

**Bringing the Other to Center Stage:
Seneca's *Medea* and the Anxieties of Imperialism**

#1 illi Pelia, non nobis iacet;
fugam, rapinas adice, desertum patrem
lacerumque fratrem, quidquid etiam nunc novas
docet maritus coniuges, non est meum.
totiens nocens sum facta, sed numquam mihi. (*Medea* 276-280)

For him, not for me, Pelias lies dead; add flight, theft, a deserted father and mutilated brother, whatever the husband even now teaches new wives, it is not my fault. So many times I have been made harmful but never for myself.

#2 discedo, exeo,
penatibus profugere quam cogis tuis.
at quo remittis? Phasin et Colchos petam
patriumque regnum quaeque fraternus cruor
perfudit arva? quas peti terras iubes?
quae maria monstras? Pontici fauces freti
per quas revexi nobilem regum manum
adulterum secuta per Symplegadas?
parvamne Iolcon, Thessala an Tempe petam?
quascumque aperui tibi vias, clausi mihi. (*Medea* 449-458)

I'm leaving, I'm going away, me, whom you compel to flee from your own home. But where do you send me back to? Should I seek Phasis and Colchis, my father's kingdom and the fields steeped in my brother's blood? What lands do you suggest I seek? What seas do you show me? The jaws of the Pontic sea through which I brought back a band of noble kings having followed an adulterer through the Symplegadas? Or is it little Iolchus, Thessaly or Tempe I should seek? Whatever paths I've opened up for you, I've closed for myself.

#3 per urbes erret ignotas egens
exul pavens invisus incerti laris,
iam notus hospes limen alienum expetat (*Medea* 20-22)

May he wander through unknown cities destitute, an exile, fearful, hated, and homeless, already a notorious suppliant searching out foreign doorsteps.

- #4 Et ut scias quemadmodum incipiant adfectus aut crescant aut efferantur, est primus motus non voluntarius . . . alter cum voluntate non contumaci, tamquam oporteat me vindicari, cum laesus sim (*De Ira*, 2.4.1)

And so you might know, further, how the passions begin, grow, and are made wild, the first emotion is not voluntary . . . the next is combined with free will, not unyielding, as though it is proper to vindicate myself when I have been injured.

- #5 Quid ergo est? Origo huius mali ab ira est, quae ubi frequenti exercitatione et satietate in oblivionem clementiae venit et omne foedus humanum eiecit animo, novissime in crudelitatem transit. Rident itaque gaudentque et voluptate multa perfruuntur (*De Ira*, 2.5.3)

Therefore, what is it? The source of this evil is anger, which, when frequently practiced and over-abundant, forgets mercy, and has expelled from the mind every human bond and crosses over finally into cruelty. And so they laugh and rejoice and completely enjoy great pleasure

- #6 Iuvat, iuvat rapuisse fratrum caput;
artus iuvat secuisse et arcano patrem
spoliasse sacro, iuvat in exitum senis
armasse natas. (*Medea* 911-913)

It gives me pleasure, pleasure to have torn off my brother's head; pleasure to have carved up his limbs and to have robbed my father of a hidden relic, and pleasure to have armed daughters for the death of their aged father.

- #7 derat hoc unum mihi,
spectator iste. nil adhuc facti reor:
quidquid sine isto fecimus sceleris perit. (*Medea* 992-994)

This one thing I lacked, that he should be a spectator. I have done nothing yet, whatever crime I have done is wasted without him.

- #8 coniunx socerque iusta iam functis habent,
a me sepulti; natus hic fatum tulit,
hic te vidente dabitur exitio pari. (999-1001)

Your wife and father-in-law already have the funeral rites for the dead, buried by me; this son has borne his fate, and this one will be given a similar fate as you watch.

- #9 Quemadmodum acerbissima crudelitas est, quae trahit poenam, et misericordiae genus est cito occidere, quia tormentum ultimum finem sui secum adfert (*De Beneficiis* 2.5.3)

Just as it is the sharpest cruelty, which prolongs punishment, and there is a sort of mercy in killing swiftly, because the ultimate torture brings with it its own end.

#10 lumina huc tumida alleva,
ingrate Iason. coniugem agnoscis tuam? (*Medea* 1020-1021)

Raise your swollen eyes, ungrateful Jason. Do you recognize your wife?

#11 Hoc est, quare vel maxime abominanda sit saevitia, quod excedit fines primum solitos, deinde humanos, nova supplicia conquirat, ingenium advocat ut instrumenta excogitet per quae varietur atque extendatur dolor, delectatur malis hominum; tunc illi dirus animi morbus ad insaniam pervenit ultimam, cum crudelitas versa est in voluptatem et iam occidere hominem iuvat. (*De Clementia* 1.25.2)

This is the reason why brutality is the greatest abomination, because it first transgresses all ordinary boundaries, and then all human bounds. It seeks out new suppliants, advocates ingenuity in order to invent devices by which suffering may be varied and extended, and delights in the disasters of men; then indeed the terrible disease of that soul has come to the ultimate insanity, when cruelty is changed into pleasure and now killing a human being brings delight.

#12 haec virgo feci. gravior exurgat dolor;
maiora iam me scelera post partus decent.
accingere ira teque in exitium para
furore toto. paria narrentur tua
repudia thalamis (*Medea* 49-53)

These things I did as a virgin. Let a more severe grief rise up; greater crimes suit me now I've given birth. Gird yourself with wrath and prepare yourself to enact destruction in complete rage. Let your divorce be told in such a way as to equal your marriage.

#13 hoc age et faxis sciant
quam levia fuerit quamque vulgaris notae
quae commodavi scelera. prolusit dolor
per ista noster: quid manus poterant rudes
audere magnum? quid puellaris furor?
Medea nunc sum (*Medea* 905-910)

Come now and let them know how frivolous and how common the crimes were which I committed to please him. In them my grief was rehearsing: what great things were unskilled hands able to dare? What could a girlish rage do? Now I am Medea!

#14 Ille se supra rerum naturam esse tunc credidit, cum tot miserorum hominum catervas sub alio caelo natis beluis obiceret, cum bellum inter tam disparia animalia committeret, cum in conspectum populi Romani multum sanguinis funderet mox plus ipsum fundere coacturus. (*De Brevitate Vitae* 13.7)

Then he believed himself to be beyond the power of nature, when he was tossing out so many crowds of miserable men to beasts born in a foreign land, when he was declaring war between such unmatched animals, and when he was pouring out so much blood in sight of the Roman people, which itself he would soon force to shed more.

#15 Candida nostri saecula patres
videre, procul fraude remota.
sua quisque piger litora tangens
patrioque senex factus in arvo,
parvo dives, nisi quas tulerat
natale solum, non norat opes.
bene dissaepi foedera mundi
traxit in unum Thessala pinus (*Medea* 329-336)

Our fathers saw pure ages far removed from deceit. Each man lazily living within his own shores, became an old man in his native land, rich on little, not knowing any wealth except that which his native soil had bourne. The Thessalian ship dragged into one the covenants of a well-divided world.