness, which extends also to his awareness of the theatrical nature of the situation itself. Indeed, the traditional structure of a tragedy - as the genre is largely represented by the dramatic compositions of the Greek tragedians of the fifth century - involves a final part which is called ἔξοδος. This part belongs to the chorus and indicates the end of the drama. The occurrence of *exeo* in the last few lines of Seneca’s *Oedipus* may be interpreted as an indication of the title character’s awareness of the theatricalisation of his situation, in which he participates as an actor, who acts according to what fate has in store for him. Oedipus’ flight from Thebes is thus perceived as an ἔξοδος marking the end of a theatrical play.

Oedipus’ intensely metatheatrical comments are also accompanied by frequent comments suggesting high levels of self-consciousness. He is portrayed as being fully aware of his fate right from the beginning of the play (*eloqui fatum pudet*, 15-21). The two charges, which in the Sophoclean version of the myth are only revealed after Creon has consulted the Delphic oracle, in the Senecan version are mentioned by Oedipus himself, that is, parricide (*infanda timeo, ne mea genitor manu perimatur*, 15-6) and incest with his mother (*toros gnato minatur impia incestos face*, 21). Within this environment of self-awareness and theatricalisation, Seneca’s drama portrays Oedipus re-enacting his mythological identity in an agonistic manner, which involves the negotiation of the constituents of his identity.

### 3.5.5 INVENTING OEDIPUS’ IMPLAUSIBLE IDENTITY

In the prologue of the drama, Oedipus provides a programmatic classification of the situation in which he will find himself involved: *cum magna horreas, / quod posse fieri non putes metuas tamen* (26-7). He states that his fears of murdering his father and of engaging in an incestuous relationship with his mother are implausible possibilities, *quod posse fieri non putes*. The same mode of thought is encountered again towards the end of the drama, when Oedipus is in search of the suitable form of punishment for himself (942-7). The key notion of the passages relating to Oedipus’ circumstances is novelty: Oedipus recognises the novel character of his birth (*nouos partus*), and seeks to invent a suitably innovative form of death for himself, (*quod saepe fieri non potest*) *fiat diu* (944), directing his skills in

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217 Mazzoli (1992) points out the presence of the adynaton in Seneca’s dramatic compositions, identifying the principle of inversion as underlying its function.

218 It is worth drawing to attention the similarity of these words to Phaedra’s words to Hippolytus in their exchange regarding the implausible nature of the evil which has inflicted her: according to Phaedra, it is of such a nature that Hippolytus would not believe to be possible to befall a stepmother.
invention (*utere ingenio, miser*) towards a course of action which goes beyond the boundaries of the possible, a recurring death which defies the laws of nature.

The terms in which Oedipus describes the novelty of his desirable course of action could well be applied to the novelty of an artistic creation: the use of the participle *commenta* (944) (*comminiscor*, ‘to devise something by careful thought’) in reference to the powers of Nature, suggests that he recognises the function of an agent of artistic creation in it. Given the sense of the verb *comminiscor*, it is plausible to argue that Oedipus implies that the novel character of his birth is a manifestation of Nature’s creative powers of ingenuity (*nouitas*). He remarks that, in the same way that Nature’s mechanisms were renewed in order for his novel birth to take place, he should now assume a similar creative role, and innovate with regards to the form of punishment to be inflicted on himself (*nouetur* 945). He thus urges himself onto using his intellectual capacities in order to accomplish that (*utere ingenio* 947). With these words, which suggest meta-cognitive regulation, he proceeds to a ludic process of rhetorical invention of his mythological self: he is in search of the appropriate way to self-punishment (*quaeratur uia* 949). It is interesting that the figure of the father seems to determine the process of invention, as the phrase *sed citra patrem* indicates.

In the course of this search, Oedipus essentially embarks upon solving a riddle which he poses to himself. In that sense his quest for the appropriate form of punishment is a ludic activity. The fact that this search involves an antagonistic attitude towards previous fictional figures brings it closer to the ludic mechanisms of declamatory rhetoric and confers a declamatory colour on it. The messenger reports the scene of Oedipus’ self-blinding, stating that Oedipus is in search of a punishment that will be similar to his fate (*suisque fatis simile*, 926). This suggests that Oedipus seeks to imitate Fate in the form of punishment to be inflicted on himself (927-33). The messenger’s account of Oedipus’ words involves a number of mythological precedents which are not named in a straightforward manner, but only alluded to.

More specifically, the phrase *hoc scelestum pectus aut ferro petat* (927) can be interpreted as an allusion to the Telamonian Ajax, who committed suicide because the Achaeans preferred to reward Odysseus with Achilles’ armour rather than himself, while *feruido aliquis igne* (928) could be an allusion to the lesser Ajax, whom Athena struck with a thunderbolt for being disrespectful to her. The phrase *quae saeua uisceribus meis incurret ales* (929-30) can be interpreted as an allusion to Prometheus, who was condemned by Zeus to have his liver devoured by an eagle, because he revealed the secret of fire to mortals; the phrases *quae tigris* (929) and *rabidos canes* (932) may refer to the myth of the hunter Actaeon, who was transformed into a stag, and was then devoured by his hounds, because he committed sacrilege watching Artemis bathing naked;\(^{219}\) *reddi Agauen* (933) must allude to the myth of

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\(^{219}\) One of Actaeon’s hounds was called *Tigris: et Dromas et Canache Sticteque et Tigris et Alce* (Ov. *Met.* 3.217).
Pentheus, who was torn apart by his mother Agave and his aunts, a punishment sent on him (and them) by Bacchus for dismissing the worship of the new god.

The connection of these precedents with Oedipus’ situation can be identified on two levels: on the defiance or questioning of (and clash with) first an established figure of power, and second, the family relationships. Furthermore, in their majority these mythological precedents share the transient and momentary nature of the form of punishment. The only exception to this is Prometheus whose form of punishment involved the repeated attack by an eagle. Prometheus, however, becomes a relevant precedent due to his status as a fire-bringer and is thus claimed to have taught the humankind the arts of civilisation. This creates a parallel between him and Oedipus who, by being described in the process of agonistic invention, thus acquires an artistic/authorial status.

3.5.6 BECOMING BIS PARRICIDA

Eventually Oedipus is only satisfied with a lasting punishment which goes beyond the nature of the precedents to which he has alluded. Upon completing this list of precedents, Oedipus grabs his sword in order to commit suicide, but the instantaneous and not long-lasting nature of his death averts him from this action: *ita? tam magnis breues / poenas sceleribus soluis atque uno omnia / pensabis ictu? moreris?* (936-8). The punishment for which he opts is one that goes beyond the laws of Nature with regards to its implications.

More specifically, Oedipus seeks to invent a form of punishment which will nullify his birth, without allowing him to die at the same time. The contradictory negation of birth, when death is, in fact, the desirable option, is justified by Oedipus’ search for an innovative type of death: one that will not allow him to be either among the dead or among the living. His phrase *citra patrem* (951) is a meta-cognitive instruction, which will direct Oedipus’ powers in invention, and which leads him onto conceiving of self-inflicted blindness. This course of action, however, does not put an end to his misfortune: at the end Oedipus realises that his actions were in vain (*perdidimus operam* 1014), because such a form of punishment as self-blinding does not allow him to avoid his mother’s voice and presence. This problem is resolved by Jocaste’s suicide. This, however, means that Oedipus has become a twice-parricide, as he has now contributed to both of his parents’ death: *bis parricida plusque quam timui nocens / matrem peremi scelere contecta est meo* (1004-5). In that sense his action has got the reverse results. He thus continues with what is a straightforward articulation of the agonistic attitude, which pervades the entire play: his remark that with his actions he has overcome an already impious fate (*fata superaui impia*, 1006) stresses in an

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ironic manner the ludic nature of his self-perception and of his understanding of his circumstances.\(^{221}\)

Seneca's *Oedipus* demonstrates a tendency explicitly to characterise Oedipus as a parricide (*parricida*). The word *parricida* occurs three times in the first forty-eight lines of the final exchange between Oedipus and Jocasta. In addition to the occurrence of the word in the passage quoted above (1032-6), the two other instances are self-references spoken by Oedipus (1001-3 and 1042-5). The second instance is of particular importance, as Oedipus refers to himself as a twice-parricide, *bis parricida*. At the same time Oedipus’ self-reference as *bis parricida* may recall such declamatory themes as *bis abiudicatus* which can be found in the elder Seneca's collection. The figure of the son accused of the murder of either of his parents (*parricida*) is a common one in the declamatory collections,\(^{222}\) and has been recognised as articulating the dynamics of the father-son relationship.

From a declamatory point of view, the emphasis on Oedipus as parricide points to the significance of his attitude towards *patria potestas* and its central role in his characterisation in Seneca's drama.\(^{223}\) Parricide, of course, is clearly an integral element of the myth of Oedipus. Sophocles' play also features the equivalent of the Latin *parricida* (*πατραλοιδίας*), and fairly enough, given the centrality of the theme of parricide. What makes its occurrence in Seneca's drama especially significant is its involvement in a matrix of general terms which create the framework within which Oedipus investigates and establishes his identity.

The previous chapter pointed out that Seneca's *Oedipus* promotes the conception of Oedipus' identity and circumstances as implausible transgressions of roles. The framework within which the plausibility of his identity is measured is defined by abstract social roles which are employed in the manner of declamatory rhetoric. The drama ultimately engages this framework in a process of reflection upon the boundaries of these abstract social roles. Ultimately looking at Oedipus’s characterisation in the light of declamatory ludism promotes reflection upon the effect which passions can have on an identity, so much so that common views on what constitutes the appropriate and expected behaviour for a good or a tyrannical *paterfamilias* become a matter of debate.

\(^{221}\) These words recall Medea’s statement *Fortuna semper omnis infra me stetit* (*Med.* 520). Hine (2000), 164 points out that the image of the Stoic sage looking down on *Fortuna* or *casus* from a vantage point is a traditional one.

\(^{222}\) The case of a blind son accused by his stepmother of the murder of his father is the theme of pseudo-Quintilian’s first *Major Declamation*, which has been commented upon in the first section of the thesis.

\(^{223}\) As has been explained in the first section of the thesis, one's attitude towards, and (strict or lenient) exertion of the *patria potestas* determines his status as a tyrannical or an indulgent father. Also one's *patria potestas* extends to the level of political power, given that under the Empire the emperor was more and more addressed as the father of his people.
Oedipus is portrayed as overwhelmed with fear, which emanates from his desire for power and status. Fear acts as the agent which triggers Oedipus’ oscillation between positive and negative expressions of the role of *paterfamilias*. The fact that Oedipus’ passionate soul contributes to such implausibilities can be seen as suggesting that passions can overturn a system of ethics and concomitant expectations to the extent of questioning established views on the boundaries between a fair and a tyrannical king, or an impious son and a tyrannical, licentious father.

### 3.6 AGAMEMNON

Seneca’s drama is named after Agamemnon, creating the expectation that he will be a major character. Agamemnon’s presence and actions, however, are minimal, as he appears briefly only to be murdered by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Instead, Seneca’s *Agamemnon* demonstrates a clear emphasis on Clytemnestra’s psychology and actions leading to her husband’s murder. In my analysis this fact is considered an indication that what matters for Seneca’s version of the myth is Clytemnestra’s attitude towards Agamemnon’s murder, and her conception of its necessity, rather than the actual event itself. The time preceding Agamemnon’s return and murder offers Clytemnestra the opportunity to reflect upon her circumstances, social status and identity, and constitutes what we identify as the ludic phase in her characterisation.

#### 3.6.1 THE LUDIC CONTEXT TO CLYTEMNESTRA’S CHARACTERISATION

Let us examine the ludic features of the context within which Clytemnestra’s characterisation is presented. First, the restrictions of time and space. The events of the drama which qualify for establishing a ludic phase occur up until Agamemnon’s return from Troy and his subsequent murder. By the time of his return, Clytemnestra’s identity has been established as that of an impious wife and mother, marking thus the end of the ludic context. Clytemnestra is then in a hurry to implement her criminal plans with Aegisthus. Secondly, the space designated by the ludic context is the palace of Pelops. This space becomes infected with the presence of Thyestes’ ghost, as the prologue shows, who acts as an agent of social and moral inversion.

These spatio-temporal boundaries are governed by their own rules and the prevalent order is that of an anti-moral landscape, or, in other words, of an inverse morality. Indeed the significance of the laws which govern the situation is a matter of dispute, with another example encountered in the dialogue between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In line 264 *lex alia solio est, alia priuato in toro*, we watch a repentant Clytemnestra in her struggle to rebut Aegisthus’ argumentation about Agamemnon’s tyrannical disposition. Here she claims that the law governing political issues is different from the law governing domestic ones. She thus expects an inversion in Agamemnon’s moral judgment of her infidelity.

The contrast between the ludic and the non-ludic contexts is most visible when Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are after Orestes and attack Electra. There and then Clytemnestra the mother
is at the same time, due to her actions, a stepmother to her children. The shift from one phase to the other reveals that the content of social roles has become unstable and negotiable.

3.6.2 DRAMATIC SPACE AND AGONISM FOR ENQUIRY INTO IDENTITIES

Metadrama provides the necessary dramatic space for Clytemnestra to reflect upon major issues of her identity, and is crucial to our understanding of her characterisation in the light of declamatory ludism. The metadramatic framework can be identified not only at the microscopic level of a scene, but at the macroscopic level of the entire drama. This is achieved by establishing the element of spectatorship as an all-pervading feature of the events portrayed in the drama. A passage from the prologue spoken by Thyestes’ ghost demonstrates how Seneca’s *Agamemnon* employs spectatorship to create dramatic space: *iam iam nabit sanguine alterno domus: / enses secures tela, diuisum graui / ictu bipennis regium uideo caput* (44-6). Having emerged from the Underworld, Thyestes sees the palace of Pelops, and wishes to infect it with his presence. He is presented as able to see into future, and witness the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Lines 44-6 suggest that the events described by Thyestes’ ghost in the prologue coincide - at least partly - temporally with the events presented in the drama. Although the passage starts with a verb in future tense *nabit*, the following verb of perception appears in present *uideo*, and suggests the direct visual contact of Thyestes’ ghost with Agamemnon’s murder. It is thus reasonable to argue that Thyestes’ ghost in fact watches these events as they take place, and, even more to our point, that the events are perceived as a metadrama triggered by Thyestes’ ghost. On these grounds, the subsequent scenes which portray Clytemnestra’s characterisation bear the mark of spectatorship and a concomitant theatricality, one of the two aspects of a ludic activity.

With regard to the other aspect, Seneca’s *Agamemnon* provides us with two perspectives which suggest the agonistic perception of the events. First, Thyestes’ intention to create a spectacle of crime is accompanied by an antagonistic attitude towards other criminal behaviours, and especially his brother Atreus’: *a fratre uincar, liberis plenus tribus in me sepultis?* (26-7). The events portrayed in Agamemnon are essentially Thyestes’ antagonistic act of revenge on the family of his brother Agamemnon.

Second, the captive Cassandra, Agamemnon’s mistress, perceives the murder of Agamemnon as the Trojan counterattack on the Achaeans. Here again we encounter a similar combination of metadramatic qualities with agonism, when the clairvoyant Cassandra relates the murder of Agamemnon, as it takes place inside the palace *res agitur intus magna* (867). Cassandra’s words *res agitur* can have the meaning of ‘events are being acted out’,

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224 Shelton (1977) draws to attention that manipulation of time in the opening scene of the drama. In her (1975) paper had made a similar point about the prologue of Seneca’s *Hercules Furens* and *Thyestes*. 

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and add to the metadramatic properties of the drama. The rest of the passage abounds in terms which denote direct, visual perception of Agamemnon’s murder. Cassandra claims that she witnesses it as it happens (uideo), reminding us of the similar claims of Thyestes’ ghost in the prologue (46) and foregrounding the element of spectatorship. The subjunctive spectemus (875) ‘let us watch’ makes it most blatant that the scene of the murder is perceived as a spectacle which Cassandra enjoys watching (fruor 873). It should also be pointed out that her words uideo et intersum et fruor (872) occur after Cassandra’s use of gladiatorial imagery to refer to the antagonistic relationship between her homeland, Troy, and Mycenae, the homeland of her enemies. To her, the prospect of Agamemnon’s murder by the Trojan Paris appears to be a spectacle of revenge in which a fallen Troy drags Mycenae down with her, and even makes her opponent run away: bene est: resurgis Troia; traxisti iacens / pares Mycenas, terga dat uictor tuus! (870-1). The occurrence of gladiatorial imagery as a metaphor for the battle between Troy and Mycenae, which Agamemnon’s murder represents for Cassandra, encapsulates the combined agonism and theatricality, the two aspects of ludism. It will be considered below how the scene of Agamemnon’s murder as witnessed by Cassandra is employed as a field for re-enacting Clytemnestra’s identity.

3.6.3 IMPIOUS MIXINGS IN THE HOUSE OF PELOPS

In a programmatic manner, the prologue spoken by Thyestes’ ghost establishes the blurring of social roles and their negotiation as the main theme of the drama. A brief account of the murderous past of the family introduces the confusion of roles in abstract terms, which evokes the tendency of declamatory rhetoric to strip characters of their specifics and emphasise their social roles (32-6). In particular Thyestes’ ghost admits that he impregnated his daughter on fate’s command (coacta fatis gnata fert utero graui, 33), so that he would be the parent of all children in his family (ut per omnis liberos irem parens, 32). This constitutes an inversion of the ways of nature (uersa natura est retro, 34), and a subsequent mixing-up of father and grandfather, husband and father, children and grandchildren (auo parentem, 227

225 At the same time, the judicial nuances of the phrase res agitur which can be interpreted as ‘a lawsuit is being carried out’, suggests the judicialised perception of the situation. cf. res magna amici apud forum agitur, / ei uolo ire aduocatus (Pl. Epid. 422-3). Tarrant (1976), 336 also proposes that ‘the language may have a judicial ring’.

226 Shelton (1983) argues that Seneca’s Agamemnon involves a study of disorder at the level of soul, family, state and universe.

227 Note the similarity with Oedipus’ words.
pro nefas, patri uirum / gnatis nepotes miscui, nocti diem, 35.6).\textsuperscript{228} At the same time, the unaware father’s consumption of his children’s bodies is another instance of mixing in the long history of impious mixings which runs in the family, and which have Thyestes as their starting point. The events presented in the drama are manifestations of the impious mixings which run in the family, establishing precedents of moral inversions as the norm.

A similar instance appears in Clytemnestra’s monologue. She admits that she is the materfamilias of the myth, whose impious behaviour questions Agamemnon’s social status, while the situation is described in the usual abstract terms of social and family roles coniugis...toros et sceptra... (110-11). She points out that any sense of morality, justice, decorum, piety and shame has become extinct, but whether she recognises a causal role in her actions or not remains unclear (periere mores ius decus pietas fides / et qui redire cum perit nescit pudor, 112-3). The current course of events requires that she follow the fashion of other bad wives and mothers (evolute femineos dolos, 116). Of particular significance are the phrases coniunx perfida atque impos sui (117) and nouercales manus (118),\textsuperscript{229} as they provide a framework for perceiving Clytemnestra’s future actions\textsuperscript{230} using the same anthropological categories as declamatory rhetoric, namely the impious wife and the stepmother, which are involved in the negotiation of her identity.

### 3.6.4 CLYTEMNESTRA INVESTIGATING HOW TO BECOME THE TYNDARID SHE IS

In Seneca’s Agamemnon declamatory ludism manifests itself in the negotiation of Clytemnestra's and Agamemnon's social status and identity, using good or bad representations of the figure of the materfamilias and the paterfamilias. Clytemnestra, during the ludic phase of her characterisation which relies on her perception of Agamemnon’s identity, oscillates among conflicting expressions of her role as a materfamilias, that of a pious wife (pia coniunx), an unfaithful wife (impia coniunx), a pious mother (mater), and a stepmother (nouerca). As soon as the enquiries relating to Clytemnestra’s identity are finalised, the ludic phase is over, and the passage to real life demands that Agamemnon be murdered, marking the establishment of a new social order of inversions. Upon establishing that Agamemnon is a bad paterfamilias (an adulter and tyrant), Clytemnestra also ends up

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\textsuperscript{228} Tarrant (1976), 175ff points out that the tetracolon is based on one by the declaimer Murredius (Sen. Contr. 9.2.27). Note also the last phrase nocti diem which points to the manifestation of the moral evil as a reversion of the laws in the physical world. These words may also be seen as an allusion to the myth of Atreus and Thyestes, according to which the consumption of his children’s dead bodies by Thyestes caused the sun to hide, and thus the day to become night, which is a mixing in itself.

\textsuperscript{229} According to Tarrant (1976), 197 ‘the earliest occurrence of nouercalis appears to be Sen. Contr. 4 (exc. 6)’.

\textsuperscript{230} The phrase nouercales manus also appears in Hercules Furens, in reference to Juno’s involvement in Hercules’ murder of his family.
as a stepmother to her children and an unfaithful wife in her murder of Agamemnon with the aid of her lover Aegisthus.

The two major aspects of Clytemnestra’s identity, her role as a wife (at te reflectat coniugi nomen sacrum, 155) and as a mother (meminisse debes sobolis ex illo tuae, 157), are brought to the foreground. Both roles are manifestations of her status as a materfamilias which the nurse invokes in her endeavours to control Clytemnestra’s passion. Her arguments, however, meet with Clytemnestra’s negative response. Her husband’s absence for ten years puts her in the irreversible status of a widow (decem per annos uidua, 156), making her role as a wife invalid, whereas his false wedding of their daughter with Achilles, who became their son-in-law without Clytemnestra’s consent (iugales filiae memini faces et generum Achillem, 159), questions and undermines her motherhood, in that her daughter was killed, as her words ironically suggest (praestitit matri fidem, 159).

At the same time, Agamemnon’s infidelity gives Clytemnestra one more reason to doubt her status as his wife, due to his return from Troy as the husband of Cassandra, Priam’s daughter (captae maritus, 191). This makes Agamemnon Priam’s son-in-law (Priami gener, 191). Clytemnestra’s reference to Agamemnon’s barbarian mistresses betrays his sexual licence: neue desertus foret / a paelice umquam barbar caelebs torus, / ablatam Achilli diligit Lynnesida / nec rapere puduit e sinu auulsam uiri (184-7). The abstract terms in which Clytemnestra describes the situation makes it evocative of other situations encountered in other Senecan dramas, which are described in similar terms. For instance, Medea also refers to Creusa, Jason’s new wife, as a paelix (cruentis paelicem poenis premat / regalis ira, Med. 462-3), while Phaedra refers to Theseus’ expedition to the Underworld to kidnap Proserpine with the words solio ut reuulsam regis inferni abstrahat (Phaedr. 95).

Clytemnestra’s concerns relate to the implications of Agamemnon’s infidelity on a socio-political level, predicting sarcastically that political power of the family of Pelops might be taken over by Phrygian women: pigra, quem expectas diem? / Pelopia Phrygiae sceptra dum teneant nurus? (193-4). Her more specific concern relates to the introduction of Cassandra as a stepmother for Clytemnestra’s children: en adest gnatis tuis / furens nouerca (198-9).231 In a manner similar to Seneca’s Medea, due to her cruelty, Clytemnestra turns out to be the stepmother of her own children. Even more to my point, she too allows herself to become her true self: siquidem hoc cruenta Tyndaris fieri sinam (306).

Agamemnon’s identity is of equal importance, with Clytemnestra’s negotiation of identity being presented as intertwined with his. It is worth noting here that the intertwining of one character’s negotiation of identity with another’s has also been identified in the case of Medea and Jason. This provides a point of contact between the two characters of the dramas (Medea and Clytemnestra, Jason and Agamemnon), and has been associated with

231 Zwierlein’s OCT text which this thesis follows presents these lines in brackets (delendum), while the critical apparatus explains that Axelson eliminated them.
the stripping of details and the emphasis on the characters' social roles as part of the negotiation of their identity.

Despite her previous hostility to her husband, Clytemnestra now falters psychologically, and regrets what she now sees as inappropriate unfaithfulness (amor iugalis uincit ac flectit retro, / referimur illuc, unde non decuit prius / abire, 239-41), while her words reveal the agonistic nature of her mental processes (uincit). Aegisthus’ words aim at making her realise that Agamemnon has been transformed into a tyrant (rex Mycenarum fuit, tyrannus ueniet, 251-2), and emphasises the existence of Agamemnon’s mistresses (ultimum est nuptae malum / palam maritam possidens paex domum, 257-8). Clytemnestra reaches her final decision regarding her attitude towards Agamemnon’s behaviour when she openly questions his status as a master or as a paterfamilias: dedecus nostrae domus / asporta ab oculis: haec uacat regi ac uiro (300-1). This marks the beginning of a new socio-political order characterised by social inversions.

When Cassandra, while in a trance, sees the murder take place inside the palace, she exclaims regemque perimet exul et adulter uirum? (884). Her statement provides a clear articulation of the new socio-political order in the royal house, as the king is being murdered by an adulterous wife and her lover. After the two exchanges between Clytemnestra and the nurse, and with Aegisthus having established Agamemnon as a tyrant, Clytemnestra’s long-negotiated identity becomes definitely established too. Electra’s words to Strophius illustrate how closely intertwined Clytemnestra’s identity was to that of Agamemnon: pater peremptus scelere materno iacet, / comes paternae quaeritur natus neci (925-6). In only two lines and using terms denoting social roles (pater-materno-paternae-natus), Electra’s words encapsulate the social disorder in the royal house. The passage provides Clytemnestra’s new portrait as a bad materfamilias, as her actions damage the internal family order. In this manner, Clytemnestra fulfils her programmatic declarations that she would follow in the direction of other passionate wives and cruel stepmothers, until she becomes her true self (116-20).

3.6.5 INVESTIGATING CLYTEMNESTRA’S AND AGAMEMNON’S IDENTITIES IN JUDICIAL TERMS

As has been the case with other dramas of the Senecan corpus, here also a manifestation of the agonistic side of declamatory ludism is the description of a process of characterisation with judicial nuances. One first example comes from the opening monologue of the drama, where Thyestes’ ghost wonders about the share of error which passes on from one member of a family to another sed ille nostrae pars quota est culpae senex?, 22). Within the context of family guilt, he introduces the figure of Minos (quaesitor ... Gnosius, 24), the investigator of Knossos who will judge all the defendants (reos) for their unspeakable deeds. The programmatic force of the prologue invites the audience to a judicialised approach to...
Clytemnestra’s characterisation as it is portrayed in the subsequent scenes and acts. Such approach is supported by the text itself.

More specifically, in her exchange with Aegisthus Clytemnestra claims that she can rely on Agamemnon’s clemency for her impious behaviour (*det ille ueniam facile cui uenia est opus*, 267), whereupon Aegisthus argues that being a tyrant Agamemnon will not be a fair judge for Clytemnestra’s misdemeanour, as tyrants are ill-disposed judges to others, and only fair to themselves (*nobis maligni iudices, aequi sibi*, 270) and (*si quidquid aliis non licet solis licet*, 272). Clytemnestra, however, is adamant in her views about Agamemnon’s forgiveness, bringing the example of Helen, to whom Agamemnon showed forgiveness: (*ignouit Helenae*, 273). Aegisthus responds by arguing that her situation is different from Helen’s, and that Agamemnon is now in search of Clytemnestra’s crimes and is preparing a case against her (*iam crimen ille quaerit et causas parat*, 277). He claims that, since Agamemnon has tyrannical qualities, he will not investigate her case to determine her guilt, but he will rather make her guilty (*ubi dominus odit, fit nocens, non quaeritur*, 280). The use of the technical term *causa* suggests the perception of Clytemnestra’s situation - and subsequent establishment of her identity - as a judicial procedure.

### 3.6.6 CLYTEMNESTRA’S ANTAGONISTIC SELF-INVENTION

Here it is argued that Clytemnestra’s characterisation is constructed agonistically. The element of declamatory agonism refers, first, to the negotiation of her identity on the basis of the declamatory anthropological categories, and, second, to the judicial nuances scattered throughout the portrayal of that negotiation. There the feature of agonism in Clytemnestra’s characterisation is traced in the antagonistic attitude which Clytemnestra demonstrates towards other mythological figures and fictions, which has been designated as ‘second-level agonism’. The destructive effect of the presence of Thyestes’ ghost in Agamemnon’s palace, with the rage which it will kindle in Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is the source of inspiration that makes all other mythical criminals pale in the comparison. In that sense, Agamemnon’s murder and its consequences are presented as exceeding in viciousness all previous similar instances.

Indeed, Clytemnestra remarks that the entire house of Pelops has been marked by consecutive criminal behaviours, one surpassing the other in monstrosity. Lines 116-24 illustrate Clytemnestra’s metafictional awareness:

\[
\text{Tecum ipsa nunc eoulu femineos dolos,}
\]
\[
\text{quod ulla coniunx perfida atque impos sui}
\]

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233 Tarrant (1976), 223 discusses the corruption in this passage. He explains that the fact that Agamemnon and not Menelaus is credited with Helen’s pardon can be supported by the order of events presented by Quintus Smyrnaeus (3.385-415), ‘who probably followed a pre-Senecan Greek source’.
amore caeco, quod nouercales manus
ausae, quod ardens impia uirgo face

Phasiaca fugiens regna Thessalica trabe:
ferrum, uenena – uel Mycenaeas domos
coniuncta socio profuge furtiuqa rate.

Quid timida loqueris furta et exilium et fugas?
soror ista fecit: te decet maius nefas.

(116-24)

In the first line the imperative evolue - which can have the meaning 'to unroll and read a book'- implies that Clytemnestra is aware of the involvement of her situation in a universe of literary fictions. Tarrant (1976) explains, however, that the occurrence of tecum with evolue renders the meaning of the verb as 'ponder'. Regardless of the specific interpretative line one may take, the verb evolue suggests Clytemnestra’s high levels of meta-literary awareness. In that sense, she is presented as urging herself to revisit these other fictions, and engaging in an antagonistic relationship with feminine figures and their contrivances. The relevance of the other fictions to her own circumstances is dictated by the declamatory anthropological categories ‘stepmother’ (nouercales manus) ‘impious wife’ (coniunx perfida) which function as lenses for revisiting and reflecting upon the literary past. The allusion to other mythological figures and her antagonistic attitude towards them leads to the articulation of Clytemnestra’s desire to surpass them (te decet maius nefas). More specifically, her allusions include Phaedra, the infamous stepmother, Medea, murderous mother (who acted in the manner of a stepmother to her own children), and her own sister Helen.

The word used to refer to the crimes of the family constantly surpassing one another is uincens (surpassing) thus establishing the agonistic tone for the entire drama: o scelera semper sceleribus uincens domus (169). It is worth reminding the reader that this same idea was programmatically expressed by Thyestes’ ghost in the prologue of the drama, where he promoted his agonistic disposition by instigating agonism in the current circumstances as well (uincam Thyestes sceleribus cunctos meis, 25). Thyestes’ ghost seeks to overcome the past events and even his past self (sed maius aliud ausa commisso scelus / gnatae

234 evolue diligenter eius eum librum qui est de animo (Cic. Tusc. 1.11.24).
235 Tarrant (1976), 196.
236 Tarrant (1976), 196 points out that ‘The passage thus appears to move from a generic reference to one which might be either generic or specific’.

111
nefandos petere concubitus iubet, 29-30), by attributing a causal force to his name in line 25
\[\text{uincam Thyestes sceleribus cunctos meis} \ 'I will win being Thyestes / since I am Thyestes'. \]

The metafictional signs in Clytemnestra’s words are also accompanied by evidence of rhetorical awareness, as the following passage suggests: accingere, anime: bella non leuia apparas. / scelus occumpandum est; pigra, quem expectas diem? (193). Here Clytemnestra accuses herself of laziness in not acting promptly, according to the literal meaning of pigra. This adjective, however, can also be interpreted metaphorically, that is, as a reference to Clytemnestra as a speaker, since the use of pigra is attested in similar contexts in other Senecan dramas, such as Thyestes, describing style, in terms which betray a fusion of moral character and rhetorical style. Criticising her verbal activities and instructing herself on how to modify them, in order to increase her rhetorical and moral effectiveness, are indicative of Clytemnestra’s high level of self-awareness. Such an antagonistic attitude foregrounds the agonistic aspect of Clytemnestra’s characterisation, adding thus to the ludic process of enquiring and establishing Clytemnestra’s identity.

3.7 THYESTES

The Elder Seneca’s collection of declamations provides us with a declamatory situation which is very similar to the myth of Atreus and Thyestes: Contr. 1.1 features two brothers who bear a grudge against each other, while the child of one of the brothers faces the consequences of his father and uncle’s mutual hostility. This suggests that the myth of Atreus and Thyestes with their impious behaviour to each other and the ethical questions which arise provides thematically suitable material for a declamatory treatment. In what follows we will examine the ways in which Seneca manipulates Atreus and Thyestes’ myth, in order to confer on it an inflection of declamatory ludism.

The two brothers inflict upon each other evils which trigger a crisis of identity and social status. This creates the need for reflection upon, and re-definition of, the aspects in which their identities consist. It will be argued that their characterisation relies on negotiating their identity on the basis of an antithetical binary, the declamatory anthropological categories

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237 The use of the name Thyestes here is similar to Medea’s, in expressions such as Medea superest and Medea – fiam (Med. 171), as in both cases the character’s name creates expectations and becomes synonymous with specific moral traits. At the same time, the high levels of rhetorical awareness suggests that the character seeks to acquire their self-accomplishment, and become their true selves by engaging themselves in a process of agonistic invention. In the present context Thyestes strives to overcome any other criminal behaviours in his family by becoming himself. Tarrant (1976), 172 also compares Thyestes’ awareness of his mythical reputation to Medea’s.

238 For instance, Horace uses it to describe Lucilius’ style: garrulus atque piger scribendi ferre laborem, / scribendi recte: nam ut multum, nil moror (Hor. Serm. 1.4.12-13).

239 Frings (1992) approaches Seneca’s Thyestes as an elaboration of the motif of fraternal enmity.
pater—tyrannus; also that these categories provide the characters with opportunities for role-playing and re-enacting a scenario within the drama, thus creating a metadramatic level of action. At the same time, these categories will be shown to function on a metafictional level establishing intertextual links with other fictions.

3.7.1 SOCIAL ROLES EMPHASISED

The tendency towards abstraction through emphasis on social roles is a major feature of the ludic mechanisms of declamatory rhetoric, and Seneca’s tendency to apply this to his own treatment of the myths has been identified in other dramas. Thyestes is no exception, as lines 26-47 demonstrate. The passage is spoken by the Fury in the prologue of the drama. As is expected of an agent of turmoil, the Fury intends to wreak havoc on whole families, and the frenzy (furor) and rage (rabies) which she threatens to induce will provoke impious actions which will pass from the fathers into the grandchildren (rabies parentum duret et longum nefas eat in nepotes, 28). The line speaks of family strife in general family terms, which will be elaborated upon later.

Indeed the Fury provides a compilation of mythological instances of impiety described only in abstract terms which refer to family roles. Moreover, this level of abstraction allows us to ‘read’ several mythological figures and events: brothers will fear each other (fratrem expauescat frater, 40) can be seen as an allusion not only to the myth of Atreus and Thyestes, but also to any myth which involves hostility between brothers, such as the case of Eteocles and Polynice; gnatum (sc. expauescat) parens (40) may allude to the myth Orestes and Clytemnestra, or even of Oedipus and Laius; gnatusque patrem (41) can be an allusion to Hippolytus and Theseus; liberi pereant male (41) may apply to the case of Thyestes’ children, but also to Medea’s children; peius tamen nascantur (42) can be an allusion to Jocaste and her children from her incestuous relationship with her son Oedipus, whilst immineat uiro infesta coniunx (42) to Clytemnestra’s murderous hostility to Agamemnon, or even to Medea’s hatred for Jason; finally, impia stuprum domo leuissimum sit fratris (45-6) may be an allusion to Thyestes sleeping with his brother Atreus’ wife. Seneca’s Thyestes is an elaboration of this last case mentioned by the Fury, with Atreus taking revenge on his brother Thyestes’ sexual relationships with his wife.

3.7.2 ROLES THROWN INTO CONFUSION

Atreus’ obsession with his brother’s impious relationship with his wife crops up several times in the course of the drama. This suggests thus that these two issues are of the utmost importance for Atreus’ self-perception. One such instance is the passage coniugem stupro abstulit / regnumque furto (222-3). Atreus addresses two issues which are both associated with his social status, namely paternity and political power: he claims that his brother’s impious relationship with his wife (stupro) deprived him of the certainty that he is the natural father of his children, and accuses him of the usurpation of his throne by a crafty deceit. A few lines later we encounter another passage (237-41) which deals with the exact same
issues, Atreus’ deprivation of political power, disturbance of his family balance and of its members’ social status. The passage indicates that the double taint which his brother has inflicted on him questions crucial aspects which determine Atreus’ identity: from being king he was turned into an exile wandering within his own realm (per regna trepidus exul errau mea, 237), his wife was corrupted (corrupta coniunx, 239), his faith in his political power was shaken (imperi quassa est fides, 239), his house has been enfeebled (domus aegra, 240), and his offspring is dubious (dubius sanguis, 240). Finally the phrase certi nihil summarises his sense of absolute uncertainty regarding all essential constituents of his identity.\(^{240}\)

Atreus now claims that, by involving his children in his plot against his brother (and their uncle) Thyestes, he will test out their paternity: if they refuse to engage in a war (si bella abnuunt, 228),\(^{241}\) if they do not wish to bear a grudge (gerere nolunt odia, 329) or if they arouse their uncle (patruum uocant, 329), then he must be their father. The final condition si patruum uocant (whose basic meaning is ‘if they call him uncle’) is of particular interest due to the semantic ambiguity in the meanings of verb uoco. More specifically, translating uoco as ‘arouse’ would imply that, if Atreus’ sons arouse their uncle Thyestes, and make him aware of his brother’s plot, then he must be their father, whom they want to protect. The verb uoco, however, can also have the judicial technical sense ‘summon into court’.\(^{242}\) According to this interpretative line, the sons’ summoning Thyestes to court would amount to them questioning his innocence and, by implication, Atreus’ paternity. A third meaning of uoco is ‘to invite one as a guest to a dinner’.\(^{243}\) This meaning relates to a central element of Atreus and Thyestes’ myth, the banquet. In this manner si patruum uocant would have the meaning ‘if they (sc. the sons) invite their uncle to the banquet’. It is worth remembering that the dinner itself is contrived by Atreus as Thyestes’ punishment for the misfortunes which he inflicted on him. The invitation of Thyestes to the dinner by Atreus’ sons can be seen as a declaration on their part of his guilt, and at the same time their assent to his punishment.

For these two meanings of uoco to be plausible interpretations of the phrase in question, one needs to accept that the sons are implicated in a highly intellectual game, as their summoning their uncle to a lawsuit would amount to a reading of their situation in judicial terms. The children’s consent to invite their uncle to Atreus’ dinner is perceived by Atreus as a confirmation by them of his guilt, as they consider him to deserve to be invited to it, and to have to deal with its consequences. In this manner Atreus is presented as expecting his children to participate in the intellectual game of literary allusions.

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\(^{240}\) See Guastella (2005).

\(^{241}\) Medea uses the verb abnuo with regards to her children (Med. 507).

\(^{242}\) For instance, tribuni etiam consulem in rostra uocari iusserunt (Varr. ap. Gell. 13.12.6).

\(^{243}\) Spatium apparandis nuptiis, uocandi, sacrificandi dabitur paululum (Ter. Phorm. 4.4.21).
3.7.3 NEGOTIATING ATREUS’ AND THYESTES’ IDENTITIES

With social and family roles having been thrown into confusion, Atreus’ stratagem against Thyestes is essentially an attempt to define his own and his brother’s identities by means of the exact same categories (pater-tyrannus). The question underlying the plot against Thyestes is whether he is the father of Atreus’ children or not, and the passage si patruum uocant, pater est expresses the need for negotiation of Thyestes’ identity. If he is, then Atreus can clearly not be their father, hence the mutual exclusiveness of the terms in which their identities are defined in the drama. Atreus thus seeks to reveal Thyestes’ true nature.

Atreus believes that Thyestes covets his brother’s political power (regna nunc sperat mea, 289), and that his yearning for the throne will make him overcome his hatred and approach him again (hac spe, quod esse maximum retur malum / fratrem uidebit, 293-4). The temptation with which Thyestes will be faced is the alternating possession of the throne (Argos regat ex parte dominus, 298-9). His response to the temptation of becoming a co-ruler will be used as part of the negotiation of his identity. The phrase ex parte dominus can yield further meanings which may enrich our interpretation of the passage, and which stem from the different meanings of the word dominus.

More specifically dominus can refer to the master of a feast, or the host. Within the context of a myth in which the feast (epulae) plays a central role, this reference may allow us to ‘read’ a particularly metafictional comment in this passage, according to which Atreus’ words are an ironic allusion to Thyestes’ banquet. Such an interpretation emanates from the understanding that Atreus is a character of intense metadramatic and metafictional awareness. A second interesting interpretation of the passage is based on the meaning of the word dominus as the master of a play or of public games. This interpretation relates to the previous one, as it relies on the perception of the scene of Thyestes’ feast as a ludic activity. In that sense, Atreus sees himself as the master of the play, and he also ironically attaches the same title to Thyestes, who is in fact the object of the play rather than the

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244 Giancotti (1989) provides a commentary on the second choral ode of Thyestes which ends with the phrase illi mors grauis incubat / qui, notus nimis omnibus / ignotus moritur sibi (401-3). These lines underscore the importance of the characters’ identity in Seneca’s Thyestes.

245 This phrase may be seen as an equivalent to Jocaste’s words: hoc iacet ferro meus / coniunx – quid illum nomine haud uero uocas? socer est. (Oedip. 1034-6).

246 Apart from the interpretations of dominus analysed in the main text, it is worth pointing out that Tarrant (1985), 132 argues that ‘the wording may have a legal flavour’.

247 Cum tot hominum milia accumberent, sum ipse epuli dominus, Q. Arrius albatis esset, tu in templum Castoris te cum C. Fibulo atrato ceterisque tuis furis funestum intulisti, quis tum non ingemuit, quis non doluit rei publicae casum? (Cic. Uatin. 13.31).

248 quae mihi atque uobis res uortat bene Gregique huic et dominis atque conductoribus (Plaut. As. prol. 3).
master of it. This interpretation is in accord with the tendency observed in the Senecan dramatic corpus to use imagery inspired by gladiatorial spectacles.

Thyestes' words seem to corroborate Atreus' views on his true nature, as they reveal his struggles to resist the temptation of trusting two supposedly most untrustworthy things, his brother and kingship (rebus incertissimis, fratri atque regno credis, 424-5), and claim that passions which remained dormant for a long time are now being aroused again, and that he fears evils long conquered (metuis mala iam uicta, iam mansueta, et aerumnas fugis, 426). To these characteristics should also be added the fear and suspiciousness towards his relatives which is outlined later in the drama: nihil timendum uideo, sed timento tamen (435). In fact the revelation of tyrannical tendencies concerns not only Thyestes, but also Atreus himself, as lines 246-8 indicate: in his exchange with the assistant (satelles), Atreus declares his tyrannical intentions in a straightforward manner (perimat tyrannus lenis) with cruelty being the major feature which his words suggest about himself as a ruler (in regno meo mors impetratur).

3.7.4 ATREUS' AND THYESTES' SPECTACLE OF THE ARENA

The ludic properties of characterisation can also be traced in the judicial conception of the circumstances which Tantalus' ghost demonstrates. He refers to Minos, the judge of the Underworld (durus umbrarum arbiter, 14), who should add to the punishments he imposes, so that they correspond to the monstrosity of the crimes committed by people in his lineage: addi si quid ad poenas potest / quod ipse custos carceris diri horreat (15-6). Such words and phrases as arbiter, supplicia disponis and quaere promote the judicial conception of the circumstances. This tendency is pursued further in the acts of the drama. Atreus seeks inspiration from the Daulian parent and sister, an allusion to the myth of the sisters Procne and Philomela. Their relevance here lies, as Atreus argues, in the resemblance which his case bears to theirs (causa est similis, 276). The term causa used by Atreus in reference to his situation can arguably be consonant with the judicial understanding of the events. Furthermore, not only Atreus but also Thyestes refers to the events in these terms, when he makes an honest confession of his share of guilt in his misfortune (causa, ..., utriusque mala sit; si minus, mala sit mea, 1087-8), when Atreus' plot against him and his children has been revealed.

The prologue helps establish the metatheatrical properties of the drama as a whole. There the events are presented as a spectacle watched by Tantalus' ghost: the Fury demands that Tantalus' ghost pollute the palace of Atreus with his presence, and that he be the spectator (spectante te, 66) of the events which will result from it. He is also endowed with an intense

Knoche (1941) points out that Seneca's portrayal of Atreus is that of a brutal tyrant.

It is worth pointing out that the reference to Minos as the judge of the Underworld is also encountered in Phaedra and Agamemnon.
awareness of the fictionality of the events, as his statement suggests: *in quod malum transcribor?* (13).\(^{251}\)

When the Fury refers to the criminal relationship between Atreus and Thyestes, she uses terms which echo warfare: *certetur omni scelere et alterna uice / stringatur ensis* (25-6). For instance, the occurrence of such words as *certetur* and *ensis* in reference to the crime portrayed in the drama, suggests that this is perceived in military terms. However, the intense theatricality and fictionality which the Fury identifies in the events suggest that the vocabulary is not merely military; in addition, the theatrical tendencies of the spectacles of the arena, which often re-enacted popular myths, makes this military passage also suggestive of gladiatorial display. Moreover, the fact that such perception is articulated by the Fury has further implications for her own status: if the Fury instructs Tantalus’ ghost regarding his role in the events which are described spectacles of the arena, it is tempting to perceive the Fury as the co-ordinator of such a spectacle (*munerarius*), in a manner similar to Juno’s role in *Hercules Furens*. The language used to refer to Atreus’ attitude and actions towards Thyestes suggests that these should be seen as instances of gladiatorial spectacles.

### 3.7.5 METAFIGTIONAL AWARENESS

At the same time, a number of passages indicate a tendency to conflate the understanding of events as spectacles of the arena, with antagonistic metafictional awareness. One such instance is encountered in the lines *Sceleris hunc finem putas? / gradus est* (746-7), where the agonistic sense of *gradus* (station, position, ground taken by a combatant), which may also be interpreted in the rhetorical sense of ‘degree, stage’.\(^{252}\) The messenger’s account of Atreus’ crime demonstrates an understanding of the situation as an admixture of rhetorical elements and military imagery. In that sense, the crime is only a stage in the development of Atreus’ full potential, and this is achieved through a theatricalised battle between the two brothers. In the passage *libet uidere, capita natorum intuens, / quos det colores, uerba quae primus dolor / effundat* (903-5), Atreus refers to the upcoming revelation of his crime and to Thyestes’ reaction to it in pure rhetorical terms such as *quae uerba, quos colores*.\(^{253}\)

Rhetorical consciousness can be identified not only in the description of the situation, but also in the characters’ self-perception and self-fashioning. For instance, Atreus addresses himself with the following words: *ignae, iners, eneruis et (quod maximum / probrum tyranno*

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\(^{251}\) On the issue of the metaliterary implications of this statement, see Schiesaro (2003), 26ff.

\(^{252}\) *OLD longa principiorum praeparatio et narrationis alte repetita series et multarum divisionum ostentatio et mille argumentorum gradus* (Quint. *Dial.* 19).

\(^{253}\) Goldberg (1997),125.
On a literal level, with this statement Atreus urges himself on to more effective actions. The occurrence of the words ignaue, iners, eneruis, all three of them also being terms which are encountered in contexts referring to style, suggests that Atreus reproaches himself for an poor rhetorical performance in his attitude towards his brother. Atreus also describes his brother’s mental disposition in rhetorical terms (noui ego ingenium uiri / indocile: flecti non potest – frangi potest, 199-200), with the term fractus being attested in use to refer to the stylistic options of an orator. These statements imply that the drama portrays actual actions as much as moral dispositions, and that the characters’ moral identity cannot be seen in isolation from their speech which helps construct their ethos. In support of this interpretation comes Seneca’s Epistle 114 (talis oratio qualis uitae) and his De Vita Beata 13.4, where he argues that an effeminate style is a reflection of the speaker’s morals. In particular, the latter passage features the use of such terms as fractus and eneruis in a fusion of style and ‘a lapse in masculinity’.

After expressing his dissatisfaction with his past actions, Atreus directs himself towards more extreme practices. He proceeds by elaborating on their nature, with the emphasis being on his attempt to overcome his brother: scelera non ulceris, nisi vincis (195-6). In the light of his words in the previous passage, the battle with his brother will be on a rhetorical as well as on an ethical level.

Atreus’ words suggest that he embarks on a process of agonistic invention in his attempt to find a suitable punishment for Thyestes’ behaviour:

fateor, immane est scelus,

sed occupatum: maius hoc aliquid dolor

inueniat. animum Daulis inspira parens

sororque.

(273-6)

Once again the occurrence of the verb inueniat, with its rhetorical nuances, can be taken as an indication that rhetorical invention is in progress. The reference to the Daulian parent and sister (Daulis parens et soror) is an allusion to the myth of Procne and Philomela, from which...

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254 Note also that eneruis may also have sexual connotation, given the literal sense of neruus as ‘penis’. This relates to the centrality of the issue of paternity in Atreus’ self-perception.

255 This is an instance of associating style with ethics. Indeed Seneca was a proponent of the idea that one’s style represents one’s morals. See Graver (1998) on the topic.

256 corrupta oratio maxime comprehensione obscura, compositione fracta consistit (Quint. Inst. 8.3.57). The term flecti may also be seen as a rhetorical technical term: hinc mille flexus et artes (Quint. Inst. 5.13.2).

257 Richlin (1997),69.
Atreus seeks inspiration. The similarities with his situation make that myth an appropriate precedent, and Atreus is presented as aware of the fact. His desire to innovate, however, makes their example unsatisfactory, precisely because this has already been taken by someone else: *sed occupatum* (274).

3.7.6 ATREUS’ INVENTION OF MORAL INVERSIONS

The process of invention in which Atreus engages himself is characterised by the unrealistic nature of the criminal plot against his brother: *quid esse tam saeuum potest*? (196). This question, which is equal to a negative (that is, there is nothing so brutal as to surpass my brother’s brutality), implies that the product of Atreus’ invention will be beyond brutality, and in that sense it will belong in the area of the impossible. Accordingly, what we find next is an argument for the appropriateness of his criminal plans: *fas est in illo quidquid in fratre est nefas* (220).

This inversion of the moral code, which demonstrates awareness of its own inverted nature with regards to what constitutes appropriate behaviour between two brothers, lies at the foundation of the declamatory ludism in *Thyestes*. According to Atreus, there is nothing which can possibly surpass Thyestes in brutality other than himself (*ipso Thyeste*, 259), precisely because the ethics which govern his mind have been overturned in such a way that what is commonly accepted as impiety is, for him and his circumstances, piety. He even urges Piety to transgress its established boundaries: *excede, Pietas, si modo in nostra domo umquam fuisti* (249-50). He finally claims ignorance of the precise nature of the prospective crime, only confirming that it will surpass normal expectations: *nescioquid animus maius et solito amplius / supraque fines moris humani tumet* (267-8). In this manner the drama articulates the inversion of the content of piety and impiety in Atreus’ and Thyestes’ situation.

3.7.7 ESTABLISHING ATREUS’ FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATUS

In his attempt to expose Thyestes’ suppressed passions, Atreus comments on Thyestes’ unkempt appearance (524-5), and appears to be willing to share his estates with his brother (526-7). Emphasis is laid on the political side of the sharing between the two brothers: the paternal grandeur, the kingship inherited from their father, will belong to both of them (*fratri paternum reddere incolumi decus*, 528). Within the context of the myth, however, where the

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258 The phrase *occupatum est* recalls Clytemnestra’s words *scelus occupandum est* (Aga. 193), when she is also in the process of agonistic invention.

259 For the sense of *excedo* as ‘to go beyond a certain boundary or a certain measure, to advance, to proceed, to transgress, digress’ see OLD *excedo* B2a: *ut primum ex pueris excessit Archias* (Cic. Arch. 3).

260 Seidensticker (1985) describes how the rhetorical significance of the motive *maius solito* also has implications on a socio-political level. These implications were explored in chapter 3.7.1 entitled ‘Social roles emphasised’.
issue of the questioned paternity is central, the phrase *paternum decus* may also assume the meaning of ‘the grandeur of the paternal role’. In that sense Atreus’ words may acquire a highly ironic tone, as they would be an insinuation of the possible sharing of the paternity of his own children. Such an ambiguity on the issue of what belongs to whom characterises not only Atreus’ words, but also Thyestes’: *AT. recipit hoc regnum duos. / TH. meum esse credo quidquid est, frater, tuum* (535-6). To Atreus declaring the sharing of the kingship, Thyestes responds that whatever belongs to Atreus he considers to be his, which may have further implications. As Fitch notes, this is a diplomatic response, as it can have both a positive ‘I do not need to share power formally, since I enjoy it through you’, and a negative meaning ‘I do not need to share something with you which is already mine.’

When finally Thyestes accepts the shared kingship (*accipio: regni nomen impositi feram, / sed iura et arma seruient mecum tibi*, 542-3), his words are reminiscent of Oedipus’ words in the opening monologue of his play: *quam bene parentis sceptra Polybi fugeram! / curis solutus exul, intrepidus uagans / (caelum deosque testor) in regnum incidi* (*Oed*. 12-14). This is an indication of the common language which is used by two characters flirting with the role of the tyrant, and as such it is a further confirmation of Thyestes’ tyrannical tendencies. Thyestes thus cannot be considered to be so innocent as he regards himself as being.

In fact, when Atreus has murdered Thyestes’ children a few lines later, the Chorus’ response to the Messenger bringing the bad tidings is: *CHO. quid sit quod horres ede et auctorem indica: / non quaero quis sit, sed uter. effare occius* (639-40). The Chorus’ response reveals a knowledge of the true nature of Atreus and Thyestes, as they consider either of them capable of criminal behaviour: *non quaero quis sit, sed uter* (640).

When it is finally proven that his brother is not his children’s father, Atreus declares that he has secured his political power – literally, the father’s throne: *nunc decora regni teneo, nunc solium patris (sc. teneo)* (887). This statement can be interpreted as referring to Atreus’ restored status as a father, since he has now confirmed his children’s paternity. In that sense, Atreus celebrates his retrieved virility. My interpretation of the phrase *solium patris* can find support in the use of the verb *implere* in the following lines. Atreus declares that what he has done is not enough, and that he will fill up the father, Thyestes, with the corpses of his sons: *sed cur satis sit? pergam et implebo patrem / funere suorum* (890-1). On a literal level, the use of *implere* here refers to the actual filling of Thyestes’ stomach with his children’s flesh. On a metaphorical level, and within the context of Atreus’ proudly asserted

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261 Fitch (2004), 277.
262 Tarrant (1985), 167 also comments that ‘Atreus is bound to interpret it as meaning “I regard the kingdom you now rule as belonging to me”’. 
263 Tarrant (1985), 167 comments on line 539 *tua ... mea*, ‘Thyestes unwittingly incriminates himself’.
264 Gigon (1938-39) and Poe (1969) consider Thyestes an innocent character, whereas Marti (1945), 239-40 considers him guilty.
virility, the meaning of implere as ‘impregnate’ is also appropriate. The occurrence of the same phrase implero patrem a few lines later hints at the significance of the confirmation of his patria potestas, and the retrieval of Atreus’ identity (979).

At the end of the play, after Atreus has committed the crime, he is confident to celebrate his victory in the battle of politics and family relationships, as his words suggest: nunc meas laudo manus, / nunc parta uera est palma (1096-7). The two notions appear to be intertwined, as the use of the verb parta est indicates: the true victory to which he has given birth, with the alliteration of the two words parta - palma pointing at their affinity. At the same time the proximity of the two notions is further emphasised by the use of the adjective uerus in reference to the victory (palma). The occurrence of the adjective in contexts concerning issues of the legitimacy of children allows one to read Atreus’ victory as one concerning the paternity of his children. Atreus believes he has finally restored his trust in the virtue of his marital chambers [sc. nunc credo] castis nunc fidem reddi toris (1099).

It is worth pointing out the similarity of Atreus’ words nunc parta uera est palma with Medea’s words parta iam, parta ultio est: / peperi (Med. 24-5). Their individual situations are a repetition, and an inversion at the same time, of each other’s status. More specifically, both Medea and Atreus have had their identity questioned due to the infidelity of their partners, while their social status is also questioned due to the circumstances. Their children play for both a major role in the course of action for which they opt. What differentiates them, however, is the manner in which they think their relationship to their children will determine their own identity. In Medea’s case, the advent of the new wife nullifies Medea’s status as a mother. Since her identity is mapped on the binary mater–nouerca (mother-stepmother), the elimination of her role as a mother inevitably means that she can only have the role of the stepmother to embody. Thus her behaviour towards her children is a stepmotherly behaviour, by which she believes she can retrieve what she considers to be her lost dignity (honor). By contrast, Atreus’ dignity relies on him confirming his status as a father. The confirmation of the paternity of his children is essential to his identity, as this is mapped on the declamatory binary pater–tyrannus. The means, however, by which he achieves the confirmation of his patria potestas create a tyrannical portrait of someone who undermines the structure of his family with his criminal actions.

3.8 TROADES

Seneca’s Troades deals with the aftermath of the Trojan war as it affects the women of Troy, portraying at the same time the attitudes of the victors of the war, the Achaeans. The fact

265 (Peleus Thetidem) ingenti implet Achille, Ov. Met. 11.625. Tarrant’s comment [Tarrant (1985), 217] on line 890 does not make reference to this sense of implero, neither does it follow my interpretative line. Littlewood (1997) points out the apparent absence of feminine figures in Seneca’s Thyestes, with gendered speech functioning as a substitute.

266 tunc igitur ueris gaudebat Graecia natis (Prop. 2.9.17).
that the myth involves the viewpoints of the two opposing sides, the victors and the vanquished, accommodates a declamatory treatment. The presentation of events in the drama also satisfies the ludic feature of temporariness. These events take place while the Argives seek to get the wind to blow again, so they can set off from Troy. This establishes the time frame for the events as a restricted period of time, within which the ludic process of portrayal of identity and social status will take place. This spatio-temporal restriction also relates to the ludic feature of ‘stepping out of real life’. Seneca’s Troades fulfil this requirement, as the characters are currently in a transitional phase which is outside of normal life. The creation of order as another ludic feature is an all-pervasive feature of the play. It can be traced in instances where the characters, either the Trojan women or the Argives, make references to, and reflect on, the properties of the new socio-political order, and to how this affects their identities.

Seneca seems to lay emphasis on the negotiation of the characters’ identity. There is a particular interest in the impact of the war on the social status both of the women of Troy and the Argives, since both have now undergone a change. The former used to be the wives and mothers of kings and princes, but are now prizes which belong to their conquerors; the latter were heroic fathers and rulers, who now have turned into tyrants. The two sides thus engage in a process of negotiation of their identities.

Unlike characters in the other dramas, characters in Seneca’s Troades do not attempt to re-define the content of moral values in an attempt to justify their behaviour and actions. The Trojan women merely accept the situation, and grieve their lost social status, and anything which that involved. The Argives reproduce established patterns of behaviour associated with imperialism, even though they attempt to disguise this by creating a ludic context for their character portrayal. In that sense declamatory ludism in the Troades does not articulate tensions developed between two opposing codes of morality, a conventional and a Stoic one. It rather draws to attention of how little relevance and applicability is Stoic ethics in a world where authority is informed by non-Stoic attitudes.

3.8.1 CHARACTERS AS FAMILY / SOCIAL ROLES

As has been observed in other plays of the Senecan corpus, characterisation in the Troades follows a general tendency to strip the characters of their specifics, and to emphasise their familial and social roles. A first relevant passage (57-61) spoken by Hecuba comes from the opening monologue of the drama, and therefore acquires a programmatic force for my reading of the subsequent acts. The first three lines promote an approach to the characters in abstract, social roles: the daughters and daughters-in-law of Priam (Priami nuribus et natis) become the new masters’ (dominum) subjects, while these masters have previously

267 Vieldberg (1994) delineates the significance of necessity (necessitas) on a political level in the plot of Seneca’s Troades. Bishop (1972) points out that the passage from an old way of life to a new order is an issue that pervades Seneca’s Troades.
married women betrothed to them. Hecuba’s words point to the inversion of the previous political status, and to the new order which has been imposed on all Trojan women. In lines 44-50 she elaborates on the nature of new political order: she relates Priam’s assassination by Pyrrhus (regiae caedis). Adjectives used by Hecuba in reference to Pyrrhus and his actions are ferox and saeua (manu) which have been encountered elsewhere suggesting the tyrannical tendencies of the Achaeans, the new rulers. The adjective senili which describes Priam’s old age contrasts with Pyrrhus’ youth. Indeed, in the exchange between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus the latter’s passionate behaviour and actions are characterised by the former as iuuenile uitium. In this way the contrast between the old and the new ruler is made more blatant, a contrast which also extends to the description of the inversion of the political status.

Andromache’s words in her exchange with Ulixes demonstrate a similar tendency to use familial and social terms, which aim to draw attention to the consequences which the new political order will have for her family. The passage 686-91 features a significantly high occurrence of family terms: with the exception of the proper name Danaos, there are no references to persons by their proper names, which have been replaced by their family role. For instance, in ruina mater et gnatum et uirum / prosternis una? (686-7), Andromache uses the words mother, son and father, in the place of proper names, when she warns Ulixes of the devastating effects of his actions. The same tendency appears a few lines later, when Andromache refers to Ulixes’ situation (698-703): again with the exception of the name Laerta, there is the same preference for familial terms over the use of proper names. References to Penelope (coniugis sanctae torus), to Telemachus (iuuenis tuus), and to Ulixes himself (ingenio patrem) place Ulixes and Andromache on the same level which parenthood provides. Treating her situation in general terms allows Andromache to invoke Ulixes as a paterfamilias, and to seek his empathy.

3.8.2 HECUBA: JUST A MOURNING MOTHER?

Hecuba’s contribution to the plot is minimal. She is a mother figure who mourns for the loss of her husband and son. In declamatory terms, she can be classed as a mourning mother, as is confirmed by her joint lament with the chorus about Hector: Hectora flemus (115-6). Her words, however, may invite interpretations of her role which make her characterisation more subtle than meets the eye. In the opening speech of the drama, Hecuba makes the following statement: meus ignis iste est, facibus ardetis meis (40). With these words she associates the fall of Troy with her pregnancy of Paris, during which she dreamt of giving birth to a burning torch, an omen of the sack of Troy (uidi grauida). In that sense Hecuba confesses her guilt and argues for her responsibility for Troy’s fall, by presenting Paris’ birth as the cause of the entire course of events.
Hecuba’s words *uidi grauida* will remind one of Medea’s words *parta iam, parta ultio est: peperi* (Med. 25-6) and also Atreus’ words *nunc parta uera est palma* (Thy. 1097). A comparison with Medea’s and Atreus’ cases indicates that the characters associate the birth of their child/children with a means to re-establish their identity which current circumstances have thrown into doubt. Ultimately birth is exploited as a way of defining roles and identities, and of articulating one’s objections to a current problematic situation. Hecuba therefore considers herself an agent of destruction for her family, in the same manner as do Medea or Atreus in their own myths, hence the promotion of birth as a means of establishing a character’s identity. By giving birth to Paris, Hecuba has undermined her own social and family status. Her contradictory description is that of a *materfamilias* mourning for the new political order, which she has triggered by giving birth to her son Paris.

The association of the fall of Troy with the birth of Paris accounts for Hecuba’s unorthodox self-characterisation as a *uana uates* (37). The unorthodoxy of such a role lies in the metalinguistic connotations which the word *uates* confers on her, as it allows her to acquire the role of the creator/author of her situation. Furthermore, her instructions to the Chorus in their joint dialogical choral ode which follows her opening monologue in the play appear to support of the reading of Hecuba as a creator of the events. For instance, the following passages involve stage directions by Hecuba to the women of Troy: *soluite crinem* (84), *cingat tunicas palla solutas* (92). The use of the word *palla*, the dress of a tragic actor, will remind one of the Roman *fabulae palliatae*. Although these are primarily plays based on Greek comedies, there may be an implication that Hecuba perceives the chorus of Trojan women as tragic actors who participate in the dramatisation of a Greek myth for a Roman audience. Two other passages, *uertite planctus* (130) and *aliо lacrimas flectite uestras* (142), can be interpreted as self-referential comments on the technical aspects of choral lyric poetry. In particular, it is tempting to interpret the verb *uertite* (*uerto* = Greek *στρέφω > στροφή*) of line 130 as an allusion to the *στροφή* and ἀντιστροφή, the constituent parts of the choral odes in Greek tragedy. At the same time, the verb *flectite* of line 142 can have the metaphorical meaning ‘change the modulation of the voice, lengthen the tone’, in which case it would be a self-conscious comment on the singing nature of the choral ode.

Hecuba continues her lamentation about the new political circumstances by laying emphasis on the consequences with which the Trojan women are faced. The passage 152-5 from the dialogical choral ode sung jointly by Hecuba and the Chorus of Trojan women laments the current political situation. Hecuba instructs the Trojan women not to mourn for Priam, as he

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268 Possibly relevant also is Juno’s *uidi ipsa, uidi nocite discussa inferum et Dite domito spolia iactantem patri fraterna* (Herc. 50-2).

269 Jocelyn (1995) describes the association between the terms *uates* and *poeta*.

270 An instance of the metaphorical usage of the verb elsewhere is *infinitо illa flexa et circumducta sunt* (Quint. Inst. 11.3.172), in which Quintilian uses it in reference to the modulation of the voice in chanting.
was fortunate enough not to be humiliated by having his hands, which had been used to holding a sceptre (adsuetas ad sceptra manus), bound behind his back. This statement suggests that Hecuba recognises their current situation as a form of slavery for the Trojan women. A few lines earlier, however, the Chorus address Hecuba with the obsolete title of queen (regina, 80), and declare their devotion to her, who is for them still their mistress (dominam, 81).

Her words quis tam impotens ac durus et iniquae ferus / sortitor urnae regibus reges dedit? (981-2) illustrate her negative feelings about losing her status as a queen, and about becoming loot at the hands of another king. Furthermore, in the last few lines of the drama Hecuba exclaims: natam an nepotem, coniugem an patriam fleam/ an omnia an me? (1171-2). The binary on which Hecuba’s identity is mapped is mater (dolorosa) and dux femina: the passage articulates this internal debate with an ... an ... an ... an ... in a most blatant way. The natam an nepotem correspond to her role as a mater (dolorosa), while the coniugem an patriam to herself as the dux femina, as the references to Hecuba’s husband and the destroyed homeland have been associated throughout the drama with her lamenting for her own lost political power. This suggests that Hecuba can be classed as a bad materfamilias, not so very different from Medea, hence the similarities which they share in their attitude towards birth. Hecuba’s rhetoric articulates this negotiation through the binary good materfamilias (mater dolorosa) – bad materfamilias (dux femina).

3.8.3 NEGOTIATING ANDROMACHE’S IDENTITY

Unlike Hecuba, Andromache, the second major female figure of the drama, engages in an investigation of her identity as a result of the new political order. This becomes particularly obvious in her exchange with Ulixes, who has been sent by the Achaeans to capture her son Astyanax and bring him back as a sacrificial victim. In her attempt to save her son, she invents the plan of hiding him in his father Hector’s tomb, pretending that he is dead. Ulixes, however, suspects her lies and threatens to demolish Hector’s tomb, in order to kill Astyanax. This is the starting point of her oscillation between the role of mother and wife.

She deliberates which side she should allow to win her over, the son or the husband. The passage 643-4 clearly articulates the internal debate with which Andromache is faced. On the one side is her son (hinc natus), and on the other is the ashes of her beloved husband (illinc coniugis cari cinis). Andromache’s words pars utra uincet suggest that she perceives the situation in antilogical terms, which are reminiscent of the sophistical in utramque partem type of argumentation. In that sense her son and husband comprise the two opposing parties in the negotiation of her own identity. The ultimate question, to which Andromache is required to respond, is whether her role as a mother or as a wife will prevail. As has been the case for Hecuba, the answer to this question is not finite, but rather should be approached as an aporetic antithesis between the two parts of the binary on which her identity is mapped.
Andromache is presented as a mother who strives to find a hiding place for her son *(heu me, quis locus fidus meo / erit timori quae te sede occulam?*, 476-7). When her attempt to deceive Ulixes fails, she affects highly theatricalised behaviour, and instructs her son to play the role of a mourning character who imitates his mourning mother *(imitare)*, in order to make Ulixes take pity on him. Her words *gere captiuum positoque genu* (715) and *matris litus imitare tuae* (717), which are essentially stage directions,²⁷¹ betray a character who is aware of the nature of the situation and attempts to manipulate it. Just like Hecuba, Andromache can thus be identified as a *mater dolorosa*. The same passages which promote this role, however, seem to also allude to the role of wife, in such a way that the two roles conflict with each other.

The first such passage appears in the lines immediately following those in which Andromache deliberated which side to favour, her son’s or her husband’s. She claims that the only reason which makes her want to save her son is that he reminds her of her husband Hector *(non aliud, Hector, in meo nato mihi / placere quam te*, 646-7). Her statement *uiuat, ut possit tuos / referre uultus* (648) creates confusion as to the distinction of roles which Andromache identifies with regards to her husband and son. These may cause Andromache’s actions to acquire erotic connotations which are dissonant with the maternal tone of the expressed fears.

In particular, upon contriving the plan of hiding Astyanax in his father’s tomb, Andromache asks for Hector’s assistance in his pious wife’s *furtum: coniugis furtum piae / serua et fideli cinere uicturum excipe* (501-2). The use of *furtum* here clearly concerns Andromache’s crafty deceit to save her son from becoming the sacrificial victim of the Achaeans. At the same time, however, *furtum* can have the sense of secret love, introducing thus erotic connotations to the situation,²⁷² which is described in terms of an extramarital, secret relationship. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the words *coniugis...piae* and *furtum* is intensely ironic, as the secret erotic relationship contradicts her claim for being a pious wife. In this manner, Andromache’s insinuation of an erotic love for her son corresponds to her claim that her reason for rescuing him is that he bears a strong resemblance on his father. By rescuing Astyanax, therefore, she seeks to revive her late husband Hector.

It is worth noting that Phaedra describes Hippolytus in a similar eroticised manner: *in te magis refugit incomptus decor: / est genitor in te totus et toruae tamen / pars aliqua matris miscet ex aequo decus* *(Pha. 657-9)*, as she claims that she is still in love with a younger figure of Theseus which is now embodied by his son Hippolytus. Phaedra and Andromache are very much alike in that they see the father and the son as interchangeable. As a result

²⁷¹ *est igitur proprium munus magistratus, intellegere, se gerere personam ciuitatis debereque eius dignitatem et decus sustinere* (Cic. Off. 1.34.132).
²⁷² *hoc certe coniux furtum mea nesciat* (Ovid Met. 2.423).
they are in a state of confusion regarding their own roles as well, which is articulated in the unresolved negotiation of their identity.

Andromache’s characterisation thus is mapped to some extent on the binary materfamilias–nouerca. Her feelings for her son, which can only be identified as understatements scattered in her exchange with Ulixes, suggest that the boundaries of her maternal and conjugal roles are blurred. The social crisis of the Trojan war has triggered a passionate response from Andromache, which does not befit the role of a mother, and does not do justice to her role as a wife either: on the one hand, in her pious attitude towards her husband she commits a furtum, which essentially renders her faithfulness invalid; on the other hand, her maternal role is undermined by the sort of feelings for her son which have been associated through literary tradition with stepmothers such as Phaedra. Declamatory ludism thus helps articulate how Andromache cannot escape the aporetic split between the two different expressions of pietas in the roles which define her identity.

3.8.4 REFLECTING ON THE VICTORS’ SOCIAL STATUS

An approach along the lines of declamatory ludism can be taken to the characterisation of the victors in the play, as they are represented by Agamemnon, Pyrrhus and Ulixes. It will be shown that the negotiation of their identity is mapped on the declamatory binary uir fortis-tyrannus. The first two major male characters of the drama are Agamemnon and Pyrrhus. These engage in an exchange concerning the sacrifice of Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles, Pyrrhus’ father, upon the request of the latter’s ghost. Pyrrhus supports his father’s request, whereas Agamemnon speaks against it. The whole exchange revolves around issues of heroism or tyrannical behaviour. Pyrrhus argues for Achilles’ heroic deeds, yet in terms which suggest his father’s tyrannical disposition.

Two passages deserve our attention: in the first one, Pyrrhus refers to Achilles’ deeds by using the phrase fortem...manum (218), an indication that he seeks to establish his father as a uir fortis. In the second one, the language of violence reveals Achilles’ bloodthirsty nature and the fear which he inspires in people (cruore regio dextram imbuit, 217; haec tanta clades gentium ac tantus pauor, 229). This, paired with the savagery of killing Hector before the eyes of his father, compose the picture of a cruel tyrant.273 Pyrrhus’ argument for his father’s heroism involves the request of a reward for his merits and services (quae minor merces potest / tantae dari uirtutis? 209-10). Towards the end of his monologue, Pyrrhus’ words summarise the deliberation regarding Achilles’ identity, which to him concerns Achilles’ having Polyxena sacrificed as a deserved reward for his heroism: debeas Achilli, merita si digne aestimas / et si ex Mycenis uirginem atque Argis petat. / dubitatur etiam? (244-6).

Agamemnon’s response puts the issue of Pyrrhus’ request in different terms, as he claims to refuse to blemish Achilles’ heroic reputation with cruel actions: quid caede dira nobiles clari

273 The motif of killing someone’s son before his father’s eyes is a motif associated with tyrants, and is often found in declamation.
ducis / aspergis umbras (255-6). His objections to Polyxena’s prospective sacrifice appear to aim at entertaining the shadows of tyranny with which Pyrrhus’ defence of his father threatens to blemish Achilles, and at establishing Achilles as a proper heroic figure who will enjoy people’s praise in future years (illum laudibus cuncti canent / magnumque terrae nomen ignotae audient, 293-4). In his attempt to refute any potential suspicions about Achilles’ tyrannical behaviour (itself a suspicious action for Agamemnon, given the strife between him and Achilles), Agamemnon preaches against passionate actions, and promotes an anti-tyrannical profile of himself too: fateor, aliquando impotens / regno ac superbus altius memet tuli (266-7). He thus creates a regretful portrait of himself concerning his own past actions during the Trojan war with statements about the vanity of victory and of political power, seeking to present himself as a wise king who has learnt from his mistakes.

3.8.5 PYRRHUS AND ACHILLES: A DECLAMATORY SON DEFENDING HIS FATHER

Agamemnon’s refusal to consent to Polyxena’s sacrifice is interpreted by Pyrrhus as an attempt to deprive Achilles of his deserved reward and keep it for himself, as he did with Briseis. Pyrrhus bases such an accusation on suspicions of sexual licence behind Agamemnon’s objections to Polyxena’s sacrifice: iamne flammatum geris / amore subito pectus ac ueneris nouae (303-4). With sexual licence being a conventional feature of a tyrant, he calls Agamemnon a tyrant regum tyranne (303), triggering a fervent exchange between the two men.

In the course of their exchange Agamemnon contradicts his earlier statements about the necessity for preserving Achilles’ heroic memory unblemished by tyrannical suspicions, now attacking the heroic image which he previously appeared to defend. His attacks concern Achilles’ activities during the war and seek to establish a cowardly, even tyrannical disposition on Achilles’ part. When Pyrrhus accuses Agamemnon of cowardice (tu, graui pauidus metu / nec ad rogandum fortis, 315-6), Agamemnon turns the accusation back onto Achilles, accusing him of lack of valour and sloth. He now bases his accusations on Achilles’ refusal to take part in the Achaean’s efforts against Troy (inter caedes Graeciae atque uستas rates / segnis iacebat belli et armorum immemor, 319-20), and on his carefree preoccupation with lyre-playing in the midst of war (uerberans plectro chelyn, 321). Thus Pyrrhus’ accusations against Agamemnon are also made to apply to Achilles. This is consonant with declamatory motif of son replacing his father.

274 Sexual licence is a common feature of a tyrant, and has been identified in other dramas of the Senecan corpus as such, for instance, Oedipus’ incestuous relationship with his mother, when he demonstrates high levels of awareness of his myth, a fact which could have prevented him from committing incest. Lycus in Hercules Furens also makes advances to Megara. Finally, Thyestes is presented as a sexually licentious character, who slept with his brother’s wife, and even impregnated his daughter. In all three characters this feature is emphasized in order to enhance their portrayal as tyrants.
The replacement and interchangeability of a father by his son, a declamatory motif which has been identified in Andromache’s feelings for her son and husband, as well as in Seneca’s *Phaedra* and *Oedipus*, informs the exchange between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus. Certain scholars have argued that the exchange between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus recalls the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles in the first book of the *Iliad*. In that sense Pyrrhus acts as Achilles’ mouthpiece, and the text hints at this interchangeability between them: Agamemnon’s description of Pyrrhus’ behaviour as *paternus feruor* (252), ‘paternal passion’, suggests that the blood relation between the two men also extends to a kinship of their characters. Thus the declamatory motif of the replacement of the father by the son can be identified here in the form of the son acting as the mouthpiece of his father, and helps the scene be reminiscent of a previous literary fiction.

At the same time, this conflation of characters is exploited in the mutual accusations between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus: Achilles’ negotiation of identity is intertwined with Pyrrhus’, and, at the same time, with Agamemnon’s in that, by interpreting the one’s activities as tyrannical and unheroic, the other’s cannot escape a similar interpretation.

Indeed criticising Pyrrhus’ tyrannical attitude seems to be not much different from criticising Achilles, as the topic of the argument appears now to switch between Pyrrhus and Achilles: *haud equidem nego / hoc esse Pyrrhi maximum in bello decus, / saeuo peremptus ense quod Priamus iacet, / supplex paternus* (310-3). The negotiation of the identities of father and son also corresponds to Agamemnon’s negotiation of identity. The passage 322-6 illustrates how the issue of whether Agamemnon is a *tyrannus* or a *uir fortis* becomes intertwined with the same question about Pyrrhus and Achilles. When Pyrrhus addresses the topic of Achilles’ courage or sloth (*nempe isdem in istis Thessalis navalibus / pax alta rursus Hectoris patri fuit, 325-6*), Agamemnon transposes the issue from the father to the son: while Pyrrhus argues that Achilles’ valour was proven even in his apparent slothful preoccupation with playing the lyre, as that activity brought peace amidst war, Agamemnon takes the opportunity to implicate Pyrrhus, by mentioning his murder of Priam, which is indicative of Pyrrhus’ lack of compassion and of his tyrannical disposition: *et nunc misericors uirginem busto petis?* (330). Pyrrhus responds by mentioning the sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father

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275 Fantham (1982), 241.

276 A similar process of the negotiation of a character’s identity being entwined with another’s has been identified in the case of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon in *Agamemnon*: Clytemnestra appeared to return to her previous state of piety, as long as she hoped that Agamemnon would not behave as a tyrant. When Aegisthus shatters her hopes by arguing that Agamemnon will return as a tyrant, she surrenders to her urge to be a bad *materfamilias*.

277 The use of the verb *petis* in the second person singular allows to assume that Agamemnon addresses Achilles, rather than Pyrrhus (or even both simultaneously, given the interchangeability of the father and the son), adding thus further to the argument that the negotiation of the characters’ identity relies on how each other’s role is articulated.
Agamemnon himself *iamne immolari uirgines credis nefas?* (331), a strikingly ironic statement in the light of Agamemnon’s preaching against the sacrifice of Polyxena as a cruel action, which shows him to be in fact a tyrannical *paterfamilias*.

Finally it is interesting that Pyrrhus’ defence of his father Achilles’ heroism, which is questioned by Agamemnon, is reminiscent of Amphitryo’s defence of Hercules’ heroic deeds, which is questioned by Lycus, as well as of Oedipus’ self-defence of his heroism, which is questioned by Jocaste. This further confirms that these three characters’ identities are mapped on the binary *uir fortis–tyrannus*.

### 3.8.6 CONFLATING IMAGES OF THE ARENA AND RHETORICAL AWARENESS

Shelton discusses the presentation of events in Seneca’s *Troades* as a ‘spectacle of death’. In this section I shall focus on those instances of imagery inspired from the reality of the arena which are intertwined with Senecan characterisation in this play. Although she is a mourning mother, Hecuba’s long monologue alludes to what she perceives to be her own responsibility for the Trojan disaster because of the birth of Paris. She can therefore be seen as an equivalent of Juno, in that she is assigned a similar authorial function in the drama by identifying herself as a *uates*. This similarity extends to the inscription of ludism in the presentation of the events and characters through the introduction of gladiatorial images in Hecuba’s speech. An example which occurs early in the drama is the following one:

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non Argolici praeda triumphi
subiecta feret colla tropaeis;
non adsuetas ad sceptra manus
post terga dabit
currusque sequens Agamemnonios
aurea dextra uincula gestans
latis fiet pompa Mycenis.
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(150-55)

The passage contains a large number of terms which refer to the context of Roman games of the arena. Hecuba claims that Priam is fortunate enough not to be alive, and not to have to experience the humiliation of the Trojan women, which is described in terms echoing the reality of the arena: the words *pompa* and *currus* used by Hecuba to refer to the group of the Trojan women, although not exclusively associated with the arena, may as well refer to the

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278 Shelton (2000).
procession of the gladiators towards the arena, at the beginning of a gladiatorial spectacle.  

Similar imagery can also be identified in Talthybius’ narrative, in which he relates the horrific experience of witnessing Achilles’ ghost emerging from the earth to demand Polyxena’s sacrifice (182-5): he describes Achilles’ state as proldens (in training).  

Even though Talthybius mentions past events to describe Achilles’ current state, his (Achilles’) involvement in the present situation is that of a character ‘in training’. The link provided by proldens with declamatory ludism and with gladiatorial imagery is clear, as the verb proludo can be used in reference to rhetorical exercises as well as to gladiatorial training. It is therefore plausible that the occurrence of proldens points to a link between gladiatorial imagery and declamatory ludism in Seneca’s dramas, and that Achilles’ ghost is perceived by Talthybius to be engaged in a ludic, pre-performative activity. With regards to ludism in Seneca’s Troades, the implications of this are that Achilles is involved in establishing the ludic context which will help articulate the changes in social status and identity for victors and defeated equally. This ultimately means that Achilles’ actual performance will take place in the course of the drama in the form of Polyxena’s sacrifice. The encounter between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus, Achilles’ mouthpiece, which follows Talthybius’ account of the appearance of Achilles’ ghost, fulfils the expectations raised by a proldens Achilles. Their encounter offers a commentary on the attitude of the victor towards the defeated party (noscere hoc primum dece, / quid facere uictor debeat, uictus pati, 256-7). With Pyrrhus acting as Achilles’ mouthpiece, the encounter between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus can be interpreted as a declamatory battle over the appropriateness of Polyxena’s sacrifice. Furthermore, in lines 281-5 Agamemnon preaches on the various events which can make someone arrogant. He refers to the successful battles which can puff up the victor’s mind, using the phrase gladius felix (284). Whilst gladius literally means ‘sword’, in the wider context of gladiatorial imagery, Agamemnon’s reference to a felix gladius can refer to a gladiatorial combat. The fact that there are instances of use of gladius in that sense in Seneca’s prose works makes it suggestive that this is another instance where the characters’ behaviours and actions are conceived of as spectacles of the arena.

Andromache’s account of her dream of Hector also maintains the use of gladiatorial imagery. In a manner similar to the emergence of Achilles’ ghost from the Underworld, Hector also

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279 Seneca in the De Prouidentia preserves the name of a gladiator called Triumphus. Triumphum ego murmillonem sub Ti. Caesare de raritate munerum audiui querentem (De Prov. 4.4). It is tempting to argue that Argolici praeda triump hi, may be an allusion to the Roman gladiator which Seneca mentions in his prose work.


281 sententis, quibus proluserint (Cic. De Or. 2.80.325).

282 qui cum maxime dubitat, utrum se ad gladium locet an ad cultrum (Ep. 87.9).
adds to the establishment of a ludic context. According to Andromache, Hector’s appearance, when he visited her in her dream to advise her to save their son Astyanax from the Argives, was of an exhausted man, and not such as when he fought with and took spoils from the one dressed like Achilles. Her words *nec caede multa qualis in Danaos furens / uera ex Achille spolia simulato tuiti* (446-7) can be interpreted as suggesting her perception of Hector’s fight with Patroclus as a gladiatorial battle. Within the context of frequent occurrence of gladiatorial imagery, it is tempting to interpret the phrase *ex Achille simulato* as an allusion to the reality of gladiatorial games, where gladiators would engage in a theatricalised battle by re-enacting mythical events. In that sense Andromache’s dream presents Hector engaging in a gladiatorial-like battle with Patroclus, in which ‘a gladiator’ Patroclus plays the role of Achilles. Another instance which suggests Andromache’s perception of the current situation as a gladiatorial spectacle is *caelitum appello fidem / fidemque Achillis: Pyrrhe, genitoris tui munus tuere* (665-7). Andromache refers to Astyanax’ sacrifice describing it as a gift (*munus*). The occurrence of the noun *munus* may echo the reality of *munera* (gladiatorial spectacles), with its other sense being that of the spectacle of the arena.283

Ulixes’ words in his encounter with Andromache also provide another instance of gladiatorial imagery in his reference to Astyanax, and to the necessity of his murder. Ulixes argues that the necessity of Astyanax’ murder arises from the prospect of him becoming the leader of the Trojans, and attacking the Argives in the future: *gregem paternum ducit ac pecori imperat* (540). In order to describe Astyanax’ future actions which the Argives dread, Ulixes uses the simile of a little calf suddenly taking the role of its father and commanding his father’s herd. The use of the word *grex* may be interpreted as an echo of the reality of public games, as it appears elsewhere in reference to troops of players, charioteers, etc.284 A few lines later Ulixes claims that Andromache should not consider him to be cruel, as he has simply been chosen to chase Astyanax, and that he would even dare to attack Orestes, Agamemnon’s son, if that were required: *neue crudelem putes, / quod sorte iussus Hectoris natum petam: / petissem Oresten* (553-5). Of particular significance is the occurrence of the verb *petam*, which is also encountered in agonistic contexts with the sense of ‘to attack, assault’. In fact, Cicero’s Orator provides an instance of use of *petere* in a gladiatorial context.285 Interpreting the verb *petam* as introducing gladiatorial imagery supports the argument that it is intertwined with the characters’ rhetorical awareness.

The agonistic nature of the encounter between Ulixes and Andromache can be identified mainly on the level of rhetoric, by which Ulixes seeks to impose the Argives’ will upon

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283 The occurrence of *munus* in Seneca’s Medea has also been interpreted as an instance of use of gladiatorial imagery to refer to the murder of her children.

284 *si uoltis adplaudere hunc gregem et fabulam* (Plaut. Ps. 5.2.33)

285 *gladiatores et uitando caute, et petendo vehementer* (Cic. Or. 68.228).
Andromache. The role of declamatory ludism in Andromache’s characterisation in her encounter with Ulixes may also be identified in the combination of gladiatorial images and rhetorical awareness.

\[
nate, quis te nunc locus, 
fortuna quae possedit? errore auio 
uagus arua lustras? uastus an patriae uapor 
corripuit artus? saeuus an uictor tuo 
lusit cruore? 
\]

(562-6)

Andromache tries to deceive Ulixes. When he demands that she surrender her son Astyanax, she responds with a rhetorical question which aims to convince Ulixes of her ignorance of her son’s whereabouts. The occurrence of the term *locus* can be interpreted as implying her rhetorical awareness, while also acting as a metafictional comment. More specifically, Andromache’s words can be seen as seeking to negotiate Astyanax’ status as an instance of a rhetorical commonplace: ‘which *locus* holds you’, in that sense, may be interpreted as ‘what sort of commonplace are you’. Such an interpretation suggests Andromache’s intention to intervene with what literary tradition has prescribed her son Astyanax to be, that is, a commonplace of bad fortune.²⁸⁶

Andromache, however, shows signs of awareness of her own myth in such phrases as *sed mei fati memor / tam magna timeo uota* (474-5). Her wish for a future time when her son will be able to revive and defend Troy reminds her of her fate, which does not allow her to make such great wishes. Thus her attempt to deceive Ulixes by blurring the nature of Astyanax as a commonplace of misfortune is not successful. The occurrence of the verb *lusit* in her words *uictor tuo lusit cruore* can be interpreted as an allusion to the ludic conception of Astyanax’ fortune.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, even though the use of *cruor* as a rhetorical term is not attested,²⁸⁸ it might be argued that it is a sort of disguised rhetorical term used in the place of its synonym *sanguis*, which appears in rhetorical contexts to refer to an orator’s force of style. In a similar manner the term *uagus* can have the sense of ‘uncertain, indefinite’, which is encountered in

²⁸⁶ Freas (2010) argues that the characters’ attempt to escape fate is described in terms which suggest that fate is confounded with the literary past determining the actions of the fictional characters.

²⁸⁷ For instance *sucus ille et sanguis incorruptususque ad hanc aetatem oratorum fuit, in qua naturalis inesset, non fucatus nitor* (Cic. Brutus 9,36).

²⁸⁸ Note, however, that *cruor* does appear in rhetorical contexts, such as: *TLL cruor* 1242, 50-1 *genus argumentorum ... quod ex facti uestigiis sumitur, ut cruor* (Cic. part. 39).
rhetorical contexts too.\textsuperscript{289} The occurrence of the word \textit{artus} also further suggest that Andromacha perceives her son Astyanax as a sort of rhetorical material.

3.8.7 JUDICIAL COLOUR AND THE VICTORS’ RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

The judicial element which has been identified in other dramas is also found in the \textit{Troades} and can be seen as a manifestation of rhetorical agonism. One example is found in the exchange between Pyrrhus and Agamemnon, where Pyrrhus defends Achilles’ compassion and sense of justice by mentioning Priam’s supplication: \textit{Priamus tamen / prae sens rogauit; tu, graui pauidus metu / nec ad rogandum fortis} (314-6). The use of the two forms of the verb \textit{rogare} (\textit{rogauit}) and \textit{ad rogandum}, confers a judicial tone on the situation with the technical meaning of the verb being ‘to propose a stipulation’.\textsuperscript{290} In this context the passage acquires the judicial sense of Priam seeking to engage in a legalis tic agreement with Achilles over the body of the dead Hector. A similar legalistic tone is encountered a few lines later, where the issue of whether Polyxena should be sacrificed is described as a matter of judicial dispute:

\begin{verbatim}
PYR. lex nulla capto parcit aut poenam impendit.
AG. quod non uetat lex, hoc uetat fieri pudor.
PYR. quodcumque libuit facere uictori licet.
AG. minimum decet libere cui multum licet.
\end{verbatim}

(333-7)

The word \textit{lex} (law) occurs twice in the first two lines, as does the verb \textit{licet} (it is lawful) in the final two. Furthermore, the notions of punishment (\textit{poenam}) and prohibition (\textit{uetat – uetat}), moral appropriateness (\textit{de cet}) and self-indulgence (\textit{libuit – libere}) provide the framework within which the issue of Polyxena’s sacrifice is investigated. A few lines later this issue is referred to as a judicial case (\textit{causa}): \textit{non tamen nostras tenet / haec una puppes causa} (365-6). The words are spoken by Calchas, according to whose oracle the reason for the delay of the Achaean fleet is not only the dispute over Polyxena’s sacrifice, as that alone would not suffice, but the requirement for blood more noble than hers, that of Astyanax. The word \textit{causa} here may have not only the meaning of ‘reason’, in the sense of ‘the reason which delays the Achaean fleet’, but also of ‘judicial case’. It should be noted that this passage is spoken by a \textit{uates}, a seer, and by implication, a creator/poet, or in other words, a metaliterary agent, given the connotations of the word.\textsuperscript{291} The fact that Agamemnon finally

\footnote{\textsuperscript{289} \textit{pars quaestionum uaga et libera et late patens} (Cic. \textit{De Orat.} 2,16,67).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{290} Cf. \textit{quod fere nouissima parte pactorum ita solet inseri: roguit Titus, spo pondit Maeuius, haec uerba non tanti m pacti onis loco accip iuntur sed etiam stipulationis} (Dig. 1. 14. 7, § 12).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{291} Hecuba was also portrayed as a (\textit{uana}) \textit{uates} in the prologue of the drama, a characterisation which was interpreted as a sign of her metadramatic role.}
consents to Polyxena’s sacrifice, as long as it is endorsed by the uates Calchas’ divine oracle, suggests that the sacrifice is ultimately an action emanating from a metaliterary level. Such a construction indicates the imperative and inescapable nature not only of the sacrifice within the play but also of the controlling force of literary tradition.

A similar judicial conception of the scene appears in Ulixes’ awareness of the fictional nature of the situation. In lines 524-8 Ulixes claims that the words he speaks are not actually his own but the Achaeans’: Graiorum omnium procerumque uox est (526-7). On one level, his statement amounts to a confession that he plays the role of the Achaeans’ mouthpiece. On a second level, his statement can be interpreted as a recognition of his metafictional status: he merely reproduces the Achaeans’ orders, and he should, therefore, not be held responsible for their consequences on the Trojans. His claim, however, cannot be taken at face value, precisely because it comes from Ulixes, a notorious liar. Indeed the truth of his words is questioned by Andromache, who calls Ulixes a machinator fraudis and a scelerum artifex (750), both terms strongly identifying a creative role in his make-up. Furthermore, Andromache’s accusation that these events are a product of his own intellect (hoc est pectoris facinus tui, 754), adds to his profile as a creator of the event and the scene. The technical meaning of verb praetendere ‘to allege in excuse for’ in the phrase uatem et insontes deos / praetendis? (753-4) suggests that Ulixes’ metafictional role is intertwined with the judicial colouring of the passage, in which Ulixes seeks to defend himself in the debate over the sacrifice of Astyanax. Indeed, lines 552-5 suggest that Ulixes perceives the debate over the sacrifice as a causa (judicial case) which delays the departure of the Argives’ fleet. He continues in the same judicial tone, arguing that he would even ask for Orestes (that is, not only the son of Hector, but also the son of one of the Achaean rulers), if he were able to speed up their departure from Troy in this manner. The occurrence of the verb peto - which in the previous section I suggested introduces gladiatorial imagery in the scene - evokes judicial connotations (‘to demand or claim at law’), as it occurs in a passage of an intense judicial agonism. Ulixes is therefore presented as launching a judicial procedure in which he argues for the lawfulness of the sacrifice of Astyanax and so demanding its execution.

Helen is also presented as perceiving her situation as a judicial case. She states that in spite of her immense sorrow, which deprives her of rationality, she is still in the position to plead her case before a hostile judge: causam possum tueri iudice infesto (905-6). Her judicial

292 Indeed the noun pectus is used in reference to people experiencing some kind of inspiration, e.g. incaluitque deo quem clausum pectore habebat (Ovid Met. 2.641). The context in which the word occurs in this passage, combined with the words machinator and artifex, indicate that to Andromache’s mind the events are a creation of Ulixes’ own inspired intellect.

293 Qui non calumnia litium alienos fundos, sed castris, exercitu, signis inferendis petebat (Cic. Clu. 59. 163).
understanding of the situation is further maintained when she addresses her identity crisis occasioned by the Trojan war. She claims that she feels divided between the two parties involved in the situation, the Achaeans and the Trojans (in me victor et uictus furit, 914). Helen’s divided feelings extend to her defence of her lover Paris and correspond to the parties whom she considers potentially responsible for the Trojan war: considering herself responsible for the war makes herself the causa (the subject of a judicial case as well as the cause); however, considering herself as merely Paris’ loot and the reward which he received from Venus for his favourable judgment (donum iudici, 921), she acquits Paris, as well as herself, of responsibility for the war, in which case he should be forgiven (ignosce Paridi, 922). She finally states that the judge for her case will be her husband Menelaus (iudicem iratum mea habitura causa est. ista Menelaum manent arbitria).

In a way similar to Hecuba’s or Ulixes’ characterisation as creators of the drama/scene, Helen is also presented as the auctor of the situation, in which she is implicated. Lines 864-71 contain several signs of Helen’s metadramatic and metafictional status. Helen claims that she is forced into harming the Trojans (nocere cogor Phrygibus), and that the orders she has received demand that she report the false news of the wedding of Polyxena with Pyrrhus (toros narrare falsos iubeor), and finally that she dress Polyxena with the Greek wedding dress, cultus ... habitusque Graios (866-7). She refers to her action with the words arte capietur meaque fraude concidet Paridis soror (867-8), and elaborates on her prospective actions in a manner which betrays her directorial role: she uses the verb narrare ‘to narrate, relate’ to refer to her fabrication of a false story in order to deceive Polyxena. In other words, Helen argues that she is forced into an action which can be described in terms of staging a drama: Polyxena will be deceived into believing that she will get married to Pyrrhus, when in fact she will be the sacrificial victim of the Achaeans on Achilles’ tomb. The last two phrases of the passage which Helen addresses to herself confirm the argument about Helen’s directorial role in this scene: in her unwillingness to contribute to Polyxena’s sacrifice, she seeks to defer the guilt to the Achaeans, who gave her such orders (ad auctorem redit sceleris coacti culpa, 870-1). The word auctor refers to the Achaeans, and concerns their responsibility for Polyxena’s sacrifice according to Helen. Helen’s metadramatic/metafictional function, however, suggests that the term auctor may well apply to her, ultimately suggesting that Helen becomes no less of an auctor herself than the Achaeans. This further confirms her self-division and, therefore, the ludic nature of her characterisation.

294 A similar manner of characterisation has been observed in Hercules, Oedipus and Medea, who are also presented as experiencing an internal battle between two opposing aspects of their identity.

295 The use of the noun auctor in reference to the author of a piece of writing, or generally to any sort of creator, is well documented, for instance: Belli Alexandrini Africique et Hispaniensis incertus auctor est (Suet. Caes. 56) for the first meaning, or ... apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse ... (Plin. Hist. Nat. 6 praeft.) for the more general meaning of creator/artist.
4 THE ROLE OF STOICISM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A study of Senecan drama, however focused on non-philosophical aspects it may be, should not fail to acknowledge the role of Seneca’s philosophical background. Even if one does not endorse a purely philosophical interpretation of the dramas, it can not be denied that Stoic ideas can be identified in them. Indeed scholarship recognises the existence of elements of the Stoic doctrine in Seneca’s dramatic works, even though it considers their interpretation as Stoic dramas to be problematic. In other words, while it is accepted that Stoicism is present in the dramas, the dramas do not support the argument that they teach Stoicism in an explicit manner.\textsuperscript{296} In several dramas of the Senecan corpus, for instance, the nurse preaches to such characters as Medea, Phaedra, or Clytemnestra on the importance of self-control or on the destructive effects of passions. In such instances, the importance of self-control as a preventive remedy against passionate behaviour does induce a Stoic colour to Senecan dramas. However, attempts to integrate the portrayal of Senecan characters’ passionate behaviour in a Stoic worldview are faced with various problems.

It is possible, however, to see Senecan dramas as part of one’s training towards a Stoic way of life. According to such an approach, Senecan dramas can be taken to illustrate the mechanisms by which the dramatic characters achieve (or fail to achieve) moral progress, even if there is little evidence in the description of the circumstances, behaviours and actions to promote purely Stoic doctrine. The concept of ludism, as it has been described above, helps implement that interpretative approach, by providing a double-faced point of contact between declamatory rhetoric and the Stoic methods of fighting passions and achieving moral progress. Let us see the reasoning behind such an interpretative approach.

Stoicism seeks to develop the individual’s capacity to live according to strictly defined principles in real life, and the eradication of passions is crucial in developing that capacity. Anything is NOT possible and Stoics are not playing. In declamation, on the other hand, there is nothing at stake, and anything IS possible, as the student tests out in imaginary and sometimes ridiculous scenarios the principles on which he will need to act when playtime is over. Another difference, of course, of the ludic nature of the two practices lies in the specific form of role-playing which they employ to explore and develop expertise: while declamation

\textsuperscript{296} Pratt (1948) argues that Stoicism has formed Senecan drama on the level of character portrayal. Auvray (1989), 34-5 explain the role of τόνος in Hercules Furens, promoting thus a Stoic conception of characterisation. See Long (1996) and Graver (2007), 19 on the notion of tension (τόνος) as the balancing of opposing forces which pervades the cosmos according to the Stoic doctrine. See Hine (2000), 27-30, who argues that Seneca’s dramas ‘do not impose a Stoic psychological reading’ (30). Hine (2004) also points out that Senecan dramas do not evoke Stoicism exclusively, and that even Epicureanism can be shown to play a significant role in them.
uses specific social roles, Stoicism prescribes impersonation in the context of staging a judicial procedure in one’s mind to eradicate passions.

Despite the differences outlined above, however, both declamation and Stoic philosophy depend upon a sense that the practitioner seeks to make progress (or that he is a proficiens, in Stoic terms rather than a master); even more to the point, that there is an expertise that may be developed and reached by constant practice of the playful or of the more grim versions of role-playing that the two disciplines offer. Finally, both disciplines investigate and seek to question the content and expression of such moral categories as piety, tyranny, heroism. The ultimate argument of this section is that one can develop a nuanced reading of Senecan drama by looking at both Senecan drama and declamation alongside one another and seeing how certain similarities of approach and of educational ethos are exploited by a dramatist who is steeped in both Stoicism and declamation.

It might be said that the intentionalist fallacy lurks under the argument that there is an educative strand in Seneca’ dramas.\(^{297}\) Even though it goes against modern literary criticism to lay exclusive stress on the intention of the original author in assigning meaning to a text, we should nonetheless note the basic fact of the corpus, which is that the same author wrote the philosophical works and (most of) the tragedies. Seneca’s Stoic background, together with the utilitarian conception of human action in Stoicism, makes it barely credible that his audience would read or hear his plays without some raising some questions over the philosophical purpose of the dramas. Given the major role of the notion of moral training and progress in Stoic philosophy, with any action being considered part of the process of constant self-improvement, it is reasonable to assume that a literary composition of a proponent of Stoicism, as Seneca was, can be expected to be conducive to Stoic moral progress. Moreover, the strong drive towards didacticism in classical literature, even in fictional genres, means that one might prima facie expect a writer whose persona involves a great deal of teaching (in the letters) also to have a didactic effect in other works. We could even say that his readers would be inclined to interpret in that way, whatever his intention. In fact, it would be strange if one were to read otherwise.\(^{298}\)

### 4.2 ERADICATION OF PASSIONS AND THE STOIC CONCEPTION OF MORAL PROGRESS

In the Stoic system of thought human life is an on-going battle with the strokes of Fortune with God(s) being the spectators of the Stoic’s struggle to reach moral excellence or wisdom (sapientia). The Stoics also conceived of life as a stage on which humans perform their

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\(^{297}\) Recent scholarship tends to recognise the pedagogical / political function of Senecan drama. For instance, see Viansino (1993), I, 1-10; Fitch & McElduff (2008) point out the ‘constructive’ element in Senecan drama.

\(^{298}\) See Hine (2004).
life,\textsuperscript{299} while the writings of the Stoics illustrate a tendency towards the use of military language, when it comes to the description of human action.\textsuperscript{300} The Stoic conception of life as an admixture of role-playing and agonism is also reflected in the high frequency of use of gladiatorial imagery to refer to human life. Seneca, for instance, makes use of gladiatorial imagery in his ethical writings, and even likens the Stoic wise man to a gladiator.\textsuperscript{301} The theatricalised conception of social behaviour is a key issue in the writings of the Stoics particularly of Imperial times.\textsuperscript{302} Certain Stoic thinkers go so far as to distinguish between the different roles which a human will necessarily assume, being a member of the society.\textsuperscript{303}

This chapter, however, does not examine Stoic role-playing in its sense of assuming specific social and family roles. Instead, here role-playing is relevant in its role in the methods of eradicating passions. Similarly, agonism is involved in our argument in relation to the mechanisms prescribed to eradicate passions, and in its expression through military/gladiatorial language, for instance, which is found in Stoic writings. The combination of role-playing and agonism in the processes of fighting passions suggests the ludic character of these methods. The specific method on which this chapter focuses is the mental exercise of investigating the causes of passions such as fear or anger by a supposed (physical or social) injury, by staging an imaginary trial on one's mind. On the basis that ludism describes tendencies of certain activities to function as games of investigating, testing and learning, this chapter will argue that ludism is an explanatory category with the capacity to encapsulate Stoicism's approach to wisdom or moral perfection, that is, as an on-going training process of investigating issues, testing the findings, and ultimately learning.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is worth reminding the reader that the practice of declamatory rhetoric reached its peak during Imperial times, a phenomenon which has been associated with the change of political atmosphere triggered by the transition from the

\textsuperscript{299} The conception of life as a stage and of human beings as actors is usually associated with the Cynics. The Stoics however adopted this view and incorporated it into their own system. For the dramatic conception of life in Seneca see Hijmans (1966). See also Edwards (2002) on attitudes towards acting and self-actualisation in Imperial Rome.

\textsuperscript{300} For the use of agonistic imagery, and more specifically, for imagery inspired by athletics in Seneca's prose writings, see Tietze (1985), 127-36. More generally on the motif of agon in the Stoic moral philosophy see Pfitzner (1967), and on military motifs in Stoic authors see Sommer (2002).

\textsuperscript{301} The combined elements of agonism and theatricality inherent in gladiatorial imagery are apt for representing the ethical battle of the Stoic disciple. See Cagniart (2000) on the figure of the gladiator in Seneca's philosophical works.

\textsuperscript{302} See Bartsch (2006).

\textsuperscript{303} Gill (1988).
Republic to the Empire. Scholars have recognised, for instance, that the early Imperial period coincided with and probably caused a huge change in the social status of aristocrats, and cast doubt on a long-established code of values, such as heroism, virtue etc. As Habinek points out, politics during Seneca’s time might be described as ‘an equilibrium of balanced antagonisms between princeps, aristocrats and arrivists, while education promised social mobility to those most skilled at manipulating the symbols of a backward-looking and status obsessed cultural tradition’.

In order for Roman aristocracy to find their place within the new political environment, reflection upon, and re-definition of a widely accepted moral code of values and behaviour was vital. By investigating what ‘being a Roman aristocrat under an Emperor’ meant, they effectively embarked on a process of re-defining views and attitudes, in order to find a place in the new political context.

In a sense Roman aristocrats were confronted with a sort of ‘social death’, which imposed not only the suspension of performing an identity inspired by an obsolescent code of aristocratic behaviour, but also the questioning and reflection upon moral issues in the new socio-political environment of Imperial Rome. Stoicism, as a major philosophical system and ideology at the time, undertook the ambitious project of providing people with mechanisms which, in their essence, prescribed the internalisation of a code of morality, and involved the re-definition of conventional aristocratic values.

The ultimate goal was to eradicate passions, while potential social death and disintegration, and the subsequent passions such as anger and grief, were currently overwhelming. Seneca’s Stoic ethics promote an aristocracy which does not (in theory) rely so much on social attributes such as birth and wealth, as on mental dispositions. For instance, according to his revolutionary and revised aristocratic programme, a master is not considered to be the person who has the power of life and death on someone, but instead that person who is in absolute control of his passions, or in other words the Stoic sapiens. It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to say that Seneca’s philosophy is a study of death.

To him, fear of death with its threat of physical disintegration tests one’s moral integrity, and provides the touchstone of whether someone has actually attained wisdom. One’s manner of facing death when the time comes is, for Seneca, the actual and genuine performance of one’s true self. By implication one’s life up to the moment of death is a training arena for

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304 Habinek (1998), 137.
305 See Wallace-Handrill (1996) for the power which proximity to the Emperor provided.
307 See Van Hoof (2007) and Roller (2001), 64-126 on the position of Imperial Stoicism (and Seneca’s in particular) towards Roman traditional values, and the resignification of ethical notions which it promoted.
308 Noyes (1973).
exercise, which aims to prepare one to face death in a fearless manner. Every critical moment in one’s life is regarded as providing the disciple of Stoicism with the opportunity for a moral exercise with the ultimate intention of the emergence of a new and re-defined self through the battle with Fate.\footnote{Edwards (1997) discusses the notion of self-transformation in Seneca’s Epistles as part of the process towards moral perfection. Also Sellars (2003), 68 refers to the transformation of an individual’s life as the (desirable) effect of philosophical discourse according to the Stoics.} In order to avoid anger or fear, therefore, one should employ practices by which one will re-learn what is worth one’s anger or fear.

With the notion of training coming into play in the fight against passions the concept of ludism becomes a useful concept to employ in approaching those Stoic practices which were considered to be conducive to moral excellence. The notion of training or exercise (\textit{exercitatio}) was the means by which moral progress is accomplished.\footnote{Hadot (1995), 81-125, 126-144.} The significance of moral exercise for the Stoics can be associated with their conception of wisdom as a performative art (not different from dancing or acting), which they called the art of life (\textit{μηχανὴ περὶ τὸν βίον}), and they identified its goal with moral excellence (\textit{virtus}) achieved through moral training.\footnote{See Cicero \textit{Fin.} 3.24; see also Sellars (2003), 74.} Seneca prescribes mental training for reflection upon and redefinition of the conventional content of moral values, which allows those passions to emerge in one’s soul.

The following passage from Seneca’s Letter 95 enumerates Posidonius’ methods of ethical teaching:

\begin{quote}
Posidonius non tantum praeceptionem (nihil enim nos hoc uerbo uti prohibet), sed etiam suasionem et consolationem et exhortationem necessarium iudicat; his adicit causarum inquisitionem, aetiological.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Ep. 95.65)}

According to Seneca’s account, Posidonius’ moral education involved such methods as precepts, persuasion, consolation and exhortation. Indeed we do have evidence that even the early orthodox Stoics accepted an argumentative approach to issues pertaining to human psychology, which could not be handled effectively through pure Logic. As Tieleman argues, the notion of \textit{mētavōn} (plausible) played a significant role in Chrysippian dialectic.\footnote{Tieleman (1996). Inwood (1985), 44 points out that there are few references to deliberation as a practice in moral judgment in the old Stoic doctrine. However, Seneca, a later Stoic, demonstrates in his writings a preference for metaphors of judicial deliberation and legal judgment, see Inwood (2004). On deliberation in Stoicism see Schafer (2009).}

The fact that sophistical notions such as \textit{mētavōn} find a place in Stoic Logic indicates that even Dialectic (which for the Stoics largely coincides with what is nowadays designated as
Logic), the ἐπιστήμη ἀληθῶν καὶ ψευδῶν καὶ οὐδετέρων (the science of things true, and false, and neither true nor false), could potentially rely on the persuasive power of argumentation based on the notions of possible, probable etc.

4.3 Seneca’s views on philosophical rhetoric

One might be surprised to discover that Seneca, who has been criticised for being ‘too declamatory’, appears to have been critical of rhetorical studies. Generally speaking the low achievements of the Stoics in the area of rhetoric are recognised. They are largely due to the fact that the theory and praxis of rhetoric was for them the discipline governing the articulation of the findings of dialectic. Seneca’s negative views on the practice of declamation are reflected in his objection to the epideictic rhetoric: Non est quod te gloria publicandi ingenii producat in medium, ut recitare istis uelis aut disputare. (Ep. 7.9). His dislike also extends to the sort of education which schools of declamation provide to young Romans, while his criticism is targeted at the loss of practical value of rhetorical education: in Ep. 106, 12 he points out that schools do not prepare students for the demands of real life (non uiae sed scholae discimus). As will shall see in what follows, however, Seneca’s objections concern the epideictic tendencies, rather than the actual mechanisms of declamatory rhetoric. Seneca’s objection is perhaps primarily to sophistic argumentation, which can be linked with the self-deceptive self-persuasion of many of the dramatic characters. He is showing what goes wrong. He is also objecting to gloria - the excessive desire for self-display.

Seneca’s philosophical works also suggest his favourable attitude towards argumentation and persuasion, while he often expresses his disbelief as to the effectiveness of dialectical

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313 This is one of the Stoic definitions of dialectic according to Diogenes Laertius (D. L. 7.42).
314 See Bobzien (1986) on the identification of modal logic (possibility, necessity, impossibility) in Stoicism, which further confirms the argument that Stoic logic made room for persuasion.
317 On the Stoics’ rhetorical studies see Striller (1886).
318 Winter (1997), 121ff. describes the Stoic Epictetus’ negative disposition to sophistic declamation, pointing out that the epideictic character of declamatory performances, which aimed at the rhetor’s self-display, was not considered conducive to virtue (ἀρετή).
319 His criticism in Ep. 108, 23 where he points out that students are only trained in carrying out debates (Sed aliquid praecipientium uitio peccatur, qui nos docent disputare, non uiuere), reminds one of the criticism expressed by Quintilian described in 2.1.3.
approaches to the battle against passions.\textsuperscript{320} Indicative of his views on the practices of the dialecticians is the following passage:

\begin{quote}
Nam illi quoque non inuenta, sed quæranda nobis reliquerunt, et inuenissent forsan necessaria, nisi et superuacua quaessissent. Multum illis temporis uerborum cauillatio eripuit, captiosae disputationes, quae acumen irritum exercent. Nectimus nodos et ambiguam significationem uerbis inligamus ac deinde dissoluimus.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Ep. 65. 4-5)}

The passage makes clear that, although Seneca acknowledges certain achievements of the dialecticians, he believes that their practices lack credibility, when they become mere quibbling that aims at deceiving the audience.\textsuperscript{321} He accuses them of acquiring sophistries which only perplex instead of clarifying problems, and of being witty, and lacking any purpose.\textsuperscript{322} In another letter he explains what the aim of philosophical argumentation should be:

\begin{quote}
Ego non redigo ista ad legem dialecticam et ad illos artificii ueternosissimi nodos. Totum genus istuc exturbandum iudico, qui circumscribi se, qui interrogatur, existimat et ad confessionem perductus aliud respondet, aliud putat. Pro ueritate simplicius agendum est, contra metum fortius. Haec ipsa, quae uoluuntur ab illis, soluere malim et expendere, ut persuadeam, non ut inponam.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Ep. 82.19-20)}

Seneca argues that dialectical methods are not always successful in approaching truth, in order to fight passions - fear, in this particular instance. Instead he proposes that a method which accomplishes its purposes through persuasion is more effective than logical rules and syllogisms. His point becomes clearer in a passage, in which he provides an example of what he regards as the wrong (and unsuccessful) method for the extirpation of fear:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{320} This does not mean that Seneca excluded dialectic as a means of dealing with enquiries. See the series of articles by Leeman (1951, 1952, 1953) with varying relevance to this topic.

\textsuperscript{321} On Seneca’s views on the dialecticians see Wildberger (2006), 141-51. Inwood (1995) also mentions that Seneca doubted that dialectic could offer much to ethics.

\textsuperscript{322} With Seneca’s admiration of Socrates (Staley (2002)), his criticism of sophistry will unavoidably recall the socratic versus sophistic antithesis, eventually raising the question of how Seneca should be perceived, as a philosopher or as a sophist. As Crome (2005) points out, the distinction between the two is rather slippery, with Socrates often using sophistic methods in his pursuit of truth. Stanton (1973) discusses the problem of classifying Seneca (among others) as a philosopher or a sophist. Costa (1995), 132 points out that, although Seneca would be reluctant to accept for himself the characterisation ‘sophist’, ‘in a sense he stands in a line of succession from them [the 5\textsuperscript{th}-century sophists]’. Brunt (1994) also points out that Seneca deplored rhetorical display on philosophic themes.
\end{quote}
In aciem educturus exercitum pro coniugibus ac liberis mortem obiturum quomodo exhortabitur? Do tibi Fabios totum rei publicae bellum in unam transferentes domum. Laconas tibi ostendo in ipsis Thermopylarum angustiis positos. Nec uictoriam sperant nec reeditum. Ille locus illis sepulchrum futurus est. Quemadmodum exhortaris, ut totius gentis ruinam obiectis corporibus excipiant et uita potius quam loco cedant? Dices: ‘quod malum est, gloriosum non est; mors gloriosa est; mors ergo non malum’? O efficacem contionem! Quis post hanc dubitet se infestis ingerere mucronibus et stans mori!

(Ep. 82.20-21)

The tone of the lines where he describes the logical syllogisms used for the alleviation of fear is clearly ironical. Seneca doubts the effectiveness of logical syllogisms in the battle with passions. Although he does not deny the value of dialectical reasoning in dealing with passions, he casts doubt on its effectiveness, and stresses the risk of it degenerating into mere sophistry. He also approved of the use of probabilistic argumentation in philosophical inquiries, as the following passage suggests:

Huic respondebimus numquam expectare nos certissimam rerum comprehensionem, quoniam in arduo est ueri exploratio, sed ea ire qua ducit ueri similitudo. Omne hac uia procedit officium.

(De Ben. 4.33.2)

Seneca here advises that one use probabilistic argumentation in their exploration of truth. The sophistical strand in Seneca’s thought can be traced in the following passage which is indicative of Seneca’s conception of the pursuit of truth:

Quid ergo? Non ibo per priorum uestigia? ego uero utar uia uetere, sed si propiorem planioremque iuuenero, hanc muniam. Qui ante nos ista mouerunt non domini nostri sed duces sunt. Patet omnibus ueritas; nondum est occupata; multum ex illa etiam futuris relictum est.

(Ep. 33.11)

The context of the passage concerns the pursuit of truth (veritas). Seneca describes a way of approaching truth, which starts from the achievements of past generations, but proceeds to break new grounds (propiorem planioremque iuuenero). He finally points out

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323 See Hamacher (2006) for a commentary on Seneca’s Ep. 82.

324 Barnes (1997) describes Seneca’s attitude towards the logicians, and explains that although he recognised the holistic structure of Stoic discourse, he was more interested in ethics.

325 Maso (1977-8) argues that Seneca saw the traditional mos maiorum of the Roman Republic as being less relevant to the Romans of the Empire.

that truth has not been captured in its entirety yet, but there is plenty of it to be discovered in future years. In relation to passions Seneca explains elsewhere that the strangeness (nouitas) of Fortune’s attacks to humans exacerbates the pain which they experience:

Nec sine causa concussus est; inexpectata plus adgrauant; nouitas adicit calamitatibus pondus, nec quisquam mortalium non magis quod etiam miratus est doluit.

(\textit{Ep.} 91.3)

Seneca points out that what is perceived to be a strangeness in Fortune’s strokes is what makes them painful for humans, and increases their fear of any form of self-disintegration, in other words a moral or physical death.\textsuperscript{327} He thus advises that they should perceive Fortune’s assaults as expressions of ingenuity. His method suggests the understanding of Fortune as a rhetorical opponent, who exploits ingenuity in her assault.

At this point it is worth returning to the passage from Seneca’s \textit{Ep.} 95.65. There the last method of moral education of Posidonius listed is \textit{inquisitio causarum}. As Dihle comments, the term \textit{inquisitio causarum} or αἰτιολογία refers to the explanation of precepts (praeccepta) as part of one’s ethical education.\textsuperscript{328} Obviously the topic of causation relates to ontological enquiries. Indeed Seneca’s philosophical works demonstrate instances of approaching ontological enquiries in terms of sophistical rhetoric. A relevant example comes from the opening paragraph of the \textit{De Prouidentia}:

Quaesisti a me, Lucili, quid ita, si prouidentia mundus ageretur, multa bonus uiris mala acciderunt. Hoc commodius in contextu operis redderetur, cum praeesse uniuersis prouidentiam probaremus et interesse nobis deum; sed quoniam a toto particulam reuelli placet et unam contradicionem manente lite integra soluere, faciam rem non facilem, causam deorum agam.

(\textit{De Prou.} 1.1)

In this passage Seneca puts the subject of his treatise into context: he recognises that the question he will deal with is only part of a wider issue ‘does Providence rules the world?’, and clarifies that he will preoccupy himself only with the refutation of the objection. He finally states that his treatment of the question will essentially be the ‘pleading the cause of the Gods’. In other words, Seneca will treat the topic not as a quaestio (thesis), but as a causa (hypothesis), one of the parties of which will be the Gods, with Seneca pleading their case as

\textsuperscript{327} Seneca expresses a similar view in a case when the strangeness of the circumstances (\textit{insolitae rei nouitas}) in which he found himself cause him fear: \textit{aliquid tamen mihi illa obscuritas, quod cogitarem, dedit; sensi quendam ictum animi et sine metu mutationem, quam insolitae rei nouitas simul ac foeditas fecerat} (\textit{Ep.} 57.3).

\textsuperscript{328} Dihle (1973), 53. It is worth noting that Lausberg (1998), 341-43, 387-8 classes αἰτιολογία as a rhetorical figure.
their advocate. One will here be reminded of the distinction outlined in the first section of the thesis between a thesis and an hypothesis, with the former referring to the type of rhetorical exercise which involves tackling a question in abstract terms, while the latter in specific terms. Even more to our point, the term causa was used in reference to the forensic type of declamatory speech usually called controversia. Tackling an issue as a causa or an hypothesis involves a judicial colouring of the approach.

This takes us back to Posidonius' forms of moral education mentioned earlier. Indeed alongside its implications on the field of ontology, it has been pointed out that the term inquisitio causarum in Seneca's Ep. 95.65 has judicial connotations. This brings the whole topic of Stoic causation closer to the legal procedures of investigating causes, and suggests the importance of causality and causal reasoning in moral education and in determining moral responsibility.

4.4 LUDIC ASPECTS AND FEATURES OF THE STOIC BATTLE AGAINST PASSIONS

The previous chapter suggested that Seneca's Stoic teaching appropriates rhetorical methods in dealing with philosophical problems. Problematic situations are to be tackled as rhetorical material. Seneca also prescribes mechanisms associated with sophistical rhetoric with nouitas being the key sophistical notion in the Stoic's pursuit to propose a re-defined moral code. The ultimate goal of the Stoic disciple is to learn to determine the truth or falsity of the common views on what is worth one's anger or fear, etc. In this chapter we will take a closer look at those mechanisms and methods, and I will propose that they have aspects and features which justify the use of the concept of ludism in approaching them.

For the Stoics passions were assents to erroneous judgments based on information which a person receives from the external world hindering the Stoic disciple's moral perfection: a passionate soul has failed in reaching a fair judgment on the information with which perception has provided it. Stoics also considered true knowledge of reality or wisdom - which for them was equal to moral excellence (sapientia) - to be the key to avoiding passions. This knowledge can be acquired through processes, which should be employed at times when a Stoic proficiens is encountered with the strokes of Fortune, in order to avoid

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329 Addiderunt Baetici, quod simul socios ministrosque Classici detulerunt, nominatimque in eos inquisitionem postulaverunt (Pliny 3.6).

330 See Duhot (1989) with a detailed description of Stoic causation. The so-called containing cause (causa coniuncta or αἱ τιν τοι συνεκτικῶν) is recognised as having judicial nuances. See Duhot (1989), 165, with implications for the understanding of determinism and human responsibility. On the Stoic theory of causation and ethics / moral responsibility with particular emphasis on Chrysippus see Bobzien (2001), 234-329.

331 On this point see earlier reference to Poulakos (1983).

the development of passions. A relevant passage which describes the stages of emergence of a passion in the human soul can be found in Seneca’s writings:

Et ut scias quemadmodum incipiant affectus aut crescant aut efferantur, est primus motus non voluntarius, quasi praeparatio affectus et quaedam comminatio; alter cum voluntate non contumaci, tamquam oporteat me iniuricari cum laesus sim, aut oporteat hunc poenas dare cum sclerus fecerit; tertius motus est iam impotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci uult sed utique, qui rationem euicit.  

(De Ira 2.4.1)

The emergence of passions is here described in two phases, the involuntary and the voluntary. During the involuntary phase, the human soul will be seized by the impressions of the external world. This is where the roots of development of any passion lie and the Stoics acknowledge the unavoidable nature of this stage. In the second phase, however, the voluntary one, mental processes should take place which enable one to escape passions. On this basis every critical moment of one’s battle with the obstacles of Fortune should be of fair and sound judgement in one’s attempt to avoid passionate behaviour.

The ludic nature of the battle against passions can be seen here. Stoics teach that what is crucial is the will to make progress with the ultimate intention of achieving moral perfection. One’s reaction to the strokes of Fortune in a manner conducive to sapientia heavily relies on a voluntary use of one’s reason in the battle against passions. For instance, the loss of one’s fortune and subsequent poverty is a moment when a person runs the risk of being overcome by such passions as fear of losing their social status. These passions emanate from the sense of injury which the person believes they receive through the loss they suffer. Their chance of avoiding these passions, however, entirely relies on their will to break away from established beliefs which lead them to associate loss of fortune with personal injury. Their means to achieve that is their reason (ratio). Therefore, voluntariness, one of the major features of play, is central in the mental practices prescribed to fight passions.

In the voluntary phase, the approach recommended by Seneca consists of the investigation of what each side has to say on the issue:

causa autem iracundiae opinio iniuriae est, cui non facile credendum est. ne apertis quidem manifestisque statim accedendum; quaedam enim falsa ueri speciem ferunt. dandum semper est tempus: ueritatem dies aperit. ne sint aures criminatibus faciles; hoc humanae naturae utium suspexum notumque nobis sit, quod quae inviti audimus libenter credimus et antequam iudicemus irascimur. quid quod non

333 See Nussbaum (1993) on Seneca’s views regarding the cognitive development of passions.

334 See Ep. 34.3 and 80.4 on the importance of will.
Seneca explains that anger develops from the belief of receiving injury by someone to which a person gives credence. This belief, Seneca continues, should not be easily trusted. It is at this critical moment, that is, just before anger prevails, that allowing time to consider what the other party involved in the issue has to say will help one avoid getting overcome with passion. Seneca recommends that one should not only take into account one's personal feeling of injury, but also consider what the other person’s views on the situation would be. Essentially he prescribes a method of distancing oneself from the problematic situation and giving oneself time to investigate the case from all sides, as a way of reaching an informed decision as to the right response to a problematic situation.

The ludic nature of Seneca’s method can also be seen in strategies of distancing. Huizinga explains that another feature of play is ‘a stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity’. The disciple of Stoicism is advised to distance himself from life, and to give himself time to form a fair and sound judgment on what might at first sight appear to be an injury, as a means of avoiding rushing to passionate actions. The temporary sphere of activity here essentially concerns a pause or shift of focus from the external to the internal world of mental activity. This equals a temporary situatedness of the prescribed activity which requires a constant, repetitive motion into and out of the mental sphere. The Stoic is advised to live as much in the real, ordinary world as in isolation from it, an approach which can be captured by the antithetical pair Theory – Praxis. This feature of the Stoic method for fighting passions can be associated with what Huizinga calls ‘the limitedness or secludedness’ of play, both temporal and spatial. Furthermore, as we saw earlier, Huizinga explains that play is repetitive in that it demonstrates a tendency towards recurring patterns of action. Stoic philosophy prescribes mental exercises to inculcate Stoic ethos. Such is Seneca’s method of detaching oneself temporarily from the external world at any critical moment, by engaging oneself in a speculative, judicial procedure in order to reach a fair judgment on the issue. These prescribed steps form a pattern of repetitive actions which aim to help the Stoic proficiens overcome moments of potential risk.

The Stoic method of eliminating the passions is essentially an attempt to create an internal order. When the Stoic proficiens detaches himself from the external world, to employ the appropriate mental procedures, effectively he promotes the establishment of order on the mental plane, to counteract what he considers madness of the external world. This brings us to the last feature of play, according to Huizinga, the attempt to create temporary order in the confusion of life. The Stoics thought that the ordinary (that is, the non-Stoic) way of living is
the life of a madman, whereas only the Stoic is wise. Play involves rules by which all players must abide, otherwise the seriousness of play is undermined. Similarly, the Stoic disciple needs to know and respect the rules which govern life according to the Stoic worldview. These rules are identified with the laws of nature, and obedience to them ensures that human society functions in accordance with nature. On the contrary, failure to live in accordance with the natural law, is considered by Stoics to be harmful to oneself and to the others.

Alongside the ludic features of Seneca’s method outlined above, the aspects of agonism and theatricality are equally significant in the battle against passions. Seneca’s recommended method of fighting passions is essentially the staging of a judicial procedure on one’s mind, by which the person will seek to acquire a complete picture of the issue. In this imaginary trial, the Stoic disciple is instructed to assume the role and voice of himself as long as of the other party involved. In one of his letters, Seneca requires that his addressee, Lucilius, play the role of referee by assessing the credibility of every party of the debate:

\[
\text{in locum stili sermo successit, ex quo eam partem ad te perferam, quae in lite est. te arbitrum addiximus. plus negotii habes quam existimas; triplex causa est.}
\]

(\textit{Ep. 65.2})

Indeed the figure of the judge is frequently used in Seneca’s writings, as the one who will form his opinion by assessing the strength of the sides which a debate involves. Relevant examples are the following: \textit{si rectam illam rigidi iudicis sententiam quaeris, alterum ab altero absolvet et dicet ‘quamuis iniuriae praeponderent, tamen beneficis donetur, quod ex iniuria superest’} (\textit{Ep. 81.4}) and \textit{in hac comparatione benefici et iniuriae uir bonus iudicabit quidem quod erit aequissimum, sed beneficio fauebit; in hanc erit partem procliuior} (\textit{Ep. 81.15}). In both passages, emphasis is laid on the subject acting as a fair judge to assess the two sides of the case.

One can identify clear parallels between the method described in the passage from the \textit{De Ira} quoted above and the judicial type of declamatory speeches (\textit{controversia}). In this manner a Stoic’s battle with the strokes of Fortune acquires a rhetorical colour: in order to render Fortune’s weaponry ineffective, the Stoic needs to change his old false views regarding what is honourable, virtuous, etc. Seneca instructs the Stoic disciple on the necessity of liberating his mind from misconceptions of the content of honour, virtue, happiness, etc. as false ideas are responsible for the development of passionate behaviour.\textsuperscript{335} The staging of an imaginary judicial procedure in one’s mind by detaching

\textsuperscript{335} Cicero characterises these misconceptions as beliefs or opinions (\textit{in opinione}) (\textit{Tusc. Disp. 3.24}). Philosophical discourse thus aims to help individuals eliminate erroneous opinions, as they are the causes of passions.
oneself temporarily from the external world in order to establish that content of moral values which is according to one’s nature is the method to achieve that.

4.5 LUDISM AND THE EDUCATIVE STRAND IN SENECAN CHARACTERISATION

In the light of observations made throughout the work so far, I shall now investigate how features and mechanisms which have been shown to establish the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric can be useful in drawing a lesson of Stoic value on the disastrous consequences of passions on people’s lives. Central place in the argument of this chapter has the tendency observed in Senecan drama to confer a judicial colour on what has been designated as the ludic phase of characterisation. The centrality of this judicial colour is founded on Huizinga’s argument that judicial procedures are ludic activities, as well as on the prescription by the Stoics of the method of staging an imaginary judicial procedure on one’s mind to deter the development of passions. In that sense, the argumentation presented in this chapter relies on those ludic features of Senecan drama, which relate to and exploit the judicial colour identified in them.

It should be noted though that such a ‘ludic’ interpretation does not rely on a premise that Seneca’s dramas teach Stoicism in a narrow sense. As pointed out earlier in the section, scholarship has shown that a strictly Stoic interpretation of the dramas (and of characterisation in particular) is problematic. Our proposed ‘ludic’ interpretation relies rather on the assumption that they can be of educative value for a Stoic, without suggesting that Seneca meant them to be interpreted exclusively as Stoic lessons; and that the concept of ludism helps us to identify and describe ways in which the dramas can be argued to communicate a message which can be of value, that is, as a form of Stoic ethologia or teaching in ethos, as Dihle has also proposed, for an audience familiar with Stoic philosophy.\(^{336}\)

If Seneca’s dramas are to be seen as having the capacity to contribute to Stoic education, however, acknowledging a subtle difference is crucial: on the one hand, the presentation of a form of immoral behaviour in positive colours, and on the other, testing its appropriateness in the light of the surrounding immorality. The latter is in line with the ludic approach which this thesis takes. As was explained in the first section of the thesis, in the chapter on the concept of ludism, describing a practice as ludic does not imply its lack of seriousness, but a broad spectrum of proximity to reality (ranging from the grimly pragmatic to the most unreal ones).

In the case of Senecan drama, the novel and unreal nature of the problems in which Senecan characters are implicated can be located on the ‘unreal’ end of the spectrum: they are portrayed as favouring and acting through a flawed (that is morally inverse) adjustment of the moral code, which eventually fails to bring redemption and retribution, while the judicial

336 Dihle (1973), 54 note 20.
colour exists as the background of their moral investigations. Their favouring of moral inversions and their disastrous results promote a reading of the dramas as case studies of how a flawed application of a healthy educative process such as the judicial conception of circumstances can lead to irreparable disaster, if the passions have already conquered reason.

4.6 A STOIC LOOK AT THE PLAYS IN THE LIGHT OF LUDISM

4.6.1 Hercules Furens

Seneca’s Hercules Furens provides us with a vivid illustration of the consequences of ambition and rage (furor) for Hercules and his family. The role of this particular hero within Stoic philosophy makes him on the face of it a likely candidate for a drama which can contribute to a Stoic philosophical training. This is not straightforwardly the Hercules of the Stoic dilemma, however, but one whose behaviour might rather seem to be as the result of him being motivated by moral values of a non-Stoic content. His heroic status is blemished with instances of ‘aggression, ambition and megalomania’,337 while he is presented as unaware of the fact that the moral code which has singled him out as a hero also allows room for his rage to make him an agent of destruction for himself and his family. As a result, the rage which he has demonstrated in his feats previously also becomes manifest in his reaction to the hinted possibility of his wife’s infidelity and his children’s doubtful paternity.

As discussed in the second major section of the thesis, the ludic phase of Hercules’ characterisation corresponds with the scene of his madness and murder of his family, and with the scene of the persuasion of Hercules by Amphitryo against committing suicide. As far as the first scene is concerned, the imagery inspired from the reality of the arena provides the two essential elements of ludism, agonism and theatricality. Ludism has been shown to be manifest in the form of a transgression of the boundaries of the anthropological category tyrannus/affectator tyrannidis which interferes with and blemishes Hercules’ heroic image. Looking at the scene of madness in the light of ludism, therefore, foregrounds the tension between a code of ethics defined by passion and a more Stoically orientated one, which is signaled in passing, for instance, in Amphitryo’s words about patience. 338

In particular, the scene of madness portrays Hercules’ failure to cope with his suspicion of Megara’s infidelity and subsequent doubt about the paternity of his children. This failure is indicative of his incapacity to negotiate effectively established boundaries of social roles, and the moral categories which these roles represent. For instance, Hercules’ conception of the role of vir fortis allows room for cruelty, which becomes apparent in his dealing with status and identity anxieties. Since his ethics of passion do not allow room for transgressing the

338 See Bishop (1966).
expectations and boundaries of the roles of a *uir fortis*, his fury over what he perceives to be his failure in maintaining his family appears to him to be justified.

With regard to the scene of persuasion, the judicial language used by Amphitryo to refer to Hercules’ circumstances (1306-7) also suggests the ludic nature of those critical moments. The scene questions and investigates the boundaries of what constitutes a *uir fortis* and of the appropriate content of heroism (*uir tus*) for Hercules to become his true self. While Hercules considers committing suicide, eventually he cannot but follow the course of action which leads to his becoming his true herculean self, hence the need to re-visit and re-define his conception of heroism. This occurs with him being dissuaded from committing suicide at the very last moment, when his foster-father Amphitryo also threatens to commit suicide, advising him to show endurance. Juno’s debilitating Hercules’ judgment contributed to him being vulnerable to Fortune’s (or Juno’s) strokes.

Nonetheless his final decision not to commit suicide suggests that he manages to overcome Fortune/Juno. His victory, which is essentially of an ethical colour (in that he transgresses the boundaries of the moral categories and the expectations which they create), can also be identified on a rhetorical level, as it lies in his success in resignifying the categories which are the only ones Juno as the director of the drama makes available to him, namely, *affectator tyrannidis/tyrannus – uir fortis*. Hercules proves to be more ingenious in making a whole new category of himself, as he overcomes Juno’s machinations by acting out and thus becoming Hercules, his true self. Amphitryo’s words suggest precisely that:

\[
\text{nunc Hercule opus est: perfer hanc molem mali} \\
\text{succumbe, uirtus, perfer imperium patris.} \\
\text{eat ad labores hic quoque Herculeos labor:} \\
\text{uiuamus} \\
\text{(1239)}
\]

Hercules’ virtue now adopts a new sense, as he defies at the same time what is traditionally considered to be acceptable for a *uir fortis*. His obedience to his father’s advice not only makes him a pious son, but also marks his re-definition of the content of virtue.\(^{339}\) Whereas Juno seeks Hercules’ defeat by simply reversing the moral code which will devastate him when he finds out about the crime, and make him want to commit suicide, Hercules manages to escape by following a new one, inspired by a Stoic ethics. He thus turns out to be a *uir fortis* precisely because he chooses to brave life, and to face the dishonour he has inflicted onto himself. It is also worth pointing out that Hercules’ re-definition of moral values

\[^{339}\] See Lawall (1983) on the topic of *uir tus* and *pietas* in Seneca’s *Hercules Furens*. 
concerns his attitude and obedience to Amphitryo, who is not his natural, but his fosterfather.

Nunc tuum nulli imparem
animum malo resume, nunc magna tibi
uirtute agendum est: Herculem irasci ueta

(1275-7).\textsuperscript{340}

In his prose works Seneca exploits Hercules as a mythological example of wisdom (\textit{sapientia}). On the basis of the observations made above, Hercules' characterisation in Seneca's drama, however, while not that of a wise man, can be thought of as someone making moral progress, in other words of a Stoic \textit{proficiens}.

4.6.2 Phaedra

In chapter 3.2 it was argued that Seneca's \textit{Phaedra} focuses on Phaedra's characterisation. It was also proposed that Theseus' and Hippolytus' characterisation is presented to be intertwined with that of Phaedra, who investigates the possibilities of manifestation of her own self through their characterisation. The role of passions is crucial in their becoming their mythological selves.

Thus the concept of ludism helps foreground how passions trigger the questioning and transgression of established boundaries of social and family roles. The transgression of boundaries manifests itself as an inversion of expectations surrounding Phaedra, whose role as a stepmother is in conflict with her feelings for her stepson (a relationship traditionally marked with hatred). The judicial element which, as we saw in 3.2.1, is present in the ludic phase of Phaedra's characterisation not only establishes a ludic context, but also creates a Stoic point of view on Phaedra's passionate behaviour.

Both Phaedra and Theseus become agents of disaster for themselves and their family, the former by being overcome with passionate love and fear, and the latter with anger.\textsuperscript{341} Hippolytus, who primarily functions as the raw material (\textit{materia}) for the establishment of Phaedra's and Theseus' identity, is angered by Phaedra's inappropriate advancements. The

\textsuperscript{340} Li Causi (2007) argues that Hercules' kinship with Jove and Amphitryro, as this is presented in Seneca's drama, can help decipher his nature.

\textsuperscript{341} For the role of \textit{furor} in Phaedra see Henry-Walker (1966), and Merzlak (1983). Léfèvre (1969) argues that Theseus' actions are instigated by passionate love (\textit{amor}) and his inability to moderate himself. This might be more accurate with regards to Theseus' behaviour prior to the events portrayed in Seneca's \textit{Phaedra}, for instance, his expedition to the Underworld to kidnap queen Proserpina. In the moments at which we see Theseus in Seneca's drama, the emphasis is on his tyrannical rage (\textit{furor}) and on its effects on his family.
fact that his rhetoric exudes violence contradicts his idealistic views on morality, and makes him vulnerable to Phaedra’s (and even his father’s) accusations of rape, luxury and tyranny.

More specifically, Phaedra is presented as having surrendered herself to her passionate love for her stepson Hippolytus. While in Stoic terms her surrender to her passion of impious love for Hippolytus is a result of poor judgement (as any passion is for the Stoics), it lies in pre-dramatic time, as the drama portrays Phaedra’s conscious attitude and response to it. In fear of her inappropriate love being revealed, Phaedra succumbs to two instances of poor judgement: firstly, she contributes to Hippolytus’ incrimination with the false charge of rape; secondly, following the revelation of Hippolytus’ false rape, she decides to commit suicide to spare herself humiliation.

Her decisions are triggered by fear and shame caused by a moral code which values conjugal loyalty, chastity, and female honour, as her allusions to historical or mythological figures such as Lucretia, Jocaste or Polyxena suggest. Phaedra’s suicide is ineffective in redeeming her lost honour as a materfamilias under the current circumstances. She explicitly points that out that these values have no place in a thoroughly depraved world. The moral nature of her circumstances is ambiguous to her (morere, si casta es, uiro; si incesta, amori, 1184-5). From a Stoic perspective, committing suicide can be an acceptable form of action, when someone’s current situation does not allow them to act virtuously. Her suicide, therefore, is not an honourable act, as it is triggered by fear and shame, and not by fair judgement on her circumstances.

Theseus fluctuates among the roles of a tyrannical king, unfaithful husband and tyrannical father. Due to his anger he fails to realise that being a tyrannical father who is unable to show mercy to his son’s supposed misdemeanour only results in perpetuating his features as a bad paterfamilias. His actions confirm Phaedra’s words, that is, he has always wreaked havoc on his family. In that sense, although his characterisation is not ludic (in that he is not presented as engaged in an investigation of his identities) Theseus comes to a realisation of his true self thanks to Phaedra’s investigation of his and her own identities.

4.6.3 Medea

Seneca’s Medea provides us with a detailed illustration of the process by which Medea becomes her criminal self. Overcome by vengeful anger as she is over what she perceives to be a dishonour caused to her by Jason’s infidelity, she seeks to eliminate the family matrix and redefine aspects of the moral code which colours not only her circumstances, but also her actions as dishonourable. Without arguing that Medea’s characterisation can produce pure Stoic interpretations, I suggest that looking at this process in the light of ludism puts into relief Medea’s conception of and attitude towards the anti-Stoic inversion of the content of

342 As has been pointed out, in Seneca’s treatment of the myth, Phaedra’s passionate love for Hippolytus is taken for granted. This suggests that the emphasis has been transposed from her passion to its consequences and to the characters’ attitude towards it.
virtue, and that doing so has the capacity to offer a Stoic lesson to an audience familiar with Stoic teachings. 343

The tendency to add a judicial colouring to her circumstances at moments of decision-making enhances an interpretation of Medea’s characterisation with the aid of the concept of ludism. On the basis of this tendency, Medea is presented as engaging in a mental judicial procedure to determine whether Jason or Creon is to blame for her circumstances. The judicial vocabulary which has been identified at various instances throughout what has been designated as the ludic phase of her characterisation provides evidence for seeing the judicial procedure as on-going and in the background of any action. From a Stoic point of view, Medea is presented as applying methods prescribed for the eradication of passions, as the judicialised perception of her crisis indicates. This sets up a ludic context for the investigation and accomplishment of her true self. Her investigation, however, is carried out when she is already overcome with anger and the findings of her investigation is eventually the criminal Medea. As such, Medea’s (self-)investigation is informed by an inversion of her content of moral values.

One instance where the inversion of the content of virtue is explored can be found in the encounter between Medea and the nurse: NUT. tunc est probanda, si locum uirtus habet. / MED. Numquam potest non esse uirtuti locus (160-1). Both characters speak of uirtus; however, the context clarifies that they have different conception of uirtus. 344 The nurse speaks of a virtue which knows when to compromise, and to accept the necessities of the situation, tempori aptari decet (175). Medea, on the other hand, is inspired by a virtue which recognises no boundaries as to what is possible. In other words, the nurse’s virtue is of a more kairotic nature, whereas Medea’s does not make allowances for what circumstances dictate, as her words Fortuna opes auferre, non animum potest (176) explain. 345 Her determination to remain invulnerable to the changing circumstances gives her the impression that she can act as an agent of change and redefinition of such moral values as piety: quidquid admissum est adhuc, / pietas uocetur (904-5). In this manner she promotes her past crimes, which including the murder of her brother, as dutiful actions.

Here, of course, uirtus can be taken to mean ‘courage’. Such an interpretation fits well with the boldness of Medea’s machinations, since, according to both Medea and the nurse, her plans require courage. The nurse seems to conceive of courage rather as bravery needed at times when one is faced with misfortune; for Medea, on the other hand, courage seems to


344 Medea mentions her virtue towards the end of the drama in reference to the murder of her children: nunc hoc age, anime: non in occulto tibi est / perdenda uirtus (976-7).

345 A similar statement appears also later on in Medea’s encounter with Jason (Fortuna semper omnis infra me stetit, 520) with which Medea argues that she is not subject to the fickleness of fortune.
lean towards boldness or audacity, as she is willing to employ courage to achieve her criminal intentions. However, if one regards virtue as a generic term covering any form of positive ethical quality, then on the basis of the wider context, it can be interpreted as referring to piety. This interpretation can be supported by Medea’s words in lines 160-1.\footnote{These words may recall the Juno’s words in the prologue of Hercules Furens gloriae feci locum, which have been interpreted as an indication that, while she searches for the appropriate opponent for Hercules, she is in the process of rhetorical invention.} On a rhetorical level, these lines suggest her intention to redefine a commonplace (or locus, as it occurs in the text) of pietas, the virtue which needs redefinition due to Medea’s desire to commit a ‘pious crime’. This paves the way for the blurring of boundaries between a motherly and a stepmotherly (or, in other words, cruel) behaviour, ultimately justifying the cruelty of her murdering her children. Eventually Medea’s becoming her true self by murdering her children is presented to be intertwined with the inversion of the content of pietas.

4.6.4 Oedipus

The judicial conception of Oedipus’ circumstances has been shown to feature extensively in the ludic phase of characterisation. As has been argued to be the case in other Senecan dramas, this judicial colouring works to create a ludic context for the investigation of the hero’s identity, a process which can be of educative value for an audience familiar with Stoic teachings. The ludic phase of Oedipus’ characterisation has helped articulate the tensions underlying his circumstances: upon the revelation of his true identity, Oedipus is faced with the dilemma of self-preservation at the expense of his homeland, or a heroic sacrifice of himself.

His initial response to the revelation of the incest comes in the form of the invention of a punishment which would imitate the innovative manner of Nature, in his attempt to overcome Nature, and that was by morere sed cita patrem. This innovative form of suicide, which relies on blindness to deprive him from the world without in fact involving his physical death, has been suggested as a product of the rhetorical invention of an irate Oedipus. He realises, however, that his efforts are in vain, and that, in fact, they contribute to his mother’s suicide. As a result, Oedipus ends up being a twice parricide (bis parricida), although he intended his self-punishment to set right the murder of his father and the incest with his mother.

From a Stoic perspective, Oedipus’ self-punishment is of a mixed ethical charge. On the one hand, it seeks to spare Oedipus the humiliation of the loss of his patria potestas by means of blindness. On the other hand, it aims to relieve Thebes of his presence, through the imitation of death. Oedipus’ steps to rectify his crimes, however, rely on fear, the tyrannical feature of his identity, which suppresses the other feature of his identity, heroism. Being thus the product of a passionate state of mind, his self-punishment is shown to be only an ineffective
half-measure, as Jocaste’s suicide suggests. Her suicide makes him realise that, in order to set things right, he must leave Thebes, which is what he does at the end of the drama.\(^{347}\)

Boyle considers Seneca’s portrayal of Oedipus as representing a Stoic failure.\(^{348}\) On the microscopic level of a scene, Boyle’s interpretation is legitimate. Oedipus does allow his tyrannical nature to trigger all those destructive events. On the macroscopic level of the entire drama, however, his heroic flight from Thebes suggests that Oedipus is making progress towards a Stoic conception of virtue, one which defies external conditions, in order to achieve the noble goal of his homeland’s prosperity. Interpreting Oedipus as a Stoic proficiens rather than a Stoic failure will do justice to his final action, and will regard the signs of fear – a major feature of a tyrant - as no longer a motive in his behaviour; instead, the virtue of a hero who cares about the welfare of his homeland is what determines his decisions and actions. It should suffice to say that for Stoicism (especially Roman Imperial Stoicism) any human being is susceptible to errors which lead to the problematic situations which they subsequently encounter. After all, in Stoicism, one’s past actions leave no moral trace, as long as one realises the error and changes views and behaviours. The process by which Oedipus chose his final heroic flight from Thebes over of a passionate outburst, as has been delineated above, indicates that Seneca presents Oedipus as overcoming the fate which led him to his errors.

4.6.5 Agamemnon

Seneca’s *Agamemnon* features Clytemnestra’s self-investigation as a major theme of drama. The process of her self-investigation is intertwined with the question of appropriateness of transgressed boundaries, as the boundaries of these aspects of her identity have become blurred, due to Agamemnon’s passions as well as her own. On the basis that Stoicism prescribes a judicial conception of one’s circumstances to form fair judgments and deter passionate behaviour, the judicial element found in the ludic phase of Clytemnestra’s characterisation justifies the application of the concept of ludism to test whether the drama can yield a Stoic message. Interpreting Clytemnestra’s characterisation with the aid of ludism helps describe the conflict she experiences when passionate behaviour (hers and Agamemnon’s) questions established boundaries of her social and family roles.

In chapter 3.6 it was shown that there is an emphasis on social and family roles which promotes the reduction of Clytemnestra into positive manifestations of a materfamilias, such as a pious mother and wife, as well as negative, such as the stepmother and the impious wife. Clytemnestra is overcome with uncontrollable sexual desire for Aegisthus and anger for Agamemnon’s infidelity. However, she points out how the morality of her prospective actions

\(^{347}\) This is another point of deviation from the Sophoclean play, in which the character at the end returns to the palace, unlike Seneca’s Oedipus whose flight is immediate.

\(^{348}\) Boyle (2011), lix. Poetscher (1977) also provides a negative evaluation of Oedipus’ moral posture, while Poe (1983) regards his nature as sinful.
can not be determined by any moral values, as these values are no longer alive (periere mores ius decus pietas fides / at qui redire cum perit nescit pudor, 112-3). The question she asks herself thus becomes a reasonable one: *quid, segnis anime, tuta consilia expetis? ... clausa iam melior uia est* (107-8). The use by Clytemnestra of the verb *deceit* (124) introduces the issue of moral appropriateness. Here in fact exists an oxymoron, due to the juxtaposition of two contradictory notions, that of the ethical appropriateness introduced by *deceit*, and that of the crime introduced by *nefas*. Clytemnestra’s actions are characterised by what is described as a paradoxical immoral appropriateness of transgressed boundaries that stems from a flawed moral landscape imposed by the house of Pelops (*o scelera semper sceleribus uincens domus: / cruore uentos emimus, bellum nece!, 169-70*). In that sense they appear to be morally appropriate, because they reproduce the principles of her anti-moral genealogy.

4.6.6 Thyestes

Seneca’s *Thyestes* illustrates the impact of Atreus’ vengeful anger on the process of investigating and establishing his identity. Applying the concept of ludism to Atreus’ characterisation can help capture and describe mechanisms of moral reflection on the effect of passion on his identity and social surroundings. The specific manifestation of ludism which can be of educative value for a Stoic audience is the ludic inversion of the content of *pietas*. Concerning the appropriate behaviour between brothers, Atreus argues: *fas est in illo quidquid in fratre est nefas* (220). This inversion confers an internal moral justification on Atreus’ crime. His cruel satisfaction in committing the crime, rather than explicitly advocating Atreus’ passionate behaviour and its consequences, can be interpreted as emanating from the very ludic inversion which motivates his crime.

Both Atreus and Thyestes have been shown to have a share in the loss of internal balance and structure of their family. Even Thyestes, who is the obvious victim of Atreus’ machinations, is no less responsible for the crisis in the family, due to his relationship with Atreus’ wife. The fact that the Chorus regards either of them as potential candidates for a crime indicates Thyestes’ contribution to the current crisis. Seneca’s *Thyestes*, however, illustrates how Atreus in particular allows his tyrannical self to determine his course of actions, triggering the destructive events which the drama portrays, whereas Thyestes’ actions lie in the pre-history, so to speak, of the drama.

As explained in 3.7, the pre-crime dramatic time is essentially preoccupied with illustrating the ludic phase of Atreus’ identity. During the ludic phase of his characterisation, his fear of status-loss compels him to engage himself in a process of investigation of his identity. The ultimate question is whether he or his brother Thyestes is father of his children, and by implication whether his social status has been undermined or not. The murder of his

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349 This tendency has been characterised as ‘the inversion of *aiēv ἄπιστεύειν*’ Trabert (1953), 54 in Tarrant (1976), 172.
brother’s children is the actual performance of himself as finally fixed, which allows him to establish his *patria potestas*. The motif of the reversal of natural processes creates the criteria against which the appropriateness of Atreus’ identity can be assessed from a Stoic perspective.

A judicial colouring of the process creates the ludic context for this investigation. The outcome of this investigation is the discovery that what is according to Nature for Atreus is a criminal self. If we follow the argument that Seneca’s *Thyestes* can be expected to have an educative value for an audience familiar with Stoic teachings, applying the concept of ludism helps draw a lesson which can throw into relief the moral norms of the audience. Atreus searches for his identity within a context of ludic features which consist of the judicial conception of his circumstances and of inversions of the physical world. His investigation reveals that what is appropriate for him to become is dictated by nature (a Stoic doctrine in itself). The fact, however, that nature itself is governed by inversions results in Atreus establishing that what is morally appropriate action for him to take is also based on an inversion of conventional morality.

### 4.6.7 Troades

A central theme of Seneca’s *Troades* is death and dissolution, not only physical, but also social (as well as the capacity to inflict either form). Physical death occurs in the broader context of the dissolution of their socio-political status, which is also a form of ‘death’ in a metaphorical sense. The judicial element creates the ludic context for the play. Compared with the function of ludism in the other Senecan dramas examined previously, the *Troades* demonstrate a striking difference. As explained in chapter 3.8, despite their attempts to exploit effectively the ludic context to overcome the crisis with which they are faced, the Trojan Women are found in circumstances which eventually do not allow them to avoid physical or social death, and their attempt to overcome these circumstances is of no consequence. As for the victorious Argives, the characterisation of Agamemnon, Pyrrhus and Ulixes is not ludic. Unlike the Trojan Women’s social status and identity, their own has not been questioned, since they are not the ones experiencing a crisis; also the questions raised regarding the new status quo which they themselves have imposed does not affect their identity, but merely allows them to confirm themselves as what they already are.

From a Stoic point of view, the mental state of the Trojan women can be seen as a result of them not having an internalised conception of *bonum* as a mental disposition. Hecuba, for instance, mourns equally for the loss of her family and for her social status. And even though she recognises the vanity of political power emanating from social status, she is unable to dispose of her aristocratic beliefs which place values on such external conditions. Fear of

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350 See Bishop (1972) and Lawall (1981) on the themes of death and dissolution in the *Troades*. Also Keulen (2001), 13-4. Fantham (1982), 78-92 discusses the views on death expressed in the *Troades* which are inconsistent with orthodox Stoicism.
death has made Andromache to be at a loss to figure out the appropriate expression of piety towards her late husband and her son, so much so that she ends up confusing maternal love with erotic conjugal love. Similarly the Argives are portrayed as incapable of handling their victory in such a way as to break out of conventional views on heroism, since their conception of it places action and power over mental disposition. While they are aware of what a Stoic inflection of heroism involves (for instance, humanity towards the conquered), they still abide by their conventional views on heroism.

Agamemnon preaches against the sacrifice of Polyxena, yet he eventually consents to it when it is endorsed by Calchas, a seer with (metafictional) knowledge of the divine will and economy. Pyrrhus, Achilles’ mouthpiece, responds to Agamemnon’s accusation of cruelty and cowardice by presenting Polyxena’s sacrifice as his father’s deserved reward for heroism. This he does in an encounter with Agamemnon which recalls Achilles’ encounter with Agamemnon in Homer’s Iliad. Ulixes recognises the cruelty of his behaviour, but he puts the blame on the Argives, claiming that he is merely their mouthpiece (and in that sense relates the narrative of what by literary necessity has to happen). Finally Helen, who stands in the middle of the two parties, ends up siding with the victors and contributing to the sacrifice, while her authorial role is made explicit in her words.
5 CONCLUSIONS

Stoic philosophical education involves a risk, which concerns the potential consequences of distancing oneself from commonly accepted values, as one could end up at the other end of the moral spectrum. The result of such a distancing could be either a Stoic sage or a monster. Indeed, with the exception of Hercules and perhaps Oedipus, the other characters in Seneca’s dramas are presented as creating their own inverse morality, \(^{351}\) which is the product of a ludic negotiation of the appropriateness of their actions. This gives their crimes the shocking appearance of an internal moral justification, and makes the argument for an educative function of Senecan drama appear to be problematic.

I have argued, however, that the portrayal of a moral code based on moral inversions in Senecan drama can be associated with the general preference for the unreal and extreme in declamatory rhetoric, the popularity of which was at a peak. Rhetorical education would guarantee to a certain degree the ability of the audience to identify and appreciate the ludic absurdity of Senecan characterisation. Interpreting Senecan characterisation by applying the concept of declamatory ludism helps us realise that it illustrates characters who ‘are collectively trapped between two competing ethical discourses and irreconcilable modes of valuation, discourses based on and generated by their alternative views’. \(^{352}\) In that sense Senecan characters are presented as case studies of how one fails to adapt to new circumstances which require moving from a conventional moral code to one of a Stoic inflection, by means of the eradication of passions.

I have sought to establish a ludic context through two features frequently occurring in Senecan characterisation, the occurrence of imagery inspired from the reality of the arena and the judicial conception of the characters’ circumstances. With regard to the arena imagery, it clearly cannot be associated with the identification of declamatory mechanisms and patterns in Senecan drama. Moreover, the popularity of the spectacles of the arena in the Roman world can account for the use of such imagery in Latin literature. For instance, Lucan’s *Pharsalia* features gladiatorial imagery extensively. Nonetheless the relevance to my argument of the occurrence of such imagery in Senecan characterisation lies in the fact that it promotes one’s conception of the Senecan characterisation as an activity of ludic properties.

Similarly, the occurrence of judicial vocabulary in the ludic phase of Senecan characterisation may not originate exclusively from declamatory rhetoric but also from pragmatic. A forensic rhetoric speech can be produced in the context of either declamatory or pragmatic rhetoric. Regardless of its origin, however, the judicial element helps establish a

\(^{351}\) Marcosignori (1960) argues that the notion of tragic in Senecan drama relies on the awareness that someone can be the agent of destruction of his own self.

\(^{352}\) Roller (2001), 29: it should be noted that Roller refers not to Senecan drama but to Lucan’s *Pharsalia*. 

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ludic context that acquires a declamatory colour due to those mechanisms and patterns particularly associated with declamatory rhetoric. Among these patterns and mechanisms are the anthropological categories, the so-called stock declamatory characters, and the manners in which these are used.

With regard to the anthropological categories of declamation, they certainly do not belong exclusively to the tradition of declamatory rhetoric, but rather they are borrowed from the whole of the literary tradition. For instance, the stock characters of the stepmother or of the tyrant are encountered in the Greek as well as Roman literary tradition. Nonetheless they acquire (and induce with their presence) a declamatory colour, due to the manners in which they are used by the declamatory tradition. These manners relate to the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric, and more specifically its agonistic and theatrical aspects. While agonism and theatricality in declamatory rhetoric were identified on two levels, the level of performance and the metafictional and metatheatrical levels were of particular relevance to this study. The metafictional and metatheatrical properties of declamatory rhetoric are not unique to the genre either.

Even though the term ‘ludic’ in Senecan characterisation describes the characters’ extreme and unrealistic behaviour, ‘ludic’ in general does not mean merely ‘not serious’ or ‘extreme and unrealistic’; rather ‘ludic’ covers a spectrum of activities ranging from the grimmest and mundane to the most exotic and extreme action. The concept of ludism was used in chapter 2 to interpret the nature of rehearsing roles, behaviours and attitudes to moral issues in declamatory rhetoric. That nature was not exclusively unrealistic, but could also be entirely pragmatic or even grim. The tendency of declamatory rhetoric, however, at the time of the Empire was increasingly favouring the unrealistic and extreme end of the spectrum. The term ‘declamatory ludism’ seeks to capture this specific preference for unrealistic issues and expressions of social roles in Senecan drama.

Characterisation in the seven complete and genuine dramas of Seneca, namely Hercules Furens, Phaedra, Medea, Troades, Oedipus, Agamemnon and Thyestes, was interpreted in the light of the concept of declamatory ludism in the second section of the thesis. My analysis sought to identify in Senecan characterisation those mechanisms and patterns encountered in declamatory rhetoric which constitute the latter’s ludic properties, and therefore support our argument for the ludic properties of the former.

Thyestes is one of the dramas in which the application of the concept of declamatory ludism was fruitful. Thematically the drama is especially close to declamatory themes, as was pointed out in chapter 3.7. Instances of a judicial conception of the circumstances in Atreus’ ludic phase of characterisation were fewer compared to other dramas, and similarly, there was a low frequency of imagery inspired from the reality of the arena. The low occurrence of these two types of signs which establish a ludic context, however, was balanced out by the numerous instances of other features associated with the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric. The declamatory mechanism of stripping characters of their specifics, and
emphasising their family and social roles was clear in many passages of the play. We were able to identify an antithetical combination of anthropological categories familiar from declamatory rhetoric, namely *pater–tyrannus*, and our analysis showed that Atreus’ as well as Thyestes’ investigation of identities is based on this binary. Only in Atreus’ characterisation, however, was this antithetical pair shown to function in the ludic manner of declamatory rhetoric.

The metadramatic qualities of the drama introduced in the prologue by Tantalus’ ghost and the Fury provided the dramatic space for the investigation of Atreus’ identity. This satisfied the first aspect of ludism, theatricality, while the antithetical pair *pater-tyrannus*, which was shown to promote the negotiation of Atreus’ identity, satisfied agonism, the second aspect of ludism. Agonism was also identified in Atreus’ metafictional awareness and allusions to literary fictions in his endeavour to invent a criminal self that will surpass all past crimes among family members. Ultimately the finding of his investigation is the ludic inversion of the content of piety among brothers.

My analysis of *Hercules Furens* also revealed signs and patterns associated with the ludic nature of declamatory rhetoric. The events of the drama revolve around the question of the other characters’ awareness of Hercules’ identity, and the concept of declamatory ludism was argued to have the capacity to describe the process of investigation of Hercules’ identity. Compared with other dramas, the tendency to strip characters of their specifics and emphasise their social and family roles was not so marked, but ludic practices were developed in other ways.

Firstly, Hercules’ ludic phase of characterisation was shown to be mapped on the antithetical pair *uir fortis–tyrannus*. The other characters of the drama as well as Hercules himself give accounts of his past actions which justify either a heroic or a tyrannical portrait of him. Even the scene of madness was shown to have the capacity to yield an interpretation of Hercules either as a heroic or a tyrannical figure. Juno’s prologue, which at least partly coincides temporally with the events of the drama, provided the dramatic space for investigating Hercules’ identity. In the manner of declamatory rhetoric, these two anthropological categories were also found to function as allusive links to mythological figures such as Odysseus, promoting antagonism as a driving force in the establishment of Hercules’ identity.

One clear instance of judicial conception of Hercules’ circumstances only appears towards the end of the drama, when Amphitryo seeks to dissuade Hercules from committing suicide. Moreover, imagery inspired from the reality of the arena was programmatically introduced by Juno’s prologue in relation to Hercules’ conflicting aspects of identity, but was not found to be exploited in an explicit manner during the ludic phase of Hercules’ characterisation, although merely agonistic / military terms were encountered in various instances.

Oedipus’ myth was thematically appropriate for analysis along the lines of the concept of ludism, as its main theme is the investigation and establishment of his true identity. This was
explored in the ludic phase of his characterisation and was carried out in an environment of theatricality, which was provided by the metadramatic properties of the drama. Agonism was provided by the antithetical binary *uir fortis* – *tyrannus/affectator tyrannidis*. Oedipus’ self-inflicted blindness was the outcome of him embarking on the process of inventing a punishment that would rectify his crime of transgressing family roles.

Finally my examination of the drama revealed a high occurrence of instances of judicial conception of Oedipus’ circumstances, while the use of imagery of the arena was very limited. The single significant instance of such occurrence was in a passage which articulated Oedipus’ internal conflict of these two categories mapping the process of investigation of his identity.

Unlike other characters whose characterisation was mapped on an antithetical combination of anthropological categories, Medea’s characterisation was shown to be mapped on the non-antithetical binary *mater-coniunx*. The judicial conception of circumstances was widely used in the ludic phase of her characterisation, establishing a ludic context for the investigation of her identity. The two anthropological categories informing the investigation of her identity were not found to function as links to other exemplary figures in the comparative manner which is demonstrated elsewhere. The outcome of embarking on a process of invention which questions the content of piety in a mother’s behaviour towards her children, Medea finds herself to become the murderer of her children, which shows her be the ultimate example of impiety.

In Seneca’s *Phaedra* we were presented not only with Phaedra’s, but also Theseus’ and Hippolytus’ characterisation. Of the three characters, however, only Phaedra’s characterisation was argued to respond to an interpretation in the light of declamatory ludism. Theseus’ and Hippolytus’ investigation of identities served the investigation of Phaedra’s identity, while they did not show any ludic signs. The use of images of hunting for Phaedra and Hippolytus in a highly theatricalised environment alongside the judicial conception of Phaedra’s circumstances were argued to establish a ludic context for her investigation. With regard to specific mechanisms and patterns of declamatory rhetoric, it was shown that Phaedra’s investigation of identity is based on the antithetical pair *mater – nouerca*, and essentially explores the content and expression of maternal love in contrast to the expectations of a stepmother. Although Theseus’ presence and involvement in the negotiation of her identity also introduce her role as a wife (*coniunx*), this role is not given as much emphasis as her other two.

Following the tendency towards antagonistic intertextuality found in declamatory rhetoric, these categories act as links to the mythological or historiographical tradition, as Phaedra compares her circumstances with Jocaste’s or Lucretia’s, and most prominently her mother Pasiphae’s unnatural love with a bull. Unlike other characters, however, the process of investigation carried out by Phaedra is not made explicit in terms of self-invention, but can only be gathered from the allusive comparison with those figures. It was shown that the
antithetical pair mater-nouerca explores the transgression of boundaries of these roles of Phaedra in relation to Hippolytus, due to her being overcome with passionate love and fear.

In the Agamemnon, Clytemnestra’s characterisation was shown to be a main theme of the drama, and to be intertwined with Agamemnon’s identity. Only Clytemnestra’s characterisation, however, was argued to have ludic properties, and to respond to an interpretation in the light of declamatory ludism. As has been shown to be the case with other dramas, in the Agamemnon too Clytemnestra’s circumstances in the ludic phase of her characterisation were given a judicial colour, especially in her encounter with Aegisthus. Unlike the other dramas, no occurrence of imagery inspired from the arena was identified.

It was suggested that these two aspects of a ludic context, theatricality and agonism, are provided by the metatheatrical qualities of the prologue spoken by Thyestes’ ghost, and the element of negotiation in subsequent scenes between Clytemnestra and the other dramatic characters. The element of negotiation concerned primarily the investigation of Clytemnestra, and was based on the antithetical binary of the categories mater – nouerca commonly used in declamatory rhetoric. Clytemnestra was shown to engage herself in a process of invention to establish the appropriate course of action that will lead to her becoming the Tyndarid that she is. The antithetical binary mater - nouerca provided links to other mythological figures, such as Medea or Helen, Clytemnestra’s sister, with whom she compares her circumstances, while also desiring to surpass them in the impiety of her actions. Her investigation essentially concerned the boundaries and transgression of the roles of a mother and a stepmother, and expected behaviours. Seen in the light of declamatory ludism, the outcome of Clytemnestra’s self-investigation is a ludic change of the content and expression of piety in a mother’s behaviour, who is actually presented to act in a most cruel or stepmotherly behaviour to her children.

Of all dramas the Troades was the least responsive to the application of the concept of declamatory ludism. In this drama there were two groups of characters, the victors consisting of the Argives, and the vanquished consisting of the women of Troy. The tendency to emphasise social roles was there; these roles, however, did not always correspond with those one finds in declamatory rhetoric. For instance, Hecuba’s characterisation was shown to be based on the combination of the categories mater – dux femina, with the latter category not being encountered in surviving declamatory speeches.

Moreover, the ludic phase of characterisation could not be clearly identified. One reason for this is that neither the victors nor the defeated party were presented as embarking on any sort of investigation of the constituent elements of their identity and of ways to re-new it. Of all characters, only Andromache showed signs of seeking to interfere with what tradition has in store for her son Astyanax. Not only were her endeavours unsuccessful, however, they did not strictly relate to herself, but to her son.

The argument of chapters 3 and 4 was that looking at Senecan characterisation in the light of ludism can help show audience how one fails to overcome the blows of Fortune and
becomes an exemplary old-fashioned aristocrat and a victim of oneself by becoming overwhelmed by passions, or how one can overcome Fate and achieve an exemplary victory over it by controlling one’s passions while still remaining an aristocrat of Stoic inflection. Pratt rightly comments that ‘declamation gave Seneca a technique for analyzing motives and diagnosing emotions’. To integrate this argument within a broader context of philosophical reflection with potentially pedagogical effects, I would add that by identifying the ludic qualities of declamatory rhetoric and by subsequently interpreting Senecan characterisation in the light of the concept of ‘declamatory ludism’ can help delineate the mechanisms which allow one to identify an educative effect out of that analysis and diagnosis. As our analysis revealed, identifying such an educative effect can be facilitated by the application of the concept of ludism to Senecan characterisation, yet often this is possible if ludism is applied rather loosely.

Generally speaking, the dramas in which the application of ludism was argued to put into relief an educative effect were those in which the judicial conception of the characters’ circumstances was most prominent, for instance Medea, Phaedra and Oedipus. In those cases, the judicial element in the ludic phase of their characterisation was the ludic element which would act as a link and reference to the Stoic mental exercise of staging an imaginary battle in one’s mind to eradicate passions.

Pratt (1983), 152.
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