Roman Tragedy and Medicine: Language and Imagery of Illness in Seneca and Celsus

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ROMAN TRAGEDY AND MEDICINE:

LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY OF ILLNESS IN SENECA AND CELSUS

by

MICHAEL P. GOYETTE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Classics in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This dissertation has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Classics in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

ROMAN TRAGEDY AND MEDICINE:
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MICHAEL P. GOYETTE

Adviser: Professor Craig A. Williams

This dissertation analyzes the language and imagery of illness in selected tragedies and, to a lesser extent, the philosophical prose of the first-century CE Roman tragic poet and philosopher Seneca, reading these works with and against De Medicina, a nearly contemporary encyclopedic Latin prose text on medical theory and practice by the Roman encyclopediast Celsus. Inspired by previous studies of classical Greek tragedy together with the largely contemporary body of Greek prose writings on medicine known as the Hippocratic Corpus, my dissertation moves the discussion to Latin literature and is the first extended study to do so. I aim not only to provide insight into Seneca’s and Celsus’ writings, with particular attention to the question of vocabulary usage, but also to show how a shared language of human illness can inform a range of textual genres in Greco-Roman antiquity, from the prose literature of knowledge to philosophy to mythological poetry. I demonstrate that reading Senecan tragedy in tandem with Celsus’ prose encyclopedia on medicine can shed light upon how illness functions as a prominent although previously overlooked theme in Seneca’s plays. At the same time, my comparisons provide insight into vocabulary usage and rhetorical strategies in Celsus’ De Medicina. My project examines both “physical” and “mental” forms of illness, calling into question the linguistic and conceptual boundaries between such categories as they are explored in the works of Seneca and Celsus, and as they relate to Roman medicine more generally. My readings are sensitive to cultural and historical differences, encouraging re-examination of modern ideas and assumptions about illness, health, and other aspects of medicine; my project thus makes a key contribution to the developing field of medical humanities.
Parentibus Meis
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family: it is only because of their loving, tireless, herculean support that I have been able to complete my doctoral studies. My parents, Michael J. and Donna Goyette, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, instilled a love of learning early on and nurtured it all the way through my time in graduate school. They have always encouraged me to follow my passions and to pursue my education to the highest level. At every stage along the way, they have given me confidence and been there for me in every way imaginable. They have also provided a constant source of inspiration with the examples of hard work, dedication, attention to detail, intellectual curiosity, and integrity that they set every day.

My sisters, Andrea Goyette and Lisa Johnson, have always been there for me as well. Their frequent encouragement and support have done so much to help me make it through the challenges of graduate school. They also have supplied much inspiration with the hard work and commitment that they dedicate to their respective careers. Other family members I would especially like to thank include Matthew Johnson, my brother-in-law, for his positivity, kindness, and encouragement, and for sharing many car rides between New York City and upstate New York; my grandparents, Helen and Sam Spoon, and Jeanne and Joseph Goyette, for their constant love and support; my aunts and uncles, especially Connie Nashton, Mary Stromei, Dave Goyette, and Gloria Kavanah, for being so encouraging and supportive, and for taking such an interest in my academic pursuits over the years. I would be remiss not to acknowledge Buddy, Reggie, Zoey, Archie, Lucy, and all the other animals who have been
members of our family and who have provided much-needed comfort, warmth, and serenity over the years.

I am very fortunate to have assembled an exceptional dissertation committee, whose members have all made vital contributions not only to the present study, but to the general course of my academic career. I am especially grateful to my adviser, Dr. Craig Williams, whom I first met when he interviewed me for an adjunct teaching position at Brooklyn College in 2008. From those early days of my teaching career—well before I could have imagined he would become my dissertation adviser—Dr. Williams was tremendously supportive of my academic pursuits, both as a teacher and as a scholar. I am, in retrospect, extremely thankful that we happened to take the same ill-fated Amtrak train to travel to upstate New York for Thanksgiving in 2009. While suffering together through many hours of travel delays and absurdities, we had the chance to discuss many fascinating topics and deepen our rapport, which would be so crucial during the dissertation process.

Dr. Williams has been an ideal person to guide this project for many reasons, including his engagement with various genres of literature, his sensitivity concerning language usage, his skills in close reading and textual analysis, his thoughtfulness and attention to the details of writing, and his sheer knowledge of Latin literature and scholarship. I deeply appreciate Dr. Williams’ willingness to work with me from afar, and how generous he has been with his time while on a leave of absence. During that time, I applied for The Graduate Center’s Dissertation Year Fellowship, and he served an instrumental resource, not only by writing me a thoughtful recommendation, but also by giving me excellent advice about various aspects of my
application. I am extremely grateful for this mentorship, which helped me craft the most competitive application possible and win the award.

Dr. Williams has given much thought to various pieces of writing I have shared with him over the years, including papers (for both courses and conference presentations), abstracts, applications, funding proposals, articles to be submitted for publication, and, most of all, this dissertation. In these projects, he has served as an extraordinarily thorough reader and commenter, always pushing me to dig deeper, to look for further evidence and comparanda, to reach for greater interpretive precision, and to mine the text as fully and critically as possible. While spurring me on in these ways, he has always maintained a constructive, encouraging, and eminently clear mode of critique. These comments have helped me become a better philologist and a better writer.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ronnie Ancona for her contributions as a member of my dissertation committee, and for the collegiality, advocacy, and support she has provided throughout my time in graduate school. Dr. Ancona is, as I have come to know quite well personally, incredibly invested in her students and always has their best interests at the very forefront of her thoughts and actions. I was fortunate enough to take two courses with her during my time in graduate school, both of which significantly enhanced my research and writing skills. It has been a tremendous privilege to be her student, and I have learned much from her inside and outside of the classroom. I have benefitted from her guidance and mentorship in so many ways, including the remarkably thorough, perceptive, and incredibly expeditious comments she has provided on various pieces of writing, the many thought-
provoking conversations we have had about my scholarly and pedagogical interests, and the innumerable articles, references, and announcements she has so thoughtfully sent my way.

I would like to thank Dr. Philip Thibodeau, who, like Dr. Williams and Dr. Ancona, kindly served on my committee for my History of Latin Literature Exam. In preparation for this exam, Dr. Thibodeau, being aware of my interests in ancient medicine, suggested that I explore Celsus, an author I previously knew very little about. At that point I had no suspicion that this research would grow into a major scholarly interest of mine, and then one of the foundations of my dissertation and future research plans. Through the many conversations we have had about ancient medicine, Dr. Thibodeau has pointed me toward new authors, literary passages, and works of scholarship that have shaped the direction of my dissertation research and methodology.

I have also been fortunate to have Dr. Markus Asper, an exceptional scholar from outside of The City University of New York, serve on my dissertation committee. Dr. Asper presently teaches at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and formerly taught at New York University, where I took his course on Greek Medicine and Literature in Fall 2008. This course sparked my passion for ancient medicine, especially by opening my eyes to the possibility of studying medical topics in various literary genres. By incorporating a rich variety of texts in this course, Dr. Asper gave a new breadth to my experience with Greek and Latin literature and inspired me to study works that have often been overlooked and/or excluded from the canon of Greek and Latin literature. The approach taken in this course deeply influenced the methodology I have applied in this dissertation, and made me better-prepared to perform analysis across genres of literature. I
am also grateful to Dr. Asper for helping me forge connections with important scholars of ancient medicine, and for being a great source of support and encouragement from abroad.

In addition to my dissertation committee members, I would like to thank all of the other faculty members in the Classics Program at The Graduate Center. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Dee Clayman for the support and guidance she has provided since my first day in the program. I owe many thanks to Ms. Marilyn Mercado, the Assistant Program Officer, for being such a helpful and nurturing presence, and for going above and beyond expectation in every aspect of her work. Without her, the Classics Program would have not been able to function so seamlessly during all the years I was a student in it.

I would also like to acknowledge the past and present students of The Classics Program for exchanging many useful ideas, sharing resources and information, suggesting relevant scholarship, and for the deep sense of solidarity we have forged. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues Jared Simard, Chris Weimer, Dr. Paul McBreen, Dr. Michael Broder, and Dr. Georgia Tsouvala.

Throughout almost my entire time in graduate school, I have taught as an Adjunct Lecturer in the Classics Department at Brooklyn College. The experience of teaching there for the last six and a half years has had a profound impact on my development as a scholar, as it has afforded me so many opportunities to share my ideas about Greek and Latin literature with insightful and inquisitive students. In addition, I have been very well-supported and encouraged by many faculty members there. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Brian Sowers for being a wise and affable mentor, and for continually looking out for my best interests, even while he was teaching an impossibly heavy course load. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Liv Yarrow,
especially for encouraging my work in the field of ancient medicine by asking me to teach
Ancient Medicine: The Classical Roots of the Medical Humanities in Fall 2013. I feel extremely
fortunate to have had the opportunity to design and teach this course, which was brand new to
Brooklyn College’s curriculum. That teaching experience helped me gain a deeper
understanding of Greek and Roman medicine, and gave me more confidence about my ability
to make contributions within this field. For these things, I must also thank the stellar students
of that course, who brought interesting and diverse perspectives to the table and challenged
me with many perceptive and profound questions. In particular, I am deeply appreciative of
the classroom discussions we had about Celsus, which helped me elucidate my thoughts and
formulate ideas that are represented in this dissertation.

There are many other faculty and staff members from Brooklyn College whom I would like to
thank for being supportive of my professional career, including Dr. Graciela Elizalde-Utnick, Dr.
Sharona Levy, Mr. Patrick Kavanagh, and Ms. Palma Dellaporta. I would also like to
acknowledge my fellow Part-Time faculty members in Brooklyn College’s Classics Department,
and, more generally, all of the Part-Time Workers throughout The City University of New York.
These colleagues have provided support and solidarity, fortifying me with additional motivation
while writing this dissertation and throughout my time in graduate school. I also extend my
gratitude to all Brooklyn College’s highly dependable library staff members, who always
processed my frequent interlibrary loan requests with great swiftness and courtesy.

I am grateful to many staff members at The Graduate Center as well, including Amy Ballmer,
a librarian who gave me many useful tips when I was learning how to use bibliographical
software at the beginning of the dissertation process, and Judy Waldman, The Graduate
Center’s Dissertation Assistant, who provided much help and advice about formatting as I prepared to deposit this dissertation. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the highly professional and compassionate staff at The Wellness Center.

I have many people to thank from outside of The City University of New York. I am grateful to Dr. Brooke Holmes of Princeton University for making valuable suggestions pertaining to research when I was at the beginning of the dissertation process, and for offering encouragement whenever our paths would cross at conferences. I would like to thank all of my friends both inside and outside the world of academia for being supportive and showing interest in my work. I would especially like to acknowledge Clifford Robinson, for being such a thought-provoking and congenial interlocutor during our many conversations about Greek and Latin literature; Carolyn Laferrière, for providing thoughtful advice and sharing many important insights about art, literature, and mythology; Talia Hoke, for bundles of positivity and encouragement; Dean Babin, for his friendship and encouragement; and Josh Felver, for sharing his expertise in psychology and discussing modern conceptualizations of mental health, and for many years of friendship, advice, and support. I would also like to thank the Canale/Ricci family—Zack, Bobby, and Donna—for being a gracious and inspiring presence in my life over the last few years.

Throughout my academic journey I have had many exceptional and influential teachers whose fingerprints have a deep imprint on this work. They begin with my primary school teachers, especially Ms. Judith Banky and Ms. Christine Bracker, both of whom inspired me and encouraged me to pursue my academic interests with enthusiasm, confidence, and passion. This passion for learning was also fostered by my secondary school teachers, including Mrs.
Rosemary Coleman and Mrs. Patricia Braney, who taught me the fundamentals of Latin and instilled a deep appreciation for Latin poetry. I am thankful to many other teachers, including Dr. Walter Fibiger, who cultivated my love of words and language, and helped develop my skills in writing and literary analysis during all four of my years in high school; Mr. Philip Rudolph, who challenged me to scrutinize commonly-held views and assumptions about history, society, and much more, and who encouraged me to seek out primary sources and innovative approaches to academic inquiry; and Mr. John Shafer, who fostered my abilities in writing, critical thinking, and self-expression.

These dedicated teachers provided the foundation that I would build upon at Vassar College, where my passion for Greek and Latin literature was truly ignited. At Vassar, I learned from the Classics Department’s brilliant and harmonious group of faculty members, each of whom contributed greatly to my understanding of Greek and Roman antiquity. I am especially grateful to Dr. Rachel Kitzinger, who served as a wise and generous adviser, resource, and supporter throughout my four years at Vassar. In her Elementary Greek course, which I took during my first year at Vassar, she powerfully brought to life the beauty of the ancient Greek language and sparked a deep interest in ancient Greek literature. This experience played a huge role in inspiring me to major in Classics. I would go on to take a plethora of other courses with Dr. Kitzinger, all of which contributed in some way to my ongoing interest in tragedy. I am also very grateful to Dr. Rachel Friedman, who served as my freshman academic adviser and remained an invaluable resource throughout my time at Vassar. Dr. Friedman fostered my interest in tragedy as well, not only by directing my senior thesis on Euripides’ Bacchae, but also by teaching a fascinating course on Sophocles’ Philoctetes. It was during this course that I first
began to think about illness, healing, and medicine as themes in tragedy. I would also like to acknowledge the fellow students with whom I studied Classics while at Vassar for their collegiality, encouragement, and friendship, especially Matt Stephenson and Ben Revkin.

I would not have been able to complete my doctoral studies without the financial support I have received from various organizations. I would like to thank Vassar College for awarding me the Elsie Van Dyck Dewitt Fellowship for Graduate Studies in 2007-2008. I am grateful to The Graduate Center for providing me with a University Fellowship for four consecutive years, and for awarding me a Dissertation Year Fellowship, which has allowed me complete my dissertation and jumpstart my post-graduate career. My graduate education has also been supported by the New York Classical Club, which awarded me the Athens Summer Scholarship, and by The City University of New York’s Adjunct CET Professional Development Fund; together these sources of support enabled me to attend the Summer Session of The American School of Classical Studies in 2011. During this program, I learned an immense amount from the many scholars who shared their expertise, as well as from my fellow student participants.

Finally, I would like to thank my all of my dissertation committee members for carefully reading my initial dissertation proposal and drafts of this dissertation, and for providing many thoughtful comments and suggestions. I am, of course, solely responsible for any errors that remain.

Michael Goyette
The Graduate Center of The City University of New York
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Chapter I
Introduction

Illness is a major theme in both Greek and Roman tragedy. One particularly well-known example from Greek tragedy is Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos*, which opens with a plague ravaging the city of Thebes\(^1\) due to the presence of Oedipus, the incestuous patricide, who is himself characterized as suffering in a state of illness. Another example is Euripides’ *Medea*, whose title character is described by her nurse as “sick with love” for her treacherous husband\(^2\), and whose own speech illustrates that she is losing her mental balance\(^3\) as she plots her revenge. Scholars have recognized the centrality of the theme of illness in these and other Greek tragedies, and have given much consideration to how such works portray the human experience of illness, both physical and mental.\(^4\) Analyses have often focused upon the use of language, looking to the terminology for symptoms, diseases, and etiologies in Hippocratic writings as a point of comparison. This method of investigation has proven to be illuminating and thought-provoking not only because both sets of texts are rich in language and thought pertinent to illness, but also because the Greek tragedies (5\(^{\text{th}}\) century BCE) were written around roughly the same time period as many influential works from the Hippocratic Corpus (5\(^{\text{th}}\) century BCE and later).

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\(^1\) See esp. *Oedipus Tyrannos* 22-30.
\(^2\) e.g. ἐρωτὶ θυμὸν ἐκπλαγείσῃ Ἰάσονος (8); νῦν δ’ ἐχθρὰ πάντα, καὶ νοσεῖ τα φίλτατα (*Medea* 16)
\(^3\) See esp. *Medea* 1040-1080.
\(^4\) Here, I use the categories “physical” and “mental” illness in keeping with popular usage, but my analysis (especially in Chapter 4) will show that this mental/physical dichotomy often fits poorly with conceptualizations of illness in Greek and Latin literature.
Despite this recent scholarly interest in comparing the terminology of illness in Greek tragedy and the Hippocratics, significantly less research has been conducted on the relationship between Roman tragedy and medical prose, whether in Latin or Greek. This lacuna in scholarship is surprising, as many Roman tragedies were deeply inspired and influenced by the earlier Greek tragedies, and the themes of illness so prevalent in the Greek plays are distinctly present in many of the surviving Latin tragedies. Although the mid-first-century CE tragedies of Seneca—the only Latin author from whom entire tragedies survive intact—provide fruitful opportunities for analyzing representations of illness, this matter has been given little scholarly attention. Nor, to my knowledge, has there been any work done on the language and imagery of illness in the other (fragmentarily surviving) Latin tragedians besides Seneca, such as Naevius, Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius. This dissertation, then, performs the first extended study of language and imagery of illness in Roman tragedy in general and in Senecan tragedy specifically, reading five of Seneca’s tragedies in particular, as well as key passages from his prose works, alongside Aulus Cornelius Celsus’ De Medicina (On Medicine), a nearly contemporary encyclopedic prose text on medical theory and practice. In short, my dissertation draws inspiration from previous studies comparing works of Greek tragedy and contemporaneous medical writings, moving the discussion to Latin literature and providing new perspectives on the works of both Seneca and Celsus.

There are several reasons that may explain the dearth of scholarship on the relationship between Seneca and Celsus, and on the relationship between Roman tragedy and medical writing more generally. First, it can be observed that Roman tragedy lacks certain direct connections to illness, healing, and medicine intrinsic to the historical and performative
contexts of Greek tragedy. In fifth century Athens, for instance, tragedies were performed in a theatre immediately adjacent to the temple of Asclepius, the Greek medical deity, which has led some scholars to suggest that the phenomenon of Athenian tragedy bore connections with the cult of Asclepius and thus the spheres of medicine and healing.\(^5\) When it comes to Senecan drama, matters of performance are still much debated\(^6\), but there is no evidence of a theatrical setting connected with the sphere of medicine or with Asclepius specifically. Also unlike Seneca’s tragedies, some of the extant Greek tragedies were composed and/or performed during periods of devastating plague, which has led some scholars to identify themes of illness in Greek tragedies more readily and even to suggest that certain Greek tragedies were informed by historical occurrences of illness. Mitchell-Boyask, for one, draws a strong link between the great plagues that ravaged Athens in the second half of the fifth-century BCE and Athenian tragedy’s increasing interest in themes of illness, as reflected in plays performed after the outbreak of the plague, such as Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus, Trachiniae} and \textit{Philoctetes}, and Euripides’ \textit{Hippolytus}.\(^7\) Seneca’s tragedies, on the other hand, do not appear to resonate with any particular historical phenomenon of illness. Neither of these reasons, however, precludes or detracts from the present study, which will in fact show that Seneca’s tragedies reveal a strong interest in illness and other medically-related issues by pointing out resonances between

\(^5\) See Mitchell-Boyask 2008: 105-109; Wiles 1997: 43-44. Wickkiser discusses claims made by Plutarch (1\textsuperscript{st} to 2\textsuperscript{nd} century CE) that Sophocles himself was involved in the introduction of the Asclepius cult in Athens. (Wickisser 2008: 66-67; see also Wilson 1947: 290; Clinton 1994) In addition, testimonia from the \textit{Etymologicum Magnum}, a twelfth century CE lexicon, state that Sophocles established an altar to Asclepius. (see Wickisser 2008: 66) While Wickkiser and other scholars have expressed some skepticism about the reliability of these testimonies, they show that connections were at least thought to exist between Athenian tragedy and medicine in antiquity and during the medieval period.

\(^6\) Whether Seneca’s plays were performed, intended for performance, or even performable is not a central concern for the purposes of this study, and it is not my aim to shed new light upon these issues. For a synopsis of the various perspectives on these thorny and unresolved questions, see Erasmo 2004: 136-137; Pratt 1983: 16-21.

\(^7\) Mitchell-Boyask 2008: see esp. 105; see also Craik 2001: 87.
language and imagery in Seneca’s tragedies and in Celsus’ *De Medicina*. My comparisons will also identify instances in which Seneca’s representations of illness and language usage diverge from descriptions of illness and language usage in Celsus, thus supplying a multi-faceted perspective on contemporary discourse concerning illness.

**Seneca and Celsus**

Before commenting further on my methodology and scholarship that has influenced it, some background information about Seneca and Celsus is in order. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, also known as Seneca the Younger, served as a tutor and adviser to the emperor Nero. Seneca was born sometime between 8 BCE and 1 BCE, and he lived until 65 CE, when he was forced to commit suicide after being accused of involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero. Seneca produced a varied assortment of writings, including philosophical essays, letters (*Epistulae*) often concerned with issues in the realm of moral philosophy, a satiric prosimetric text on the death of the emperor Claudius, three essays written in the form of letters which make up a body of texts known as the *Consolations*, and tragedies, which may or may not have been intended for performance. Of the ten tragedies traditionally grouped in the Senecan corpus, two—*Octavia* and *Hercules Oetaeus*—are generally considered the work of an unknown author who was strongly influenced by the works of Seneca. My study does not delve into *Octavia*, but takes some brief glances at *Hercules Oetaeus*, setting aside questions of authorship.

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8 As Miriam Griffin notes in her biography on Seneca, there is scant evidence concerning Seneca’s life before 41. Based upon ancient sources, Griffin infers that Seneca could have been born in 8, 4, or 1 BCE, but she thinks that he was most likely born between 4 and 1 BCE. (Griffin 1976: 34)

9 *Octavia* is typically rejected because it refers to historical events which occurred after Seneca’s death, while *Hercules Oetaeus* is often considered spurious because of its “excessive length”. (see Pratt 1983: 12)
in the interest of comparing language usage.\textsuperscript{10} It is not a goal of this study to attempt to resolve these questions.

Many of Seneca’s philosophical works espouse ideas associated with Stoic philosophy and, like other works influenced by Stoicism, often reflect an “obsession with...sickness”.\textsuperscript{11} Commenting on Seneca’s writings more generally, Busch has observed that “Seneca’s prose teems with characters oppressed by serious illness”\textsuperscript{12}, including psychological forms of illness. While the relationship between Seneca’s prose writings and tragedies is highly complex\textsuperscript{13} and has been the subject of much debate\textsuperscript{14}, the obsession with illness which is so pronounced in works of Senecan prose is, as I will show, strikingly present in Seneca’s tragedies, although, to date, this matter has been given only limited attention. Some scholars have even suggested that this interest in illness which pervades so many of Seneca’s works can be traced to Seneca’s own personal experiences with illness.\textsuperscript{15} While enticing, the idea that Seneca’s own personal experience influenced him to write about the subject of illness is impossible to confirm or

\textsuperscript{10} Zanobi similarly admits Hercules Oetaeus into her analysis of Senecan tragedy on the basis that it is “much indebted in phrasing and tone to the [other] Senecan [tragedies]”. (Zanobi 2014: 239 n. 75)
\textsuperscript{11} Rosenmeyer 1989: 136.
\textsuperscript{12} Busch cites Epistula 77 and Epistula 78 (6-10) as examples. (Busch 2009: 255) Nutton also comments that Seneca is, in comparison with Cicero, “at ease with medical theories and terminologies.” (Nutton 2013: 161)
\textsuperscript{13} As Boyle aptly observes, “Seneca’s tragedies, textured though they are with Stoic ideas, exhibit a series of world-views which are neither simply Stoic, nor simple.” (Boyle 2006: 198; see also 201) Hesk discerns a distinct difference between Seneca’s philosophical prose and poetic tragedies: “Seneca expresses revulsion for...violent entertainment in his philosophical writing and yet we see that the baroque descriptions of human suffering and bloody violence in his tragedies are meant to be \textit{enjoyably} disgusting.” (Hesk 2007: 88) On the complex role of Stoic philosophy in the corpus of Senecan literature, see also Volk and Williams 2006: esp. 19-41; 43-55; 57-74.
\textsuperscript{14} Recent scholarship has tended to embrace the possibility of considering Senecan tragedy alongside Seneca’s Stoic philosophical writings. Nussbaum, for instance, has argued that certain Senecan tragedies aim to develop and test Stoic ideas about the passions (see Nussbaum 1994: 448-453). In past decades, it was less uncommon to find scholarship which maintained that that the two genres should be read completely separately. (e.g. Dingel 1974)
\textsuperscript{15} Busch, for instance, suggests that Seneca’s interest in illness could be related to his own “personal struggle with asthma, which left him feeling his own hold on life was tenuous.” (Busch 2009: 255; see also Edwards 1999: 253; Noyes Jr. 1973: 224) Seneca discusses his personal experience with asthma in Epistula 54.
refute. Furthermore, while the impact of biographical realities of author on text can be important, this is by no means the beginning or end of interpretation; such concerns are (at best) ancillary to the present study’s close analysis of language and imagery.

Compared with Seneca, there is much less certainty concerning the details of the life, educational background, and literary career of Aulus Cornelius Celsus.\textsuperscript{16} It is generally accepted that Celsus was born around 25 BCE and that he lived until about 50 CE\textsuperscript{17}, although these dates are very much based upon conjecture. It is also unclear where Celsus was born and where he lived\textsuperscript{18}, although his use of the first person when discussing the medicinal hot springs at Baiae, a city in the bay of Naples, might suggest possible residence in the area.\textsuperscript{19} The first century Latin rhetorician Quintilian attests that Celsus wrote not only on medicine, but also works on agriculture, military arts, rhetoric, philosophy, and jurisprudence, which together comprised a vast cultural encyclopedia called the\textit{Artes}.\textsuperscript{20} Of these works, only Celsus’ work on medicine,\textit{De Medicina}, survives in any substantial form\textsuperscript{21}, and fortunately enough it survives almost completely intact. Based upon certain known physicians and medical writers who are mentioned in this work\textsuperscript{22}, and the apparent lack of reference to any physicians or medical

\textsuperscript{16} For a more in depth examination of the life and career of Celsus, see Contino 1988: 13-50.
\textsuperscript{17} Allbutt 1921: 203-204; Mazzini 1999: 14.
\textsuperscript{18} It has been suggested that Celsus lived in either Italy or Gallia Narbonensis, but there is not strong evidence for either suggestion, as Langslow notes (Langslow 2000: 43 and n. 123)
\textsuperscript{19} See\textit{De Medicina} 2.17.1.2-5; 3.21.6.1-5. In each of these passages, Celsus uses the phrase \textit{super Baias in murtetis habemus} (as we have in the myrtle groves above Baiae), possibly indicating some personal familiarity with the area. I would like to thank Philip Thibodeau for bringing these passages to my attention. To my knowledge, no other scholar has commented on these possible clues as to where Celsus lived.
\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Institutio Oratoria} 12.11.24.
\textsuperscript{21} Only fragments of other parts of Celsus’\textit{Artes} remain, surviving as quotations by later Latin authors. (see Langslow 2000: 41)
\textsuperscript{22} e.g. Meges of Sidon, a surgeon who lived a little before the time of Celsus.
writers known to lived after 50 CE, *De Medicina* is often dated to the reign of Tiberius\(^{23}\) and sometimes to the reign of Nero\(^{24}\), making Celsus roughly contemporaneous with Seneca.\(^{25}\)

Also rather uncertain is the role Celsus played within the world of medicine.\(^{26}\) His compendia on various subjects demonstrate that Celsus had an array of interests outside of the medical sphere. He is, for instance, frequently cited as an agricultural authority by the first century CE author Columella.\(^{27}\) At the same time, we must be cautious about assuming that Celsus was a practicing farmer, philosopher, jurist, or doctor simply because he wrote texts on those subjects. While it is certainly possible that Celsus could have had expertise in these various areas of knowledge and still belong to the ranks of the medical profession, it is perhaps more likely, as scholars such as Scarborough have suggested, that Celsus was “not a ‘physician’ who practiced medicine, [but] merely a Roman compiler of a Hellenistic medical handbook”.\(^{28}\)

It is also possible, as Scarborough acknowledges, that Celsus could have been *both* a “physician” and a “compiler”\(^{29}\), but even ancient sources such as Pliny the Elder associate Celsus more with the *auctores* than with the *medici*.\(^{30}\) There have long been attempts to place Celsus into one box or another\(^{31}\), but as I discuss later in this introductory chapter, it is not so simple to make firm distinctions between such groups in the historical context of the first


\(^{24}\) Nutton 2013: 376 n. 63; 382 n. 16; see also Allbutt 1921: 203-204.

\(^{25}\) Langslow discusses the issue of dating Celsus in more depth, and suggests, with some reservation, that Celsus most likely wrote *De Medicina* sometime between 14 and 39 CE (Langslow 2000: 43-44). This is very close to the time when Seneca’s tragedies and prose works were written.

\(^{26}\) See Mei\ßner 1999: 201-202.

\(^{27}\) See *De Re Rustica* 1.1.14, 1.8.4, 2.2.15, 2.2.24-25. See also Scarborough 1969: 60.

\(^{28}\) Scarborough 1969: 59.

\(^{29}\) Scarborough 1969: 59.

\(^{30}\) As Scarborough points out, in Book 1 of *Naturalis Historia* Pliny lists his sources for the following books, and Celsus is repeatedly cited as a source of information about medicine; meanwhile, nowhere in Pliny’s work is Celsus ever described as a *medicus* himself. (see Scarborough 1969: 196; Spencer 1935: viii)

\(^{31}\) For a list of citations of modern scholars who have arguments about these issues, see Langslow 2000: 46 n. 130.
century Roman Empire. In addition, it is rather puzzling that the scholarly tradition begins with the assumption that we should pose the question whether Celsus was a practicing physician, but not whether he was a practicing farmer, orator, jurist, philosopher, etc. The fact that Celsus’ works on these subjects do not survive should not keep us from questioning his relationship to these spheres of inquiry in the same way that scholars have questioned Celsus’ relationship to the world of medicine.

Equally unclear is Celsus’ intended audience, namely the question of whether his work was meant for “laymen” or “professionals”. Although these categories were not definitively differentiated in Celsus’ time period, Gourevitch maintains that Celsus must have written “for the interested general public” because he decided to write about medical subjects in Latin, instead of Greek, the traditional language of medical learning. While Celsus’ choice to write in Latin may indeed have helped expand his potential audience to some degree, it must also be borne in mind that only a small minority of people during Celsus’ time period would have actually been able to read Celsus’ text. Indeed, Celsus’ audience still would have been limited by the number of people who had the ability to read Latin at the level of his prose and who were also interested in learning about medicine (as well as agriculture, jurisprudence, philosophy, etc.), and by the number of people who actually had access to his text. While the present study is not directly concerned with the issue of Celsus’ audience, the fact that Celsus’ work often includes pieces of common, “non-specialized” vocabulary (as this study will show)

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32 Gourevitch refers to this choice as “an absolutely unprecedented undertaking” (Gourevitch 1998: 122), although it should be noted that in the last decade of his lifetime Varro (116-27 BCE) wrote a book on medicine in his Disciplinae, a lost encyclopedic work (see Conte 1994: 210-211; 218). On technical/scientific writers’ use of Latin (as opposed to Greek) as a means of appealing to a broader readership specifically in late antiquity, see Formisano 2004: 129.
lends some support to the idea that Celsus may have writing with a broader audience in mind, or at least that his work may have been geared in some ways to “non-specialists”.33 This possibility is also bolstered by Celsus’ style, which is famously lucid, such that Renaissance scholars hailed him as the “Cicero of the medical writers.”34 Nonetheless, Celsus’ work offers little direct evidence pointing toward or even implying a desired readership.

As for Celsus’ literary influences, there are numerous passages in De Medicina that echo passages from the various Hippocratic texts so closely that they might be regarded as “translations” of the Greek35, although Celsus himself never claims to be translating Hippocrates directly. It has also been argued that De Medicina is largely based upon the work of Asclepiades of Bithynia, a Greek physician and philosopher who came to Rome in the first century BCE.36 In addition, Celsus makes frequent reference to various other Hellenistic writers on medicine who appear to have heavily influenced his work. According to Flemming, Celsus refashioned “parts of the Hellenistic tradition in a recognizably Roman idiom”37, suggesting that his role was very much akin to that of a translator. This role is apparent in a great many passages in which Celsus offers a Latin term along with the corresponding Greek term when

33 Concerning such questions of intended/implied readership and the status of the author with regard to their subject matter, some potential parallels could be drawn with Vitruvius and his first century BCE work De Architectura. (on Vitruvius, see Gros 1997)
34 Peltier 1990: 21; Spencer 1935: x.
35 The third volume of Spencer’s Loeb edition of De Medicina provides an extensive concordance of such passages. (Spencer 1938b)
36 On this matter, see Mudry 1994: 800-802; 811-815; Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 1964: 45; Toohey 2004: 300 n. 39.
37 Flemming 2000: 130; see also Spencer 1935: ix.
giving the names of illnesses, symptoms, body parts, plant remedies, etc.\textsuperscript{38} But as for the question of Celsus’ sources, this problem remains largely elusive given the current evidence.\textsuperscript{39}

One of the few pieces of scholarship to examine the relationship between Seneca and Celsus is Stok’s short article “Celso in Seneca?”, which raises the possibility that Seneca may have been familiar with the writings of Celsus. This article does not explore Seneca’s tragedies, but it notes several passages from Seneca’s \textit{Epistulae} that bear similarities to passages from Celsus, particularly in regard to vocabulary usage.\textsuperscript{40} Stok even suggests that Seneca probably had knowledge of Celsus’ medical writings, an idea he supports by pointing to an extensive passage from Seneca’s \textit{Epistula 95} (13-15) which bears a close resemblance to the opening passage of the Proemium to Book 1 of \textit{De Medicina} (1.Pr.1.1-5) in both its ideas and use of language.\textsuperscript{41}

Fernandez, on the other hand, in his overview of Seneca’s literary influences, asserts quite forcefully: “\textit{no podemos establier ninguna relación, ninguna paralelismo entre [Celsus] y Séneca...}”\textsuperscript{42} Fernandez gives short shrift to this issue, however, spending only three short paragraphs comparing Seneca and Celsus, and ruling out any possible resonances between the two authors without providing any textual examples. Both Stok and Fernandez leave room for further analysis, especially with regard to close readings, textual comparisons, and language usage, all of which—to use a medical metaphor—the present study seeks to remedy.

\textsuperscript{38} e.g. \textit{...tabes, quam Graeci ΦΘΙΣΙΝ, urinae difficultas, quam ΣΤΡΑΝΓΟΥΙΑΝ appellant...} (2.1.8.2-4); \textit{...infra transversum septum, quod ΔΙΑΦΡΑΓΜΑ Graeci vocant...} (2.7.32.5-6)

\textsuperscript{39} On the intractability of this matter, see von Staden 1999: 252.

\textsuperscript{40} Stok 1985: 420.

\textsuperscript{41} Stok 1985: 418. On the possibility that Seneca was familiar with the writings of Celsus, see also Lana 1955: 73; Migliorini 1988: 52.

\textsuperscript{42} Fernandez 1976: 15. In this article it is not clear whether Fernandez’ assertion is based upon analysis of Senecan tragedy, Senecan prose, or the entire Senecan corpus. In an earlier article, however, Fernandez examines medical language in both Senecan tragedy and prose, though without making any mention of Celsus. (Fernandez 1973)
Methodology

Although the works of Seneca and Celsus both take a significant interest in matters of illness, and although they were written around the same period of time, I am not seeking to show that Seneca may have been directly influenced by the writings of Celsus (or vice versa). Nor am I attempting to argue that the two authors may have had any personal acquaintance or interaction (I do not aim to refute this point, either). To be sure, the near-contemporaneity of these authors is one reason that they are intriguing to compare (as is the case with the Greek tragedies and certain Hippocratic texts), but this dissertation focuses on terminological and thematic points of comparison between Seneca and Celsus, without arguing for direct influence or exchange of ideas. Indeed, my study takes a largely philological approach, centering on close readings of passages from Seneca’s tragedies which contain language or imagery evocative of illness (in both its “physical” and “mental” manifestations). In performing these close readings, I often suggest fruitful comparisons with relevant passages from Celsus’ *De Medicina*. Throughout, my interpretation is driven by close attention to language use as a way into larger questions of the representation of human illness in the language, literature, and culture of ancient Rome. In keeping with my emphasis on close reading, all passages of text that are given close consideration are provided in the original language\(^43\) along with my own translations (unless otherwise indicated), which tend toward the literal but always aim to demonstrate

\(^43\) Unless otherwise indicated, I follow the textual editions published in the Oxford Classical Texts (OCTs) when quoting passages of Seneca’s tragedies (Zwierlein 1986), letters (Reynolds 1965), and philosophical treatises (Reynolds 1977). When quoting passages from Celsus, I follow the Teubner text established by Marx (1915), which is reproduced in Spencer’s Loeb editions (1935-1938) and is generally still regarded as the most definitive edition of Celsus’ *De Medicina*. When quoting other ancient sources, I follow the OCT editions unless otherwise noted.
clarity and an understanding of idiomatic expression. In the Latin passages that are quoted, key phrases and pieces of vocabulary are underlined.

I focus on Seneca’s plays Oedipus, Thyestes, Phaedra, Hercules Furens, and Medea—all works in which the theme of illness (physical, mental, or both) plays a prominent role. For clarity of focus (or for reasons of space), I discuss each play in connection with a specific theme/topic (i.e. Chapters 2, 3, 4) which it particularly well illustrates. Here is a brief overview of each chapter:

I. Introduction — This chapter provides background information about Seneca and Celsus, explanation of my methodology, a review of scholarship that has influenced my methodology, and theory-driven comments on “technical” writing and vocabulary.

II. Vocabulary of Illness — This chapter builds upon my theoretical observations in Chapter 1, first commenting on vocabulary associated with “illness” in the English language (e.g. “sickness”, “disease”, etc.) to draw attention to methodological issues. Then, I analyze Latin vocabulary having the sense of “illness”, focusing on Seneca’s Oedipus and various sections of Celsus, with attention to some of the ways in which illness is described and categorized in Latin literature, but also to issues of characterization and theme (such as paradox and self-awareness) specific to Seneca’s Oedipus and his tragedies more generally.

III. Illness Unveiled: Language of Concealment and Revelation — This chapter analyzes language associated with the manifestation and concealment of illness, focusing especially on the Proemium to Book 1 of De Medicina and Seneca’s Thyestes and Phaedra. In this chapter I give close attention to the emergence and detection of illness, which often becomes apparent
via what might be called “symptoms”, as well as situations in which illness is present but remains undetected. This chapter thus sheds light upon how the perception of illness is depicted in different genres of Latin literature, as well as perceptions of the body and the body’s role in the concealment and revelation of various forms of illness. In the Proemium, Celsus provides an overview of the history of medicine up to his own time, and this section of De Medicina is of special interest here because it discusses both “obvious” as well as “hidden” causes of illness, and because of its vocabulary usage, which often resonates with language in Seneca’s tragedies. Through close readings of various textual passages, this chapter connects observations about language usage with themes and issues of characterization specific to Thyestes and Phaedra.

IV. The Language of Madness — This chapter examines language associated with “mental illness”, with a focus on Celsus, various Senecan philosophical works, and Seneca’s Hercules Furens and Medea. Since my project seeks to analyze both physical and mental manifestations of illness, this chapter broadens out my study in an important way, providing opportunities to look closely at Seneca’s discussions of madness in his philosophical prose, including passages from De Ira (On Anger), Naturales Quaestiones (Natural Questions), De Tranquillitate Animi (On Peace of Mind), and De Vita Beata (On the Happy Life), and his Epistulae Morales. Here, I am careful about assuming that there should be any kind of congruity between a statement in a philosophical essay and a passage in a poetic tragedy; instead of looking for a consistent,

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44 While there are also Proemia preceding Books 2 and 7 of De Medicina, scholars generally refer to the Proemium to Book 1 as the Proemium because it serves as an introduction to the entire work (and probably also because it is significantly longer than these other Proemia). I follow this convention, always meaning the Proemium to Book 1 when using the phrase “the Proemium”. I specifically indicate if I am referring to the Proemium to Book 2 or the Proemium to Book 7.
unified theory of diseases and symptoms across all of Seneca’s texts, I generally find it more productive to note and interpret the differences between these works, and to consider how these differences relate to each work’s literary aims and approach to “madness”. To be clear, I am not calling into question whether these prose works and tragedies can be confidently attributed to the same author.І Indeed, the present study operates with the view that all of the “Senecan” works—with the exception of the spurious tragedies 
*Hercules Oetaeus* and 
*Octavia*—were written by a single author named Seneca. In fact, while I point out many differences between Senecan prose and tragedy, I also identify some striking similarities in language usage across these genres.

Another recurring theme of my project builds on the observation that Seneca and Celsus are typical of ancient Greek and Latin authors in frequently not making a sharp distinction between what we today call “physical” and “mental” illness. This point, which is emphasized in Chapter 4 as well as other parts of my dissertation, in turn brings my work into the area of translation studies, since the question of whether and how various languages, such as Latin and English, make that very distinction is an open one, and the English vocabulary associated with mental illnesses is continually evolving. In this way, my study urges sensitivity to processes of translation and to how they can influence perceptions of other cultures’ understandings.

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45 Most present-day Senecan scholars accept that both the philosophical works and tragedies in the Senecan corpus can be confidently attributed to a single author by the name of Seneca. There are, however, a small number of scholars who still question whether the prose works and tragedies in the Senecan corpus were written by the same individual (for a review of some of these scholars and their arguments, see Kohn 2003: 271-280; Pratt 1983: 12). Prior to the Renaissance, on the other hand, it was generally held that the tragedies and prose treatises were written by two different individuals, “Seneca tragicus” and “Seneca philosophus”. (see Schubert 2014: 74; Fischer 2014: 745-746) Even today, the dichotomy long-drawn between Seneca’s works of poetry and prose is still reflected in that fact that, although there are many existing editions of Seneca’s works, it remains almost unheard of to find an anthology that, as Romm puts it, “dares to package tragedies and prose works together.” (Romm 2014: 76, see also 234)
With these things in mind, throughout my study I do not try to identify the conditions described in the works of Seneca or Celsus with conditions or diagnoses recognized by the modern medical establishment—an approach which is problematic for numerous reasons, as has been pointed out by scholars such as Biggs, Nutton, and Pigeaud.\textsuperscript{46} Such problems include the scantiness and partiality of ancient data pertaining to symptoms and diagnosis, as well as the not infrequent dubiousness of what is reported (e.g. the Hippocratic notion of “tertian” and “quartan” fevers, believed to recur every three or four days, respectively, and the emphasis on “critical days” which were believed to be particularly important during the course of an illness\textsuperscript{47}). But above all, from a linguistic standpoint there is the real potential that modern conceptual clusters resulting in the identification of specific syndromes or diseases are susceptible to shifting, changing, adapting, coming into being and disappearing (e.g. “hysteria”, “nervous breakdown”, “neurasthenia”, “idiocy”). This phenomenon, as I discuss in Chapter 4, is particularly evident with the ever-evolving terminology associated with mental illness. Sometimes inexact correspondences in terminology can be seen across even modern languages contemporary with each other: the English word “flu” is not quite coextensive with the Italian “influenza” or the German “Grippe” (i.e. “flu” can refer to “stomach flu”, which is not called “influenza” or "Grippe" in those languages); the German “Kreislaufbeschwerden” has no direct equivalent in other languages.

\textsuperscript{46} See Biggs 1966: 223; Nutton 2013: 22-23; Pigeaud 1981: 413.
\textsuperscript{47} For instance, the author of Book I of the Hippocratic \textit{Epidemics} asserts that certain types of fevers may potentially reach their “crisis” on day 4, 6, 8, 10, 14, 20, 24, 30, 40, 60, 80, or 120 after their onset. (\textit{Epidemics} 1.26)
V. Conclusions — Here, I briefly restate some of the major issues and questions explored in the dissertation, as well as some of the major points made in each chapter. Reflecting on my study as a whole, I highlight its most significant findings and interesting observations. I also point toward some related areas of inquiry where there remains room for further research, and I comment on my study’s relevance to the budding field known as the medical humanities.

In short, this study fills a gap in English-language scholarship on the use of medical language in the works of Seneca, and on connections between the writings of Seneca and Celsus (a matter which has been hardly explored in any language). It demonstrates that works of Roman tragedy and medical literature can be productively read alongside each other, much in the way that other scholars have done with comparative readings of Greek tragedy and the Hippocratic Corpus. In doing so, this study points out specific ways in which Seneca’s tragedies both reflect and depart from terminology associated with illness and perceptions of illness evident in a near-contemporary prose text on medicine.

Discussion of Scholarship

This study is strongly influenced by works of scholarship that examine illness and medicine in Greek and Latin literature from cross-generic perspectives. One notable example of this kind of scholarship is Alessia Guardasole’s *Tragedia e medicina nell’Atene del V secolo a.C.* which surveys representations of illness in Greek tragedy and works in the Hippocratic Corpus.

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48 As the next section of my Introduction indicates, a significant amount of the most relevant scholarship is written in Italian (e.g. Guardasole 2000; Mazzini 1991; Migliorini 1997), and even this scholarship gives little attention to Senecan tragedy.
49 e.g. Fernández 1976: 15; Stok 1985. But these studies only scratch the surface.
50 Guardasole 2000.
Guardasole’s methodology serves as an important model for this study, even though Roman tragedies and Roman medical texts are outside of her book’s scope.  

Other studies of Greek literature that have influenced my approach are Brooke Holmes’ *The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece* and Jennifer Clarke Kosak’s *Heroic Measures: Hippocratic Medicine in the Making of Euripidean Tragedy*. Holmes’ book explores conceptualizations of the human body and discourses about health, illness, and medicine across various genres of ancient Greek literature, including epic, lyric poetry, history, philosophy, tragedy, and medical writing. Covering a wide arc of literary history, Holmes identifies some concepts of health, illness, and the human body as unique to the Hippocratic Corpus or tragedy, while pointing out other ideas that transcend genres of Greek literature. For instance, Holmes observes that, in writers as disparate as Hippocrates, Hesiod, Plutarch, symptoms repeatedly “demand interpretation”, while she also maintains that tragedy, more than any other genre she discusses, “realizes the potential of the symptom to generate meaning, rather than simply revealing ‘facts’.” Like Holmes, Kosak looks across genres, examining “medical” language and imagery in works of Greek tragedy (with a particular focus on the plays of Euripides) and Hippocratic texts. Without arguing for direct influence or exchange, Kosak observes that the corpus of Greek tragedies contains both echoes and

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51 Guardasole makes very brief mention of Seneca, noting that details in Seneca’s description of Oedipus’ self-blinding (Oedipus 978-979) are “certainly Sophoclean” (sicuramente sofoclei, see Guardasole 2000: 66 n. 102). Guardasole does not elaborate further and otherwise leaves Roman tragedy out of her analysis.

52 Holmes 2010. Commenting in reference to Greek literature, Holmes suggests that “medicine was particularly relevant to tragedy because it was developing conceptual and imaginative resources to describe struggles for power in the inner recesses of a human being.” (Holmes 2010: 230)


54 Holmes 2010: 2, see also 1.

55 Holmes 2010: 229.
divergences from concepts found in contemporary medical writings. On the one hand, she notes that both Hippocratic treatises and Athenian tragedies are motivated to “discuss, probe, observe, diagnose, and predict the outcome of their particular situations”. On the other hand, tragedy, more than the Hippocratic texts, incorporates divine elements in explicating the causality of illness, and also uses illness as metaphor for “the breakdown of political unity, the corruption of leaders, and the rule of passion over reason”. My work expands upon the work of Holmes and Kosak by taking the discussion into the realm of Latin literature, while also focusing more specifically on language usage.

Other cross-generic studies of medical issues in Greek literature serve as a precedent for the present study. These include Rosalind Thomas’ book *Herodotus in Context: Ethnography, Science, and the Art of Persuasion*, which features one chapter, “Medicine and the Ethnography of Health”, in which Thomas compares ideas and language in Herodotus’ *Histories* with Hippocratic texts. In a similarly-themed article, entitled “Herodotus as a Medical Writer”, Warren R. Dawson and F.D. Harvey observe that there is much “of medical interest to be found in purely literary works, and...[that] collections from the Greek anthology, Lucian, Chaucer and others have justly aroused and stimulated the interest of those who have hitherto only sought res medica in locis medicis.” Dawson and Harvey make the important point that authors not traditionally included in the canon of “medical writers” can serve as rich sources for medical thought and language, but I would still question their use of the phrase “purely literary works”,

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56 Kosak 2004: 2.  
57 Kosak 2004: 3.  
59 Dawson and Harvey 1986: 87. Stok also demonstrates some of the potential for studying “medical language” in authors not traditionally considered “medical writers”, including Seneca (see “Celso in Seneca?” 1985) and Virgil (see “Celso e Vergilio” 1994b).
which suggests that some works are more “literary” than others, without providing any definition for this problematic descriptor. Inherent in this phrase lies the implication that “medical writings” are not “purely literary”, which Dawson and Harvey perpetuate further in the next sentence when mentioning that the reliability of “non-medical writers” (by whom they mean “purely literary” writers) are not a subject of concern in their article. By using phrases such as “non-medical writers” and “purely literary works” in such ways, Dawson and Harvey undercut the larger point which they are trying to make, namely that one can find subjects of medical interest in various genres of Greek and Latin literature. As the next section of this Introduction will emphasize, in a world where scholars have begun to take more and more of an interest in studying “medical” or “technical” subjects in works of poetry and artistic prose, the labels “medical writing” and “technical writing” are less and less informative.

In the realm of Latin literature, Sari Kivistö has explored the usage of medical vocabulary in works of satire. Kivistö recognizes that “it is important to observe the use of medical discourse in different kinds of contexts. The goals of healing have traditionally been associated with all kinds of writings…” Similarly, in one chapter of his book on technical and scientific writing in late antiquity, Marco Formisano discusses the use of medical terminology in various genres of

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60 Dawson and Harvey 1986: 87.
61 In her recent book, Baker discusses various methodologies available to students of ancient medicine: She observes: “besides the erudite medical and philosophical texts of authors such as Galen, Rufus of Ephesus, and the Hippocratic writers, medical historians are fortunate to have many other types of textual remains at their disposal that survive from the Greco-Roman period: papyri fragments, lead curse tablets, wax and wood tablets, inscriptions, coins, and collyrium stamps.” (Baker 2013: 36) Even though she takes a broad view of the study of ancient medicine, pointing out that this study need not be restricted to the traditional works of medical prose, Baker nevertheless does not mention the possibility of looking at poetic texts concerned with medical matters. For sure, this comment is influenced by Baker’s archaeological approach to the subject of ancient medicine, but it is still somewhat surprising that she does not acknowledge the value of poetic texts, since, for example, she later remarks that “seemingly minor texts [e.g. papyri fragments] tell us something about medical practices in the past.” (Baker 2013: 40)
literature, including the anonymously authored fourth century prose work *De Rebus Bellicis*, which proposes various innovations in military technology and contains a series of observations about the economy and politics of the Roman Empire. Formisano compares language in this work with language in Theodorus Priscianus’ roughly contemporaneous work on medicine *Rerum Medicarum Libri Quatuor*, thereby offering a precedent for this study’s comparison of medical language and imagery in Celsus’ *De Medicina* and Seneca’s nearly-contemporaneous works of prose and poetry. Indeed, Formisano urges for a reading of all such texts as “literary”, and as belonging to one and the same “literary space” as each other, regardless of differences in genre, style, and subject matter.

Other scholars, such as Paola Migliorini, have investigated medical vocabulary and themes in the works of Seneca specifically. In *Scienza e terminologia medica nella letteratura latina di età neroniana: Seneca, Lucano, Persio, Petronio*, she observes that the writings of Seneca (and other Latin authors who are not traditionally considered “medical writers”, namely Lucan, Persius, and Petronius) abound in language and themes dealing with medical issues, and she provides many citations of medical vocabulary in Seneca’s writings, but almost exclusively from the prose works. Migliorini’s study offers many useful lists and citations of relevant vocabulary items, whereas my dissertation performs close readings of specific passages containing such vocabulary. Another difference relates to scope: Migliorini’s study is quite broad, aiming to

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63 Describing the methodology of his study, Formisano observes: “Dal punto di vista linguistico e stilistico i testi che prenderemo in esame appaiono eterogenei.” (Formisano 2001: 63-64)

64 Formisano 2001: 71-76. Formisano focuses primarily on late antique authors, but he does make several brief references to usage in Celsus to point out Celsus’ influence on later authors. (see Formisano 2001: 80, 84)

65 Commenting on Seneca, Migliorini states: “l’interesse per la medicina appare più relevante, sia per la quantità dei temi affrontati sia, come vedremo, per il livello delle conoscenze mediche che questi rivelano...” (Migliorini 1997: 21)
shed light on the role of science and medicine in the age of Nero, while my study is centered more specifically upon Seneca and Celsus. Like Migliorini, Innocenzo Mazzini offers some analysis of medically-oriented vocabulary used in Seneca’s philosophical works in his article entitled “Il lessico medico latino antico: Caratteri e strumenti della sua differenziazione”.66 Here, Mazzini, too, touches only briefly upon the use of such vocabulary in Seneca’s tragedies.

For perspectives on what might be called “mental illness” in classical literature more generally, the recent collection of essays entitled Mental Disorders in the Classical World, edited by William V. Harris, has proven to be a very important source, in particularly Harris’ own introductory chapter entitled “Thinking about Mental Disorders in Classical Antiquity”.67 Although this collection engages only briefly with Seneca’s philosophical works, and makes only passing references to Seneca’s tragedies and Celsus’ De Medicina, it makes important theoretical distinctions between ancient and modern views on mental illness, a question upon which my own study expands in Chapter 4.

As for scholarship on the cultural and theatrical contexts of Seneca’s plays, Anthony J. Boyle’s book Roman Tragedy68 has been a valuable source for contextualizing my own analysis. Boyle discusses connections between Roman tragedy and other genres of literature, observing that Seneca’s tragedies interweave a rich array of literary influences and thus operate in a “palimpsestic mode”.69 Although he acknowledges this plethora of influences on Seneca’s tragedies, Boyle does not delve into connections with medical literature. Similarly, James Ker

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66 Mazzini 1991. In the first footnote of this article, Mazzini notes that there are “lacune della ricerca...per cogliere e intendere le allusioni e le immagini alla lingua e all’arte dei medici, che frequenti ricorrono in scrittori profani, quali ad es. Cicerone, Seneca, Persio, ecc.” (Mazzini 1991: 175-176)
67 Harris 2013.
68 Boyle 2006.
69 Boyle 2006: 208; see also 205-207.
has examined the multiplicity of influences on Seneca’s tragedies in “Seneca, Man of Many Genres”. Ker, too, affirms the value of examining Seneca’s work “as part of a larger polygeneric project”, often drawing connections that transcend genre, but his study does not take medical writing into consideration. Two new pieces of scholarship that may prove useful to this study’s exploration of Seneca, but were in fact published too recently to be taken into account at the time of writing, are The Cambridge Companion to Seneca edited by Shadi Bartsch and Alessandro Schiesaro and Sénèque, un philosophe homme de théâtre? edited by Jean-Pierre Aygon.

“Medical Writing” and “Technical Writing”

Since my dissertation interprets both poetic texts on mythological themes and an encyclopedic prose text on medical knowledge, questions of genre and of definition are key, above all the commonly invoked categories of “literary” texts and “technical writing,” which are frequently contrasted with each other or implicitly understood as hermetically distinct categories. My study questions this dichotomy, building upon the work of various scholars, including Markus Asper, Marco Formisano, and in particular David R. Langslow, who has written extensively on these issues. By drawing attention to specific pieces of vocabulary and concepts of illness common to both works of tragedy and medical texts, my study erodes

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70 Ker 2006. Similarly, Schiesaro emphasizes that Seneca’s tragedies bear an array of “literary affiliations”, but he too does not address their relationship to works of medical prose. (Schiesaro 2003: 222)
71 Ker 2006: 31. Ker similarly observes that Seneca’s tragedies exhibit “a continual embedding of one genre in another.” (Ker 2006: 31)
75 See esp. Langslow 2000; see also 1991; 1994; 1999b.
distinctions sometimes drawn between so-called literary and technical forms of writing. The comments below are intended to elucidate my own theoretical perspective, which I apply in the ensuing chapters.

Greek and Roman tragedies are often labeled “literary” works; Greek and Roman treatises on medicine, on the other hand, are frequently referred to as examples of “technical writing”, often with the implication that they are not “literary”. These ostensible boundaries reflect the canonization of certain Greek and Latin texts, a phenomenon which has caused works of “technical” writing to be largely overlooked by literary critics, both ancient and modern.76 Scholars in the field of Classics have only recently begin to take a broader view of “literature” and recognize that works of “medical writing” are ripe with potential for literary analysis, which Asper calls attention to in asking, “these people [i.e. scientific/“technical” writers] are, to us, mainly writers, so why do we hesitate to apply to them the instruments we are accustomed to bring to reading Herodotus or Apollonius (of Rhodes)?”77 This question points toward the fact that it is challenging to produce reliable criteria by which “literary” and “technical” or “scientific” modes of writing can be distinguished from one another. It is also difficult to pin down a firm definition for “medical writing”, a prominent type of what is often called technical

76 On this point, see Asper 2013: 1-2. In the same volume of collected essays, Ralph Rosen points out that even in antiquity authors such as Galen quoted and reflected upon poetic works in works of medical prose. As Rosen puts it, Galen “felt the poets important as a part of the rhetoric of science”. (Rosen 2013: 188; see also 177-178) Despite Galen’s direct engagement with works of poetry in his medical treatises, critics have long neglected to examined his writings from a “literary” perspective.
77 Asper 2013: 3. Van der Eijk similarly comments: “even such seemingly ‘inartistic’, non-presumptuous prose writings as the extant works of Aristotle, the Elements of Euclid and the ‘notebook-like’ Hippocratic Epidemics do have a form and structure which deserves to be studied in its own right”. (van der Eijk 1997: 81)
writing. In the opening chapter of Medical Latin in the Roman Empire, Langslow discusses some of the problems inherent to distinguishing between “medical” and “non-medical” vocabulary and modes of writing, as well as “technical” and “non-technical” vocabulary and modes of writing, and he examines some of the possible criteria by which these terms might be defined.

To deal first with the term “medical Latin”, this phrase, according to Langslow, can be used in either a “strong” or “weak” sense. Under this framework, the “strong view” describes medical Latin as a variety of Latin which is distinct both in vocabulary and grammar when compared with the “common language”, and used by writers with “special medical knowledge”. Langslow points out one major problem with this view in noting that “words like caput and manus may not be excluded as [medical] terms simply because all Latin speakers use and understand them, in part like the specialist.” Kallet reaches a similar conclusion in her examination of medical language in a passage from the Greek historian Thucydides, stating that “it must be acknowledged at the outset that much vocabulary found in the medical corpora is of course also used by other writers in nonmedical contexts, without necessarily any exclusively

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78 Similarly, van der Eijk has observed that there is no easy way to define “scientific discourse” in the context of the ancient world. (van der Eijk 1997: 78, see also 89-90)
79 Langslow 2000: 28. Here Langslow makes reference to corresponding terms in other languages, such as “le latin médical”, “il latino medico”, “medizinisches Latein”, asserting that all such expressions “[require] more attention than [they have] yet received.”
80 See Langslow 2000: 28; see also Langslow 1999b: 208; 222.
81 Langslow 1991b: 190. Craik makes a similar point that Greek words such as βαρύς, ἄϊδιος, ἐλαφρός, and ἱσχυρός are generally not regarded as pieces of “technical” vocabulary, even though they are “frequently used by medical writers to describe medical conditions or symptoms.” (Craik 2001: 84)
medical connotation.” In addition, it can be observed that similar grammatical constructions can be used in both “medical” and “nonmedical” contexts, thus further blurring the lines between medical and non-medical forms of discourse. While these points may seem rather obvious, it is important to emphasize their fundamental importance to the methodology of this study. Like Langslow, I reject the strong definition of “medical Latin”, as I note that many pieces of vocabulary without any intrinsic medical relevance frequently appear in Celsus, and conversely, that many pieces of medically-charged vocabulary can be found in Seneca’s tragedies.

According to the “weak view” identified by Langslow, “medical Latin” constitutes the corpus of “Latin texts devoted to medicine.” While this view is much more open to discerning medical language and themes in various genres of literature, the phrase “Latin texts devoted to medicine” creates some ambiguity. One might question what it means, exactly, for a text to be “devoted to medicine”. To take matters to an absurd extreme, does it imply that a text must be concerned only with medical issues (to the point of excluding “non-medical” issues), in order to be considered “devoted to medicine”? Such an interpretation of that phrase would disqualify seemingly all texts from consideration. Indeed, few, if any, Greek or Latin texts can be said to be “devoted” to medical issues alone, since so many texts that deal with medicine also have relevance to various aspects of culture, history, and the like. Surely, Langslow is not narrowly suggesting that Latin texts can only be considered to be “devoted to medicine” if they only

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82 Kallet 1999: 225; see also 226. Kallet adds: “This was language in circulation, ‘in the air’ not necessarily tied to any particular origin, as writers engaged in a ‘shared response’ to the problems of the community and man’s relation to it.” (Kallet 1999: 226)
83 Langslow 2000: 28; see also Langslow 1999b: 208.
discuss matters which are directly relevant to medicine. But this raises the question of just how much of a text must deal with medicine for that text to be considered “devoted” to medicine (as if this were quantifiable in some way). Furthermore, one can ask how “medicine” is to be understood in this phrase. If a text is primarily interested in exploring issues such as weather and the environment, but also acknowledges that these factors can influence health (as in the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*), can such a text be said to be concerned with (or even “devoted to”) “medicine”? Similarly, should we say that a text that is primarily concerned about weather, but does not explicitly discuss how weather affects health, is still “devoted to medicine” merely through the text’s ability to call to mind ideas relevant to the sphere of medicine? As this questions demonstrate, the phrase “devoted to medicine” does not do much to narrow down a definition of “medical Latin”. By phrasing his “weak” definition of the term “medical Latin” in this way, Langslow leaves opens the door for all manner of Latin texts, regardless of form, to be included in the corpus of “medical Latin”.

Concerning the question of whether a specific word should be considered “medical”, Holmes has observed that “words are usually called medical if they appear in the [medical] corpus.”

Holmes goes on to question this definition of medical vocabulary, observing that it is difficult to know how “technical” a word used in an ancient Greek tragedy would have seemed to contemporary audiences, and thus how specialized any given word might be to a certain discipline, such as medicine. Holmes’ critique focuses on vocabulary in Greek tragedy, and the same can be observed of vocabulary occurring in Senecan tragedy. I would also draw

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84 Holmes 2010: 234 n. 30.
85 Holmes 2010: 234 n. 30; see also Craik 2001: 83.
attention to the circular quality of the practice which is critiqued by Holmes, and which occurs in many definitions of “medical writing” and “medical vocabulary”: words are considered “medical” if they occur in “medical” texts, and texts are described as “medical” if they contain “medical” vocabulary. This does not take into account the fact that the vast majority of words (in both Greek and Latin) which appear in medical contexts also appear in non-medical contexts and in various genres of literature.86 As Langslow observes, “technical languages are, of course, based on and derived from general language”87, and this dynamic, ongoing process problematizes attempts to distinguish between such modes of discourse.

In addition to discussing “medical” vocabulary, Langslow explores how “technical terminology” might be defined. He highlights various problems associated with distinguishing between technical and non-technical terminology by reviewing three influential criteria which have been proposed by Klaus Heller88:

(1). a technical term is “not generally understood in the linguistic community as a whole” or
(2). a technical term is “proper to a given specialist or technical discipline” or
(3). a technical term is “normalized or standardized in its usage in a discipline”

According to Heller’s theory, which is intended to be applicable to technical terminology in any language, a term needs to satisfy only one of the above criteria in order to be considered “technical”. Langslow carefully scrutinizes each of Heller’s criteria, rejecting (1), but largely accepting (2) and (3). I agree with Langslow’s objection to (1), but would like to raise some

86 Craik touches upon this point in her examination of “medical” language in Euripides, stating that “priority between literary and medical usage can be very hard to disentangle.” (Craik 2001: 85) See also Langslow 2013: 161.
87 Langslow 1991a: 122.
questions about (2) and (3), as well. Langslow dismisses (1) by observing that certain words in English (e.g. *abscess*, *recovery*, *tongue*, and even *eat*) are employed by medical practitioners working in specialized settings, as well as by “non-specialists” in common, everyday situations.\(^{89}\) Langslow goes on to observe that technical terminologies—both ancient and modern—“merge gradually with the generally known, everyday vocabulary of the language”\(^{90}\), making it even more difficult to draw the distinction posited by (1). This phenomenon speaks against Isidore Pinchuck’s assertion that “the most significant linguistic feature of the technical text is its vocabulary, the specialized terminology of the specialized discipline.”\(^{91}\) I find this emphasis on vocabulary to be overstated, especially in light of the fact that one can find in the works of Seneca (an author who is not usually considered either a “medical” writer or “technical writer”) words which are pertinent to the world of medicine, and which also appear in Celsus (an author who is sometimes labeled a “technical writer”).\(^{92}\) Identifying and analyzing such instances of overlapping usage is, of course, a major focus of this dissertation. The fact that one can find such similarities in usage gives all the more reason to question the usefulness and descriptiveness of distinctions between what are often called “literary” texts (e.g. Seneca) and “technical” texts (e.g. Celsus), along with “literary” vocabulary and “technical” vocabulary.

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\(^{89}\) Langslow 2000: 14.

\(^{90}\) Langslow 2000: 14.

\(^{91}\) Pinchuck 1977: 19; see also 161.

\(^{92}\) As Langslow comments, “there is of course a great deal of medical vocabulary, Greek and Latin, in (non-medical) Latin literary texts, both prose and verse, of all periods, whether used *sensu proprio* or metaphorically.” (Langslow 2000: 31; see also Langslow 1999b: 205; 216) I find this observation to be perceptive, but would prefer to leave the term “non-medical” out of the statement, even as a parenthetical addition. From my perspective, this qualifier perpetuates the idea that there is a clear distinction between “medical” and “non-medical” texts, when close scrutiny reveals that idea to be rather flimsy. Auvray has also observed that medical “images” appear in various genres of literature, making it difficult to distinguish what constitutes “vocabulaire technique”. (Auvray 1989: 70-71)
Because of the problematic nature of these terms, I try to avoid using them whenever possible, except when responding to points made by other scholars.

Langslow, on the other hand, does not go so far as to eliminate such phrases from his own writing; he refers, for instance, to the “letters and tragedies of the hypochondriac Younger Seneca” as a unique opportunity “to identify and evaluate the use of technical terms in non-technical writings.”93 While it is encouraging for the present study that Langslow singles out Seneca as an author whose works might be analyzed with such questions in mind, his use of the phrase “technical terms in non-technical writings” perpetuates a dichotomy which my study is calling into question (not to mention his questionable pseudo-diagnosis of Seneca as “hypochondriac” solely on the basis of some of his writings). Langslow does offer some compelling ideas in this article about how “technical terms” might be defined on the basis on certain morphological properties94, the question remains: if a piece of writing contains some technical terms, how can it be determined that that piece of writing is not a piece of “technical writing”? Exactly how many “technical terms” must appear in a work for it to be considered a piece of “technical writing”, or what percentage of words in a work must be “technical terms” for that work to be considered a piece of “technical writing”? These questions are not raised by Langslow, but they are important ones to ask especially because they do not have straightforward answers, and thus further problematize the criteria by which a piece of writing might be labeled as “technical”.

93 Langslow 1999b: 188.
94 Langslow observes, for instance, that –sco verbs (e.g. gravescere, inveterascere, mollescere, nigrescere) are characteristic of Latin medical discourse, and that signs and symptoms of illness frequently include nouns ending in –or (e.g. dolor, rubor, tumor, tremor, pallor, marcor, sapor). (Langslow 1999: 216-220, esp. 216-217; see also Langslow 1991: 118-120)
Langslow somewhat reluctantly accepts the second and third criteria proposed by Heller, conceding that “words are considered to belong to the Latin medical terminology simply if they name (or relate closely to) objects or ideas of ancient medicine”. 95 Here, Langslow identifies “medical terminology” as an example of a kind of technical terminology. He acknowledges that this is a rather broad and loose way of defining technical terminology, but he suggests that it is probably impossible to arrive at a narrower definition. I also find this definition imprecise, but, unlike Langslow, I am not willing to accept it despite its imprecision. I question Langslow’s concession for reasons similar to the objections Langslow himself makes in response to Heller’s first criterion: the assertion that a word “belongs” to medical terminology if it names or relates to “objects or ideas of ancient medicine” does not seem to take into account the fact that certain words (for instance, the examples identified by Langslow above: recovery, tongue, eat) may also be used in various contexts, medical and otherwise. 96 Indeed, it means little to say that a word “belongs” to medical (or technical) terminology if it can also be used in non-medical contexts (and thus “belong” to other, nonmedical forms of discourse). Such an assertion can flatten out important and real variations in usage and lead to overgeneralizations about “readers” or “speakers” or a “linguistic community”—groups which are not, and cannot be, uniform and monolithic. In my study, I identify many pieces of vocabulary which occur both in works traditionally considered “medical”/“technical” literature (e.g. Celsus), as well as in works not traditionally included in the corpus of medical literature (e.g. Seneca’s tragedies). Such

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95 Langslow 2000: 15; see also 20.
96 Craik similarly points out that certain English words, such as “endoscopy” and “amniocentesis” may seem “technical to some patients, but not to others”. For this reason, she describes “technical” as a “weasel word”. (Craik 2001: 83)
pieces of vocabulary cannot be said to belong strictly to medical forms of discourse, and in keeping with these observations I also refrain whenever possible from using the phrase “medical vocabulary” and similar expressions.

Langslow has also suggested, in apparent agreement with (2) and (3), that the terminology of a given field, or tekhnē (or—to use a Latin term with a similar semantic range—ars), is set by specialists in that field.97 When we look at Celsus’ writings, we obviously find a great deal of vocabulary pertinent to the sphere of medicine, but most scholars do not regard Celsus as a professional “doctor” or a “specialist” in medicine. Despite the fact that Celsus coins new pieces of vocabulary and phrases that appear in subsequent works concerned with medicine, he is generally regarded as a knowledgeable “amateur”.98 Langslow, for one, states that Celsus was “no medicus proper” because there is no evidence that he practiced medicine outside of his own familia99, and von Staden observes that, despite the fact that Celsus frequently inserts his own comments and observations into De Medicina, he “never once projects himself as a member of this professio or as one of its professores or as a medicus”.100 Langslow does not, however, directly address the question of whether Celsus could be considered a “medical writer”, even though he himself was supposedly not a medicus. While this is an important question in and of itself, the larger point here is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between “professional” and “amateur” status within the historical context of

97 Langslow 2000: 19.
99 Langslow 2000: 48. In contrast, Langslow refers to the fifth century Latin author Cassius Felix as a “professional” because he conducted a broader medical practice. (Langslow 2000: 128)
100 von Staden 1996: 401.
ancient medicine (as is also the case with other tekhnai in Greek and Roman antiquity).\textsuperscript{101} One problem is that the modern construct of a “professional doctor” cannot be applied to a medicus in the context of ancient medicine, which Langslow himself acknowledges was “very heterogeneous [in] nature”\textsuperscript{102} and “lack[ing in] a sharp divide between professional and amateur.”\textsuperscript{103} In regard to matters of terminology, it is quite possible that a “lay person” (i.e. a person without any formal training in the tekhnē of medicine) would have knowledge of much of the vocabulary used in the field of medicine.\textsuperscript{104} Such an individual might be mistaken (possibly in his own time, and/or by later readers) for a “specialist” on the basis of language usage. Moreover, it is not safe to assume that Celsus had any actual medical experience, whether as a doctor or observer, simply because he sometimes uses the first person when describing certain treatments.\textsuperscript{105} This use of the first person may, as von Staden has suggested, be more of an “epistemological posture” intended to cultivate an air of medical authority.\textsuperscript{106}

It is also likely that even some writers who did possess some formal medical training (“specialists”) would “[make] concession to their lay readers by sparing them some technical terms and using paraphrases instead”.\textsuperscript{107} This sort of concession could problematize the perception of the “specialist” even further, making it difficult to identify a specialist on the basis on their language usage. While this is an important observation, Langslow’s phrasing suggests

\begin{footnotes}
\item[101] See Spencer 1935: xi-xii.
\item[102] Langslow 2000: 41, see also 47.
\item[103] Langslow 2000: 47. Langslow is thus willing to concede that “Celsus (perhaps Pliny, too), although not writing medical Latin in the strong sense, represents something more than medical Latin in the weak sense…” (Langslow 2000: 48)
\item[104] On this point, see Spencer 1935: viii.
\item[105] e.g. ...ego autem cognovi, qui succisa lingua cum abunde super dentes eam promeret...(7.12.4.8-10); Ad strumam multa malagmata invenio. (5.18.3.1)
\item[106] von Staden 1994a: 112; see also 110-111.
\item[107] Langslow 2000: 20.
\end{footnotes}
that a piece of vocabulary should not be considered “technical” in nature if it can be understood by an “untrained” or “amateur” audience. With Celsus, we have the reverse of the situation described above: he is generally considered an “amateur” despite the fact that he frequently uses words associated with the tekhnē of medicine. At the same time, Gourevitch has suggested that Celsus actually “fell short” in developing a “technical language” in Latin because he “quite often...gives the names of diseases in a transliterated version of the Greek.”108 For such reasons, it is overly facile to describe Celsus’ writing with labels such as “technical”/ “non-technical” or “professional”/ “amateur”. These categories become even more blurry and destabilized when one observes that both Celsus and Seneca use pieces of vocabulary (and in some cases the same pieces of vocabulary) which are pertinent to the world of medicine, but which would have been generally comprehensible to audiences lacking specialized medical training or knowledge. This speaks further to the ambiguity of the phrase “technical writing”, since the epithet “technical” could apply either to a style of writing, or to the nature of the content (i.e. texts that deal with tekhnai or artes); both of these senses, I would argue, are imprecise and not particularly elucidatory. My study, then, draws upon Langslow’s discussion of “technical writing” in Latin literature, but goes even further in questioning what this phrase denotes by pointing out the flimsiness of criteria (2) and (3).

In further response to (3), it also bears mentioning that Celsus (like Seneca) is not always consistent in his usage of terminology. In his comments on insania, for instance, Celsus sometimes breaks with other writers’ use of this term, and he sometimes lacks consistency with

even his own use of the term. These inconsistencies suggest that the word *insania* is not completely “normalized or standardized in its usage in a discipline” (to return to Heller’s third criterion), but this is nonetheless a word which Celsus uses to categorize and diagnose various forms of mental illness. *Insania* is thus a word strongly associated with the *tekhnē* of medicine. While I am calling into question the usefulness of the phrase “technical terminology”, the fact that the uses of *insania* are not completely “normalized or standardized” would not seem to be a solid reason to dismiss it from being considered an example of “technical terminology”.

Innocenzo Mazzini is another scholar who notes the presence of “medico Latino” in various authors who are not traditionally included in the Latin medical corpus, including Seneca. Mazzini complicates some of the boundaries between so-called medical and non-medical writers, observing, for instance, that a word such as *caligo* can have the sense of “blindness” in both “medici” (physicians) and “profani” (laymen). Mazzini does not provide a clear basis for distinguishing between “medici” and “profani”, but he does state that a firm distinction cannot be made between these groups on the basis of language usage. Although Mazzini is not responding to Heller here, his observation about *caligo* would call (2) into question. Moreover, Mazzini observes in a later piece of scholarship that “tematiche

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109 The term *insania* is discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.
111 In Chapter 4, I discuss the usage of *caligo* in both Celsus and Seneca.
112 Mazzini 1991: 179. Similarly, Mazzini asserts that medical language and concepts recur “con notevole frequenza negli autori profani.” (Mazzini 1991: 180)
113 Mazzini does, however, make some observations about morphological patterns that tend to be more common in the “terminologia medica latina”. He notes, for instance, that Celsus has a tendency to create new items of medical vocabulary by adding prefixes to existing verbs (e.g. *infrico, suffrico, superinungo, superillino*, and *superimpono*— all verbs that first appear in Celsus). (Mazzini 1991: 182-183) Langslow makes a similar observation regarding the use of suffixes, noting for example that Latin “medical authors” have a tendency to use nouns ending in –or to express symptoms (e.g. *rubor, tumor, calor, dolor;* see Langslow 1991a: 118).
mediche”\textsuperscript{114} can be found in many Latin poets, including Seneca, further eroding distinctions between medical “specialists” and “non-specialists”. For this reason, it is a little surprising that Mazzini’s analyses only briefly examine Seneca’s tragedies.

While Mazzini problematizes some of the distinctions between medical “professionals” and “laymen”, he does attempt to contrast “lessico medico latino” with non-medical Latin discourse, proposing three criteria of his own\textsuperscript{115}:

(1) medical Latin lacks \emph{variatio}, whereas “non-medical” Latin tends to have more variety in vocabulary usage

(2) medical Latin tends to employ vocabulary which is emotionally neutral (“\emph{emotivamente neutro}”)

(3) medical Latin is characterized by the use terminology which is concise and technical (“\emph{concisa e tecnica}”)

Mazzini does not elaborate much upon these criteria, but they all appear to rest on shaky ground. Concerning (1), it is clear that Celsus’ medical prose is not averse to \emph{variatio}; for instance, he uses various terms in reference to “illness”, as Chapter 2 will make quite apparent.

In fact, Jocelyn has convincingly argued for the “literariness” of Celsus’ work on the basis of its lexical and syntactical \emph{variatio}.\textsuperscript{116} Regarding (2), Mazzini does not explain what he means by “\emph{un vocabulario emotivamente neutro}”, but it is difficult to categorize a piece of Latin vocabulary as totally “emotionally neutral”, given that almost any Latin word could elicit an emotional response—either through the word’s sense in a specific context, or through the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Mazzini 1998: 15-16.
\item \textsuperscript{115} See Mazzini 1991: 185.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Jocelyn also states that “a false perspective is created when separating [Celsus] from the ‘literary’ figures of the Early Empire.” (Jocelyn 1985: 319; see also 316)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
connotations it may evoke via usage in other emotionally-charged contexts. Indeed, this study will point out many instances in which Seneca and Celsus use vocabulary in contexts that are quite obviously not “emotionally neutral”. As for (3), it is difficult to say much because the phrase “concisa e tecnica” is rather vague in its formulation, but it can again be pointed out that Celsus and Seneca use many of the same pieces of vocabulary in their reflections on illness (e.g. morbus, insania, causa), so this also seems to be an overgeneralization. The close readings performed in this study will further demonstrate the flimsiness of these criteria.

One scholar who has observed that Seneca makes use of vocabulary from both “specialized and generalized discourses” is Thomas Habinek. According to Habinek, Seneca’s works are for this reason particularly difficult to classify according to traditional distinctions such as “literary” vs. “non-literary” and “technical” vs. “non-technical”. Habinek’s views are very much informed by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, a twentieth-century linguist and literary theorist who questions the criteria by which “literary” language can be distinguished from “non-literary” language. Bakhtin identifies “primary genres” of speech and language usage, which consist of expressions commonly used in daily life, as well as “secondary genres”, which include specialized technical vocabulary. Concerning the phenomenon of language usage, Bakhtin notes that, in practice, one often finds frequent shifts between primary and second speech genres. This supports Bakhtin’s larger point that classifying vocabulary into rigid spheres of human activity is often difficult and ultimately misguided. Bakhtin goes on to conclude that

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117 Habinek 2001: 139.
118 Bakhtin observes that what is often referred to as “literary” language may include “nonliterary” styles, as “literary” language is a part of a “complex, dynamic system of linguistic styles.” (Bakhtin 1986: 65)
typical classifications of technical language are “completely random”, neglecting the “generic nature of linguistic styles”. As Bakhtin explains, seemingly straightforward divisions of speech such as “bookish speech, popular speech, abstract-scientific, scientific-technical, journalistic-commentarial, office-business, and familiar everyday speech” cannot be decisively distinguished from each other because any one of these styles of speech may make use of elements found in one of the other styles. By pointing out the complexity of the relationship between “technical language” and other genres of language and speech, Bakhtin’s analysis presents further challenges to Heller’s second criterion, thus lending further support to the methodology of this study.

120 Bakhtin 1986: 65.
121 Bakhtin 1986: 64-65.
Chapter II

Vocabulary of Illness

No single Latin word has precisely the same sense and connotations as the English word “illness”. Indeed, while it could be said that there is no Latin word whose semantic range—with all of its senses and connotations—has an exact one-to-one correspondence with any English word, translating words in the general semantic category of “illness” is especially fraught with complexity because of differences in relevant conceptualizations across cultures and time periods. Further complication results from the existence of various English words such as “sickness”, “disease”, and “disorder”, which partially overlap with, but do not completely replicate the various senses and connotations of the English word “illness”.

The issue becomes even thornier when considering these pieces of English vocabulary from a diachronic perspective. Indeed, the nuances of these words have changed in subtle but significant ways over time, as Jackson discerns: “Although there has been a useful trend in modern times toward giving different definition to illness and disease, it should be noted that historically these terms were essentially synonymous.”

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1 This is a general principle of lexical semantics—true between and across any and all languages. See Lyons 1977: 236-238; Murphy and Koskela 2010: 180-181, 207-208; Davidson 1973; Quine 1960, 1968.

2 The glosses of these words provided in the Oxford English Dictionary reflect a circularity in definition: “illness” and “sickness” are listed under the entry for “disease”; “disease” and “sickness” are listed under the entry for “illness”; and “illness” and “disease” are listed under the entry for “sickness”. (see OED Online: s.v. disease (n.); illness (n.); sickness (n.). Other English words in this semantic sphere include “ailment”, “disorder”, “malady”, and “malaise”.

3 Jackson 1986: 12. Jackson elaborates: “the growing strength of pathology and the emergence of bacteriology and laboratory medicine [in the nineteenth century] began to provide the basis for the modern differentiation of illness as the combination of the symptoms testified to by the sick person and the signs observed by others, and disease as a combination of anatomical, physiological, and even psychological deviations from the norm that could be the basis for a complex of symptoms and signs.” (Jackson 1986: 12-13) Other scholars have attempted to draw distinctions between these terms; Eisenberg, for one, asserts that “patients suffer ‘illnesses’: physicians diagnose and treat ‘diseases’.” (Eisenberg 1977: 9, see also 11) This delineation makes a sharp distinction between the personal experience of the patient on the one hand, and the physician’s observations of the patient and
these words’ senses have changed along with developments in modern science, but we should be cautious about accepting his claim that these words were once “essentially synonymous”. Linguists such as Cruse consider the phenomenon of absolute synonymy, or the mutual substitutability of two or more words in all contexts without any change in sense or connotation, to be a rare, and perhaps even non-existent phenomenon. Thus, even if the senses of “illness” and “disease” were formerly less differentiated in the past, as Jackson suggests, even then there still would have been differences in the kinds of things these words could suggest to speakers of English. Furthermore, Jackson’s qualification that words such as “illness” and “disease” used to be “essentially synonymous” diminishes the important fact that now, as in the past, one can find differences in the usage of these words. We find, for instance, that in certain expressions only one of these words tends to be employed idiomatically (e.g. we are accustomed to the phrase “mental illness”, but not “mental disease”). Then there’s also the question of register: how the “technical vocabulary” of medicine uses these two words is one thing, and how they are used in broadly attested everyday speech may be another. All of this serves to remind us not only of the danger of labeling two English words as “synonymous”, but also of the fact that considering any two Latin words to be simply “synonymous” (even if the same English word can be used to translate those Latin words) is to diminish differences in semantic range and in nuances of usage.

4 Cruse has remarked that “languages abhor absolute synonyms just as nature abhors a vacuum.” (Cruse 1986: 270; see also Cruse 2011: 142-143). Murphy similarly observes that “very few words are absolute synonyms”, as it is “rare for two words to have exactly the same meaning/use.” (Murphy 2010: 110, see also 111-112; Murphy 2003)
This important point does not always receive the emphasis it deserves. Meyer’s recent book *Latin Synonyms for Language Lovers* (2013), for instance, lists semantically-similar words together in broad categories, for example “verbs of arriving”, under which are listed verbs such as *atttingere; advenire; devenire; pervenire;* and *adipisci*. While these categories are useful, Meyer does not issue the caveat that there will inevitably be semantic and pragmatic differences between the various words listed under a single category. In fact, Meyer’s book does not at any point explain its understanding of synonymy. This is worthy of some discussion, especially since the book is avowedly geared toward an audience that includes not only students and “armchair Latinists”, but also teachers, who ought to be able to help their students become more sensitive to semantic nuances and nuances of usage.

Another problem associated with the usage of these terms in English has been noted by Grmek, who observes that there is “a subtle and fundamental distinction between ‘being sick’ and ‘having a sickness’”6; this points to the ability that language has to refer to actions (using verbs), as opposed to its ability to assert identity (using nouns and adjectives). By the same token, one often finds differences in semantic range when comparing a Latin verb and related nouns or adjectives. The complexities mount further when we examine Latin terminology, as there are numerous pieces of vocabulary having the sense of “illness”, “sickness”, or “disease”, including the nouns *pestis, pestilentia, morbus, infirmitas, aegritudo, lues, macies, tabes, vitium,* and *malum*. When we examine specific instances of usage in Latin texts, we see that there are

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5 Meyer 2013: xi.
6 Grmek 1998: 123. It can also be pointed out that the English adjective “sick” can, in colloquial parlance, be used in the senses of “excellent”, “impressive” and “risky”, and that “ill” can similarly be used in the senses of “excellent”, “attractive” and “fashionable”. (see OED Online: s.v. *sick* (adj.); *ill* (n.)) These senses—which take on an element of irony in light of traditional uses of these words—are not apparent in the usage patterns of the related nouns. It would be rather unusual for a person to use the nouns “sickness” or “illness” in the respective senses of “excellence” or “fashionableness”.
no absolute synonyms among these words; there are subtle differentiations in sense and connotations between each word, which in turn reflect or emphasize different aspects of the broad phenomenon of “illness”. At the same time, throughout this chapter I generally translate or gloss these words with the English “illness” deliberately and consistently, as both a reminder and tool to draw attention to the prevalence of this theme, while allowing the Latin words to speak for themselves.

In this chapter, my analysis will focus on the varied and complex language of illness in Seneca’s *Oedipus*, a play which offers fruitful opportunity for analysis due to its richness in relevant themes and language use. In this play, Seneca presents a city beleaguered with a plague which encompasses various forms of suffering and illness; this multiplicity is in turn reflected in the array of vocabulary used throughout the play. I will analyze words in the semantic sphere of illness by performing close readings of passages from *Oedipus*, with occasional reference to vocabulary usage in other Senecan plays. My analysis is organized by semantic types, first focusing on nouns and related adjectives and verbs whose semantic core is specifically linked to illness (e.g. *pestis*, *pestilentia*, *morbus*, *aegritudo*), then turning to words whose semantic core is more general, or at least not always specific to illness (e.g. *lues*, *macies*, *tabes*, *virus*), and finally turning to words whose semantic core is even more broad (e.g. *malum*, *vitium*). To use a linguistic term which has been employed by Cruse, it could be said that these various words constitute a “lexical cluster”, or an informal grouping of “near-synonyms”. Throughout this analysis, I will draw comparisons with the various pieces of vocabulary

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7 As Mastronarde observes, when one focuses on the play’s use of language, “the play emerges more and more as a study of a sick situation which centers around and derives from a sick individual.” (Mastronarde 1970: 301)
employed by Celsus⁹, thus providing a fuller understanding of the semantic range and connotations of such words and offering insight into the conceptualization of illness in different genres of Latin literature. By looking closely at specific instances of usage in both Seneca and Celsus, we can become more sensitive to the subtleties of the Latin vocabulary of illness, and thus arrive at a more nuanced understanding of these authors’ ways of describing illness that are characteristic of these different kinds of texts, and the literary, linguistic, and cultural traditions in which they arose and circulated.

**Pestis and Pestilentia**

I begin with words that are often translated as “plague”, since that is such a prominent theme in *Oedipus*. The English word “plague” can signify “a particular affliction, calamity, or evil”, “a wound, a sore; a boil”, “a smiting, slaughter”, “an infectious disease which spreads rapidly and has a high mortality rate”, or “a person, animal, or plant whose presence, behavior, or activities are damaging, troublesome, or merely irritating”, etc.¹⁰ Two Latin words commonly translated as plague are *pestis* and *pestilentia*.¹¹ Bodson observes that these are the Latin words most commonly used to refer to “maladies epidemiques”.¹² Aside from “plague”, possible translations for *pestis* include “physical destruction”, “death”, “an instrument of death

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⁹ Commenting on the lexical *variatio* in Celsus’ work, Jocelyn observes that Celsus uses “three words for πάθος (malum, morbus, vitium).” (Jocelyn 1985: 315) Jocelyn points out a few of the different words in Celsus’ rich vocabulary of illness, but we should question his suggestion that these Latin words are synonymous with each other, and that they are all synonymous with a Greek word.

¹⁰ see *OED Online*: s.v. *plague* (n.).

¹¹ According to Ernout and Meillet, the etymology of *pestis* is unclear. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *pestis*) Lewis and Short suggest a possible connection with the verb *perdere* (to destroy, to waste). (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *pestis*)

or destruction”, “disaster”, “curse”13, and, according to Lewis and Short, “noxious atmosphere” and “unhealthy weather”14—all senses that resonate with the plot and themes of Oedipus. Both the Oxford Latin Dictionary and Lewis and Short observe that pestis can refer to either a destructive thing or a destructive person—an ambiguity which, as I will argue, has great significance to the situation in Oedipus. Possible translations for pestilentia include “an outbreak of epidemic disease”, “pestilence”, “unhealthy quality of atmosphere”, and “insalubrity”.15 While pestilentia does not appear in Oedipus or any other Senecan play16, pestis plays an important role in Oedipus, possessing a broad range of connotations. At the opening of the play, Oedipus describes some of the elements of the pestis that is besieging his city17:

\[
\text{Iam nocte Titan dubius expulsa redit} \\
\text{et nube maestum squalida exoritur iubar,} \\
\text{lumenque flamma triste luctifica gerens} \\
\text{prospiciet avida peste solatas domos,} \\
\text{stragemque quam nox fecit ostendet dies.}
\]

Now, with the night driven off, Titan hesitantly returns and his radiance appears gloomy due to a dirty cloud, his woeful flame carrying a sad light that will look upon homes abandoned because of the greedy plague, and day will reveal the confusion which night has made. (1-5)

13 Glare 2012: s.v. pestis.
14 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. pestis.
15 Glare 2012: s.v. pestilentia.
16 In the corpus of Senecan tragedy, the adjective pestilens appears twice, (Hercules Furens 32; Phaedra 489), and the adjective pestifer appears four times (Hercules Furens 562, 976; Phoenissae 38, 220). For a discussion of the representation of pestis and pestilentia in Senecan prose, see Pisi 1989: 73-79.
17 This opening speech, which continues until Jocasta’s speech at line 82, appears to be a soliloquy which, according to Boyle, performs a “prologic” function. Boyle convincingly argues that Oedipus “enters alone” and that he is not speaking to another character. (Boyle 2011: 102)
Oedipus describes this *pestis* as an all-consuming manifestation of illness: it is shown to affect not only the people of Thebes, but also the surrounding environment and the cosmos.\(^{18}\) As Boyle has commented, “the land, animals, citizens of Thebes, even and especially the air are infected with Oedipus’ contagion.”\(^{19}\) This is a clear illustration of how *pestis* can have the sense of a “noxious atmosphere”. As we will see, Oedipus provides more detail about the effects of the *pestis* on the surrounding atmosphere and environment later in his opening speech. Here, Oedipus’ reference to the plague as “greedy” (*avida*, 4) points toward these pervasive effects, while also giving the *pestis* a human characteristic. The adjective *avida* is also used to describe the *pestis* at 589, where the plague is said to be hungry for the Ogygian people (*avidumque populi Pestis Ogygii malum*, 589)\(^{20}\), which again underscores the ravenous, consumptive nature of the plague.\(^{21}\) In that particular passage, *Pestis* is mentioned at the end of a long, asyndetic list\(^{22}\) containing various words with connotations of illness and infirmity (*Furor, Horror, Luctus, Morbus, Metus, Senectus, Pestis*, 589-594\(^{23}\)). The fact that this list culminates with *Pestis* suggests that it is the ultimate form of illness, encompassing all other forms of illness, suffering, and infirmity, and this is in keeping with the representation of the plague as all-consuming. The

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\(^{18}\) Duncan has remarked upon the tendency of Senecan tragedy to “describe the entire universe, not simply the particular Greek *polis* of the play’s setting, as falling into chaos as a result of human crimes.” Duncan also suggests that this tendency is in keeping with Seneca’s Stoic cosmological beliefs. (Duncan 2006: 198; see also D. Henry and E.W. Henry 1985: 40-54)

\(^{19}\) Boyle 1997: 97. D. Henry and E.W. Henry also note that emphasis is placed upon the ill condition of the air. (D. Henry and E.W. Henry 1985: 147)

\(^{20}\) Ogygos was an early, legendary ruler of Thebes from whom the *populus Ogygius* of Oedipus’ time were supposedly descended.

\(^{21}\) As Boyle notes, in this play *avida* is also used in connection with words denoting death (164), fate (411), and Oedipus’ self-blinding (965). (Boyle 2011: 106). Mastronarde has also observed that the adjective *avidus* is used to create connections between Oedipus and “the horribly insistent grabbing of death and of its agent, the plague.” (Mastronarde 1970: 295)

\(^{22}\) On the frequent use of asyndetic lists of nouns and adjectives in Senecan tragedy, see Boyle 2011: 112, 263.

\(^{23}\) Most critical editions, including those of Boyle and Fitch, transpose the line labeled 589 after line 594. (see Boyle 2011: 249-250; Fitch 68-69)
words in this list, including Pestis, are usually capitalized in critical editions, reflecting how they are used as personified abstractions. Seneca includes lists of personified entities in other tragedies (e.g. Hercules Furens 95-99; 1059-1060); in this practice, Seneca appears to have been influenced by Virgil and Ovid, as well as earlier Roman tragedians, such as Accius and Pacuvius. In this particular passage, the use of the adjective avida contributes to the sense of personification, as if to endow Pestis with a sense of agency. Later in this chapter, I discuss other lists in Oedipus which feature language personifying illness (652, 1059-1060).

In the opening lines of the play, pestis is also associated with paradoxical changes in nature: the sun (Titan) is returning, yet it possesses a “gloomy radiance” (maestum iubar, 2); day and night are thus confounded, as is highlighted by stragem (5). Later in the opening scene, we see that this confusion extends to the realm of human society when Oedipus observes that the pestis brings death indiscriminately, showing no regard for age, sex, or the natural sequence of generations:

Nec ulla pars immunis exitio vacat,
sed omnis aetas pariter et sexus ruit,
juvenesque senibus iungit et gnatis patres
funesta pestis...

No area is unaffected or free from destruction,
but every age and sex perishes equally;
the deadly plague joins the young to the old,
fathers to sons... (52-55)

In noting that the plague muddles up the typical cycles and patterns of life, death, illness, and health, Oedipus also reminds us of the confused lineage of the Theban royal family (even if Oedipus himself is still unaware about this confusion at this point), and the confused nature of

25 See Boyle 2011: 250.
Oedipus himself. All this confusion is connected with Oedipus’ unwitting marriage to his mother, which makes Oedipus paradoxically both a father and a brother to his children, and is here highlighted by the suggestive juxtaposition of *gnatis* and *patres*. Littlewood and Bettini also observe that the plague’s confusion of natural order mirrors, and perhaps stems from, the confused nature of Oedipus’ identity. Tiresias makes this quite explicit later in the play, when he asserts that the cause of the plague does not have to do with *luctificus Auster* (the baleful South Wind, 632) or the fact that the land is afflicted by dry fumes (*halitu sicco*, 633), but the *rex cruentus* (bloody king, 634) himself, and herein lies another paradox: the plague is a form of illness experienced by an entire community, but its cause (and potential healer) is closely linked with a single individual. It also paradoxical that the plague does not directly harm Oedipus, despite his assertion that nothing is free from its wrath. A little earlier in his opening speech, Oedipus wonders why the plague spares him alone (*...mihi parcit uni?* 31); this formulation draws attention to the paradox that he alone is (or could be said to be) the cause of the *pestis*. Oedipus’ opening speech thus emphasizes that the *pestis* is confounding and paradoxical, and this theme is explored further as the play progresses.

While the nature of the plague remains perplexing to Oedipus, he is fully aware of the havoc that it wreaks on the land of Thebes. Oedipus uses language of health and illness to comment upon the condition of his realm, noting that one would not find bodies piled up in a “healthy

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26 Busch and Frank make similar points about this specific passage. (Busch 2007: 258; Frank 1995: 124)
28 As Pisi observes, “la ‘peste’ ed Edipo sono irrimediabilmente legati: Edipo è la peste, perché è la colpa.” (Pisi 1989: 68-69) Sontag also discusses interconnections between individual and communal experiences of illness in antiquity, and she includes the Oedipus myth in her comments. (Sontag 1990: 133)
conditions of the environment, using a number of words evocative of medical symptoms:\(^{29}\)

Non aura gelido lenis afflatu fovet
anhela flammis corda, non Zephyri leves
spirant, sed ignes auget aestiferi canis
Titan, leonis terga Nemeai premens.
Deseruit amnes umor atque herbas color
aretque Dirce, tenuis Ismenos fluit
et tinguit inopi nuda vix unda vada.
Obscura caelo labitur Phoebi soror,
tristisque mundus nubilo palpet die.
Nullum serenis noctibus sidus micat,
sed gravis et ater incubat terris vapor:
obtexit arces caelitum ac summas domos
inferna facies. Denegat fructum Ceres
adulta, et altis flava cum spicis tremat,
arente culmo sterilis emoritur seges.

No mild breeze with its cold breath
soothes our hearts that gasp with heat, no mild west winds
breathe, but the Titan, pressing down upon the back of the Nemean lion,
increases the fires of the heat-bringing dog star.
Moisture departs from rivers and color from grasses;
Dirce is parched; Ismenos flows scantily
and hardly moistens the bare shallows with its slight waves.
Phoebus’ sister glides through the sky concealed,
and the sad universe grows pale with the overcast day.
There is no star shining in the clear night,
But a heavy black vapor broods upon the earth.
An infernal appearance spreads over the fortresses of the heavens,
the highest palaces. The mature grain denies harvest,
and although the golden field shakes with its tall shoots,
the crop is fruitless, and dies away on dry stalks. (37-51)

Although the term *pestis* does not appear in this passage, it is used by Oedipus shortly
thereafter (55), suggesting that this passage is a description of the *pestis*. This section of

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\(^{29}\) Boyle states that this passage is “self-consciously allusive” to descriptions of plague in Thucydides, Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid, but he does not examine the passage in relation to Celsus. (Boyle 2011: 122) Pisi also notes the passage’s connections with descriptions of plague in Thucydides. (Pisi 1989: 63)
Oedipus’ soliloquy first informs us that there is no mild breeze to provide relief from the plague’s oppressive heat. This is expressed using language associated with medical treatment, since the verb *fovere* (37) can be translated “to relieve”, “to massage”, “to treat (parts of the body, wounds, etc.)” “to tend (the sick, infirm, etc.), etc.\(^{30}\) This is in fact a word that Celsus uses (whether as a finite verb or as a participle) more than seventy times, often when describing the application of various kinds of liquids (often water) or unguents in order to remedy an assortment of conditions.\(^{31}\) In the above passage, relief is needed because there are no breezes bringing “cold breath” (*gelido...afflatu*), and because no west winds “breathe” (*non Zephyri leves / spirant*) upon the land of Thebes. These west winds are described as *leves*—a word I translate above as “mild”, but which also suggests medical relief, especially through its etymological connection with the verb *levare* (“to lift or raise up”, “to relieve”, “to lessen (pain toil, loss, grief, etc.”).\(^{32}\) Celsus frequently uses this verb in the sense of “treating” or “relieving” various conditions\(^ {33}\), and Oedipus uses it in this sense later in this speech (*non ars ulla corruptos levant*, 69).\(^ {34}\) Lacking such relief, the people of Thebes suffer from “hearts that gasp with flames” (*anhela flammis corda*, 38). The connection between the condition of the land and the condition of the Theban people is made very clear: because the winds do not “breathe”, the people themselves cannot breathe.\(^ {35}\) We are presented with an image of asphyxiation, which is

\(^{30}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *fovere*.

\(^{31}\) e.g. 1.2.4.3-5.2; 2.17.1.8; 4.12.4.3-10; 7.3.3.5-8.

\(^{32}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *levare*.

\(^{33}\) e.g. *Super tabem si mulieri suppressa quoque menstrua fuerunt, et circa pectus atque scapulas dolor mansit subitoque sanguis erupit, levari morbus solet*... (2.8.7.1-4)

\(^{34}\) This verse is examined more in depth in this chapter’s forthcoming discussion of *morbus*.

\(^{35}\) Aygon makes a similar connection between the plague’s effects on nature and its effects on the people of Thebes, stating that “les hommes pâtissent directement des maux mêmes qui frappent la nature.”
reminiscent of Celsus’ description of an illness in the region of the throat (circa fauces malum, 4.8.1.1) which produces various kinds of breathing problems:

Omne in difficultate spirandi consistit; sed haec dum modica est neque ex toto strangulat δύσπνοια appellatur; cum vehementior est, ut spirare aeger sine sono et anhelatione non possit, ἄσθμα: at cum accessit id quoque, quod aegre nisi recta cervice spiritus trahitur, ὀρθόπνοια. (4.8.1.3-9)

It consists of a difficulty in breathing; when it is moderate and does not produce any choking, it is called dyspnoea; when it is more severe, with the result that the ill person is not able to breathe without noise and gasping, it is called asthma; but when in addition the patient is barely able to draw in breath unless his neck is positioned upright, it is called orthopnoea.

In the above description from Celsus, we find language also used by Oedipus in his description of the condition of Thebes: both writers use the verb spirare in reference to breathing, and the stem anhel- (the adjective anhelus in Seneca, the noun anhelatio in Celsus) in reference to “gasping”. These resonances further accentuate the medicalized nature of Oedipus’ description of the Theban pestis.

Interestingly, Oedipus states that the hearts (corda, 38) themselves are gasping (anhela), in effect attributing the process of breathing to those organs, rather than to the Theban people who are suffering as a result of the gasping. While this might be considered an example of a transferred epithet, there is also a subtle element of personification with these gasping organs, similar to how the plague itself is given human characteristics. This instance illustrates what one can miss in calling something a transferred epithet and simply leaving it at that. Another noteworthy aspect of usage in this phrase is that the heart is associated with breathing, rather than another organ that we may expect, such as the lungs. Celsus provides a description of the relationship between the heart and lungs; he states that these organs are directly attached to
each other, but he associates breathing with the lungs, noting that their spongy nature facilitates taking in breath.\textsuperscript{36} In his reference to “hearts that gasp” \textit{(anhela flammis corda)}, Oedipus also suggests a close relationship between the heart and the lungs, as if their functions are so interconnected as to be indistinguishable from each other. In other Senecan tragedies, one can also find instances where a bodily function or perception is surprisingly attributed to an unexpected organ; in \textit{Thyestes}, for instance, Atreus states that he saw the entrails of Thystes’ sons groan \textit{(mugire fibras vidi, 1064)}. This particular phrase is discussed in Chapter 3, but here we note that in this example and in the above passage from \textit{Oedipus} the normal functioning of the body is thrown into disturbance by the intermixing of bodily processes.

Due to the excessive heat brought on by \textit{Titan}, the rivers Dirce and Ismenos become devoid of \textit{umor} \textsuperscript{(41)}. The word \textit{umor} appears quite frequently in Celsus, often serving as an important indicator of health. Celsus uses \textit{umor} in various ways: it may refer to one of the four humours familiar from the Hippocratic Corpus\textsuperscript{37}, but it can also refer to any kind of moisture, fluid, or discharge, and it can be applied to bodies of water.\textsuperscript{38} Like earlier Hippocratic writers, Celsus places importance on the proper flow, proportion, and balance of bodily fluids, and considers abnormal discharges or excessive accumulations of \textit{umor} to be signs of illness.\textsuperscript{39} As Rosenmeyer has noted, Seneca states in \textit{Naturales Quaestiones} that the earth itself, as well as

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Is spongiosus, ideoque spiritus capax, et a tergo spinae lbi iunctus, in duas fibras ungulae bubulae modo dividitur. Huic cor adnexum est, natura musculosum, in pectore sub sinistriore mamma situm; duosque quasi ventriculos habet. \textsuperscript{(4.1.4.1-5)}}

\textsuperscript{37} Celsus refers to \textit{bilis atra} (black bile), along with various other bodily fluids, as \textit{umor} \textsuperscript{(2.1.6.1-7)}. \textit{Bilis atra} is discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{38} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{umor}. Thomas’ discussion of medical language in Herodotus observes that certain pieces of Greek humoral vocabulary, such as \textit{ικμις} (“moisture”) have a similarly broad semantic range and that they are capable of referring to fluids inside human beings as well as fluids in the earth. (Thomas 2000: 49-52; cf. Lonie 1981: 269)

\textsuperscript{39} e.g. \textit{vere tamen maxime, quae cum umoris motu novantur, in metu esse consuerunt. \textsuperscript{(2.1.6.1-2)}}
human bodies, contain different types of humor. This idea is reflected in Oedipus, where the rivers’ deficiency of umor is a sign of the Theban plague. A little later in the play, the chorus relates that the river Dirce is clouded with blood (turbatam sanguine Dircen, 177), suggesting another kind of humoral abnormality.

The Theban environment’s poor state of health is also conveyed by the grasses’ loss of color (41), another indicator of various forms of illness in Celsus and works by other authors. Celsus notes, for instance, that when the heart is punctured, a person assumes a color pallidissimus (most pallid color, 5.26.8.2) before dying shortly thereafter. In another passage, Celsus states that it is a particularly bad sign when a person loses their usual color (colorem…amisit, 2.2.2.2-3). In addition, Goldman has observed that Celsus uses the verb decolorare in relation to various parts of the body, “which have changed color in a significantly negative fashion”. Celsus also asserts that administering proper treatment to a wounded body part requires knowledge of the color that body part displays in a state of health (1.Pr.25.5-26.2). A change in color is also indicative of illness in other Senecan tragedies. In Seneca’s Thyestes, Atreus anticipates that a change in Thyestes’ colores (904) will come about when Thyestes realizes that he has consumed the flesh of his sons. In Medea, Medea’s mental distress is manifested in

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40 Rosenmeyer 1989: 131; cf. Naturales Quaestiones 3.15.2.2. Note that humor is a variant spelling of umor (Glare 2012: s.v. humor). In Hine’s edition of Naturales Quaestiones, this phrase is printed as multa genera umoris.

41 As Bradley notes, the quality of color is an important aspect in diagnosing and classifying forms of illness in medical texts from the Hippocratic Corpus through to Galen. (Bradley 2013: 133; see also Villard 2002; Nutton 2013: 339 n. 82)

42 Goldman cites two particular passages from Celsus: a description of a skin condition in which the eyelids become pale (2.6.4.2), and a description of abscesses that form under the skin, causing a discoloration of the overlying skin (2.8.23.2). (Goldman 2013: 143; see also 144 concerning the use of decolorare and the noun decolor by authors such as Pliny, Prudentius, and Cicero in passages that describe the worsening condition of body parts)

43 This passage is discussed more in depth in Chapter 3.
the ever-changing color of her face. As for the grasses’ loss of color in the above passage, one finds an interesting parallel in a passage from Lucan’s De Bello Civili that describes how war brings devastation and deterioration to every aspect of the universe. As in Oedipus, the sense of illness and despair is manifested in even the humble blades of grass: *quae seges infecta surget non decolor herba?* (What crop of grass will not rise up discolored and with tainted blades? 7.851).

In the passage above, Oedipus’ use of the verb *pallet* (45) also suggests that the natural environment has undergone a change in color. The verb *pallere*, which can have the sense of “to be pale or bloodless (from illness, strong emotion, etc.)” or “to lose [one’s] natural color”, appears frequently in Celsus, along with the noun *pallor* and the adjective *pallidus*. These words are often indicators of various kinds of illness, and they are closely associated with changes in color, as in the passage discussed above (5.26.8.2). In another passage, Celsus notes that changes in color (color) and *pallor* (paleness) are both signs of fever (*febris*, 3.6.7.11-12). While the above passage does not feature the word *febris*, it does contain language and imagery associated with heat (e.g. *flammis, ignes, aestiferi canis, Titan*), as if to suggest that the entire universe is in a feverish state. Celsus also relates that *pallor* deprives body parts of color (*eademque palpebrae pallent, et idem pallor labra et nares decolorant*, 2.6.4.1-2), and he asserts that this is a sign of imminent death (*mortis index est, 2.6.3.1; eadem mors denuntiatur, 2.6.5.1.*

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44 *Flagrant genae rubentes / pallor fugat ruborem. / Nullum vagante forma / servat diu colorem.* (Medea 858-861) Commenting on this passage, Boyle observes that changes in color are “a standard index of high emotionality”. (Boyle 2014: 341; see also 340)

45 Glare 2012: s.v. *pallere*.

46 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *pallere*.

47 Pisi and Stok note that Celsus associates *pallor* with *stomachus infirmus*. (e.g. 1.8.2.1-2; see Pisi 1989: 76 n. 16; Stok 1985: 420)
Oedipus observes that his city is oppressed by a heavy, black vapor (47), suggesting an image of polluted air. As Boyle notes, vapor is often used to express “exhalations arising from heat”\textsuperscript{48} and it can even be translated as just “heat”, reinforcing the sense that the environment is in a feverish state. Boyle notes that this word also appears in the description of symptoms experienced by the people of Thebes which is provided by the chorus after the first act of the play (\textit{tum vapor ipsam corporis arcem flammeus urit}, 185).\textsuperscript{49} Here, vapor is modified by \textit{flammeus} (185)\textsuperscript{50} and it is said to burn (urit) the surface of the human body—language evoking fever.\textsuperscript{51} Vapor is thus presented as a symptom experienced by both the people of Thebes and the Theban environment itself.\textsuperscript{52} These widespread effects recall ideas propounded in the Hippocratic treatise \textit{Breaths}, which traces the origin of all diseases to air and emphasizes the effects that air has on both individuals and the universe in general.\textsuperscript{53} In \textit{Oedipus}, however, the noxious condition of the air around Thebes is presented not as a cause of illness, but rather as a symptom of an illness brought about by an individual—a point which is made quite forcefully by Tiresias.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Vapor} is also a term with medical significance in Celsus, where it appears thirteen times, but with rather different connotations. But in each of Celsus’ mentions of vapor, it is used in reference to treatments of illness, rather than symptoms. In one instance, Celsus discusses

\textsuperscript{49} Boyle 2011: 124.
\textsuperscript{50} Rosenmeyer remarks that vapor is also linked with \textit{flammeae Hercules Oetaeus} (1613) and with \textit{pestis} in \textit{Thyestes} (87-89). (Rosenmeyer 1989: 130)
\textsuperscript{51} Mastronarde observes that vapor contributes to the sense of heat and dryness which is repeatedly evoked in this passage (cf. 37-40; 41-43; 49-51), and he associates this collective imagery with “the fever of disease”. (Mastronarde 1970: 296)
\textsuperscript{52} Boyle observes that “heat” is traditionally identified as a symptom of plague, citing descriptions by Thucydides, Lucretius, and Ovid. (Boyle 2011: 158)
\textsuperscript{53} On these theories put forth in \textit{Breaths}, see Nutton 2013: 74.
\textsuperscript{54} See 631-634 (discussed above)
treatments that require perspiration to be induced, and he notes that these treatments can be conveniently carried out in locations where vapor naturally rises out of the ground (2.17.1.1-5). In several other instances, Celsus mentions the ingestion of vapor aquae (water vapor) as a way to treat various kinds of illness. In none of these instances is vapor associated with pestis or other language suggestive of mass illness/plague. Celsus does, however, often associate vapor with heat, describing it as calidus or associating it with substances that are calidus, which recalls the connotations of heat that vapor carries in Oedipus (cf. 185).

The effects of the pestis are so extensive that even the farmland of Thebes is depicted in a state of illness. Oedipus observes that even though the land shakes with tall shoots (altis...spicis tremat, 50), it produces a barren crop which cannot be harvested. The verb tremere, which can be translated “to tremble” or “to quiver”, and the related noun tremor, evoke symptoms of human illness. Near the end of the play, for instance, Oedipus speaks of Morbi tremor (the shaking of Illness, 1059), and Oedipus also experiences a cold tremor run through his body (Et ossa et artus gelidus invasit tremor, 659) after Creon accuses him of bringing illness upon Thebes through his unwitting acts of incest and patricide. Seneca’s Hercules Furens also contains repeated uses of tremere and tremor, referring to either physical symptoms of Hercules’ madness, or indicators that the natural environment is in a tumultuous state, recalling the use of these words in Oedipus. Moreover, the connotations of shaking in lines 50-51 of Oedipus are particularly dire, as it is also stated that the crop is dying.

55 e.g. 6.8.1a.1; 6.8.1c.2; 6.9.1.5; 7.7.10.9; 7.7.11.10; 7.9.5.8; 8.4.11.1; 8.7.4.5
56 e.g. 2.7.1.3; 4.9.1.3; 6.8.1a.1; 6.8.1c.2; 6.9.1.5; 6.10.1.2; 6.10.3.6; 6.13.3.4; 7.7.10.9; 7.7.11.10; 7.9.5.8; 8.4.11.1; 8.7.4.5.
57 Glare 2012: s.v. tremere.
58 Cf. Morbus tremens (Hercules Furens, 694).
59 Hercules Furens 61, 81, 158, 259, 269, 414, 418, 517, 694, 979, 1044. The language and imagery associated with Hercules’ madness are discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.
away (emoritur, 51). The grim connotations of shaking are also apparent when the chorus, describing the afflictions of the environment, states that the Cadmean woodland shook twice (bis Cadmeum / ... tremuisse nemus, 175-176). The verb tremere does not appear in Celsus, but the noun tremor (shaking) appears six times, in connection with various conditions. This includes some rather severe conditions, such as delirium (2.8.16.6-7)\textsuperscript{60} and ardentes febres (burning fevers, 7.23.1.5); in the latter case, the onset of a tremor is said to indicate that death is imminent.

The wide-ranging effects that the plague has upon both mankind and nature reflect two fundamental components (as Migliorini notes) of a pestis or pestilentia: it is both contagious and deadly.\textsuperscript{61} Oedipus’ description of the plague culminates in language of death (emoritur), suggesting that death is the ultimate outcome to be expected based upon the symptoms that are identified. This constellation of symptoms allows Oedipus to conclude that his kingdom is mired in a funesta pestis (55). The large-scale devastation of nature wrought by the pestis is presented as a macrocosm of a human body afflicted with illness. The process by which Oedipus describes aspects of the condition of the environment, and concludes that it is suffering from a deadly pestis, resembles the processes of medical diagnosis, whereby one observes a set of symptoms then attempts to draw a conclusion about a person’s condition. This process operates similarly in Celsus, who emphasizes at the opening of the Proemium of Book 2 that various forms of adverse health can be detected by observing signa conplura

\textsuperscript{60} The term delirium is discussed further in Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{61} “...quello che conta è solo l’allusione ad un tipo di malattia “contagiosa”, letale, che semina sofferenza e morte e da cui non mettono al riparo neppure un fisico robusto ed una cura attenta della propria salute.” (Migliorini 1997: 74)
(various signs, 2.Pr.1.1-262). Celsus then goes on throughout the rest of Book 2 to provide a multitude of examples in which specific illnesses are identified through the observation of 

signa63, and he recommends treatments based upon these identifications. Celsus’ diagnoses are also sometimes informed by causes (weather, seasons, age, etc.) which can precipitate symptoms associated with certain forms of illness64; Oedipus, on the other hand, remains ignorant of the causes of the pestis, and treatment thus remains elusive despite his diagnosis.

In Migliorini’s discussion of the opening passage of Oedipus, she argues that Seneca’s portrayal of the funesta pestis is merely following “tradizione letteraria”, and that it is thus difficult to identify a “particolare competenza ‘clinica’ senecana.”65 My analysis, however, demonstrates that this passage can be considered both “letteraria” and “clinica” in nature, and that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Migliorini also states that representations of illness in Seneca’s tragedies are primarily derived from Stoic thought, and that they thus do not demonstrate “conoscenze mediche”.66 Migliorini, however, does not explain what constitutes “conoscenze mediche”, nor does she explain how this epistemological paradigm is distinct from other epistemological paradigms. Oedipus’ description of the pestis features numerous examples of language also used by Celsus, which calls into question the suggestion that the

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62 Later in Book 2, Celsus similarly remarks: Ante adversam autem valetudinem, ut supra dixi [cf. 2.Pr.1], quaedam notae oriuntur, quam omnium commune est aliter se corpus habere atque consuevit, neque in peius tantum sed etiam in melius. (2.2.1.1-5)
63 On the process of diagnosis in other Roman authors of prose texts on medicine (esp. Galen), see Nutton 2013: 228, 244.
64 e.g. Frigus modo nervorum distentionem, modo rigorem infert; illud spasmos, hoc tetanos Graece nominatur; nigritiem in ulceribus, horrores in febris excitat. (2.1.12.1-4)
65 Migliorini 1997: 75.
66 Migliorini 1997: 83. Despite this assertion, Migliorini also claims that Seneca’s descriptions of the conditions of Phaedra (in Phaedra) and Heracles (in Hercules Furens and Hercules Oetaeus) possess a greater sense of medical precision, and she compares these descriptions to passages in Caelius Aurelianus’ De Morbis Acutis (1.38.2; 62-63) (Migliorini 1997: 85, nn. 427, 428).
passage is devoid of medical knowledge. Similar distinctions between the “literary” and “medical” spheres are made by Pisi, who draws a contrast between the usage of the words *pestis* and *pestilentia*, asserting that the former word “conosce l’uso metaforico”, while the latter “è ristretto al campo specifico (nosologico) e all’uso proprio”. But as my analysis has shown, *pestis* carries “metaphorical” as well as “nosological” or medical connotations in Oedipus’ opening speech. All this illustrates a point emphasized in my introduction’s discussion of “technical vocabulary”: dichotomies such as “literary”/“clinical” (or “medical”), and “technical”/“non-technical” often break down when one looks closely at the specific instances of vocabulary use.

Following Oedipus’ speech, the chorus goes on to describe other physical and medical elements of the mass illness: the animals in and around the city become weak and unable to perform their typical behavior (132-153), plant life dies off (154-159), the rivers of the underworld change their course, and even the ferryman who famously serves the underworld becomes exhausted from the constant influx of the dead (166-170). While these elements of the mass illness are not directly associated with the word *pestis*, this word is used when the chorus describes effects which the plague has upon one specific animal:

...perdidit *pestem* latebrosa serpens:
aret et sicco moritur veneno.

...the lurking snake has lost its means of destruction:
he is parched, and dies with poison dried up. (152-153)

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67 Pisi 1989: 72; see also 73-74.
68 Pisi also maintains that “*pestis* è riservato alla sfera morale”, but my analysis illustrates that a *pestis* does not necessarily possess only moral connotations.
Here, the Theban plague actually deprives the snake of its ability to inflict “plague” or “destruction” (*pestem*) upon other animals through the use of its poison;' the snake thus loses the means by which it sustains its own life. The statement borders on the paradoxical: it is implied that the *pestis* of Thebes is so destructive and all-consuming that it prevails over other, weaker *pestes* that exist in nature. In this particular instance, *pestis* refers to a specific means by which a snake can kill prey; this is in contrasts with other passages where the use of *pestis* is more generalized. *Pestis* is also connected with the sudden attack of an animal in *Hercules Oetaeus*. Setting aside the question of whether this play should be attributed to Seneca, we find a similar use of *pestis* in this play. After Hercules puts on a shirt poisoned with the blood of the Lernaean hydra and his flesh begins to melt away, Hercules refers to this sudden attack as a *pestis* (1225, 1230, 1260). Before dying from this attack, Hercules also associates his condition with the strike of a scorpion (*scorpios*, 1218) or crab (*cancer*, 1219), which further emphasizes the quick and sudden action of *pestes*. Similar connotations are also apparent when Hercules refers to the Nemean lion as a *pestis* (1193) in a passage that will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. In Celsus, the word *cancer* is used to in reference to various conditions, including ulcerations, erysipelas, and gangrene; each of these conditions is associated with its own specific symptoms, but they are all characterized by disfigurement of the skin, including discoloration, putrefaction, mortification of external tissue, and quickly spreading swollen veins which were thought to resemble the limbs of a crab. The *cancer* which subdues Hercules also

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69 In Fitch’s translation, *pestem* is translated as “poison”, apparently through analogy with *veneno*, which Fitch translates as “venom”. (Fitch 2004: 29)
70 A similar sense of paradox is again apparent later in this chorus, where we see reference to a “form of death that is more severe than death” (*facies leti / gravior leto*, 180-181).
71 Budelmann also discusses how these references to scorpions and crabs contribute to the representation of Hercules’ experience of illness and pain. (Budelmann 2007: 448-449).
spreads quickly over his body, but the fact that it results in his death represents a departure from Celsus’ usage, as Celsus never applies cancer to malignant conditions.\textsuperscript{72}

The word \textit{pestis} makes one final appearance near the ending of the play, after Oedipus has come to understand his identity as an incestuous patricide, and how these aspects of his identity are connected with Theban plague. Oedipus then prepares to leave Thebes and go into exile, believing that the \textit{pestis} and other manifestations of illness will leave with him:

\begin{verbatim}
Quicumque fessi pectore et \textit{morbo} graves
semianima trahitis \textit{corpora}\textsuperscript{73}, en fugio, exeo:
relevate colla. Mitior caeli status
post terga sequitur: quisquis exilem iacens
animam retentat, vividos haustus levis
concipiatur. Ite, ferte depositis opem:
mortifera mecum \textit{vitia} terrarum extraho.
Violenta Fata et horridus \textit{Morbi} tremor,
\textit{Maciesque} et atra \textit{Pestis} et rabidus Dolor,
mecum ite, mecum. Ducibus his uti libet.
\end{verbatim}

Whoever are weary at heart and heavy with illness
dragging along half-dead bodies, behold, I am fleeing, I depart:
lift up your heads. A milder condition of the sky
will come in behind me: whoever, lying prostrate, retains
scant breath of life, may easily take in life-giving draughts.
Go, bring help to those put down:
I am drawing away the deadly illnesses of the lands.
Violent Fates and terrible shaking of Disease,
Wasting and black Plague and raving Pain,
come with me, with me. I delight in having guides such as these. (1052-1061)

The present discussion of this passage will remain focused on the usage of \textit{pestis}, while the other words in this passage that can have the sense of “illness” (\textit{morbus, macies, vitium}) will be

\textsuperscript{72} Spencer devotes an entire section of his Appendix to Celsus’ usage of the word \textit{cancer}. According to Spencer, Celsus’s use of \textit{cancer} always denotes superficial, non-malignant conditions, which do \textit{not} include the condition known as “cancer” today. In reference to superficial conditions that are malignant, Celsus uses the words \textit{carcinoma} or \textit{carcinodes}. (see Spencer 1938: 589-592)

\textsuperscript{73} Here, my quotation of the Latin (\textit{corpora}) departs from the Oxford Classical text (\textit{corpore}), following a reading which Boyle and other scholars have persuasively argued for. (see Boyle 2011: 358).
discussed later in this chapter. The mention of pestis in 1060 provides a matching bookend for the initial reference to pestis which occurs near the very beginning of the play (4)—an example of ring composition that underscores how the entire play is encompassed by this particular manifestation of illness. This passage also contains another list of words that personify forms of illness and suffering (1059-1060, cf. 589-594), building up to the ultimate form of illness, Pestis. The fact that the list concludes with Dolor suggests that this quality subsumes and unites Morbus, Macies, and Pestis, while it is also most strongly associated with Pestis through their close juxtaposition. Oedipus himself is also closely identified with this Pestis, and with the other manifestations of illness in the list; he addresses them all in an apostrophe, asking them to become his companions in exile. As previously noted, pestis can be used in reference to a “destructive thing or person”, and both of these senses are evident at the closing of the play, when the pestis and Oedipus—the destructive cause of the pestis and the curse of Thebes—merge into a single entity. By removing himself from Thebes, Oedipus believes that he will cease to be a source of pestis for the city, finally bringing relief to its people and environment.

While the play initially presents Oedipus as an agent of disease, in the end he becomes a source of healing for his city.

The representation of Oedipus as a “healer” of Thebes has some precedent in Sophocles’

Oedipus Tyrannos. As Knox has shown, certain sections of the play depict Oedipus as a

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74 The word dolor, which can be used to denote both physical and psychological pain (Glare 2012: s.v. dolor), appears very frequently in Senecan tragedy, and in Oedipus it appears in two lists of various personified manifestations of illness (652, 1060). For some remarks on the challenge of translating this particular word into English, see Nussbaum 1984: 451-452 with nn. 16 and 17; King 1999: 269-282.

75 Boyle takes a similar view, stating that “the ending of Seneca’s Oedipus plays out externally the moral situation internally experienced by its protagonist in the drama’s opening lines.” (Boyle 1997:92)

76 This builds upon Boyle’s suggestion that this passage represents Oedipus as a “self-conscious scapegoat for the Theban community.” (Boyle 2011: 359) Earlier in the play, Creon also asserts that Oedipus’ exile from Thebes will rid the city of illness (647-653).
“physician” figure in part by using medical language and imagery, some of which can be found in Hippocratic medical treatises. Yet the ending of Sophocles’ play, I would argue, does not characterize Oedipus as a healer of others in the same way that we see in Seneca’s play. Knox convincingly observes that Sophocles’ ending showcases the recovery and resurgence of Oedipus, both through his reassertion of decisive, autonomous action, as seen in his act of self-blinding (a choice, Knox reminds us, not mandated by the gods, cf. 1330-1331), and in his willing departure from Thebes. But to this I would add that Oedipus’ rehabilitation is very much a personal one, not bringing the same relief to the rest of the Thebans. Indeed, near the end of the play Oedipus states “neither disease nor anything else will destroy me” (μήτε μ’ ἂν νοσον / μήτε ἄλλο πέρσαι μηδέν, 1455-1456), but he laments the future of his own children: “oh children, it is clear that you are destined to waste away, unmarried” (ὦ τέκν’, ἄλλα δηλαδὴ / χέρσους φθαρῆναι κάγάμους ύμᾶς χρεών, 1501-1502; see also 1486-1500). Furthermore, in the final three lines of the play, the chorus proclaims the sententia that no one can ever be certain to be free from pain until death, with their final two words placing extra emphasis upon the idea of pain (ἀλγεινὸν παθών, 1529-1520). The final words of Seneca’s play, on the other hand, conclude matters with Oedipus rejoicing (Ducibus his uti libet,

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77 For example, Knox cites Oedipus’ use of the word ἀνακουφίσις (relief, 218; cf. ἀνακουφίσαι, 23), a word which he says “is used almost as a technical term in medical language to describe ‘improvement’ on the part of the patient”. (Knox 1957: 140-141; see also 139, 142-147)

78 See Knox 1957: 185-196.

79 This sententia is familiar from Herodotus’ narrative of Croesus and Solon (Ἰστορίαι 1.32), and it has been suggested that Sophocles may have had this narrative in mind when writing the final lines of the play. (see Earle 1901: 300) It should be noted, however, that some commentators, including Dawe, consider lines 1524-1530 to be spurious, and that Pearson’s Oxford Classical text places these lines in brackets. (Dawe 1982: 247; Pearson 1971)
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1061)\textsuperscript{80}, not necessarily on his own behalf, but on the behalf of the rest of his city as it will now have relief from the “guides” that are to accompany him in exile, \textit{Macies} and \textit{Pestis} and \textit{Dolor}. Oedipus directly states that his departure will help others heal a few lines earlier: “whoever, lying prostrate, retains scant breath of life, may easily take in life-giving draughts” (\textit{qu quisquis ex ilem iacens / animam retentat, vividos haustus levis / concipiat}, 1055-1057). Even though he is ultimately still associated with \textit{pestis} and with various other manifestations of illness, Oedipus is able to alleviate the suffering of others—a paradox which is not explored as fully by Sophocles. I hope to investigate comparisons between the language of illness in Seneca’s \textit{Oedipus} and Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus Tyrannos} (and other Greek tragedies representing Oedipus) more in depth in future studies.

In Seneca’s \textit{Oedipus}, then, \textit{pestis} signifies a particularly virulent form of illness which encompasses other forms of illness and affects massive numbers of people, as well as animals and the natural environment.\textsuperscript{81} It has confounding and paradoxical effects, and at times is personified and given a sense of agency. All this is enabled by the word’s broad semantic range, which Seneca exploits in a manner that recalls the parallel semantics of word \textit{νόσος} and its usage in Greek tragedy. As Mitchell-Boyask notes, this is the word used most often by the Greek tragedians in reference to “mass illness” or “plague”\textsuperscript{82}, but it has various other senses, including “sickness”, “distress”, “disease of mind”, “bane”, “mischief”\textsuperscript{83}, making it a rather ambiguous word with a high degree of metaphorical potential. This is in contrast with the word

\textsuperscript{80} Boyle observes that \textit{libet} (1061) is an “extraordinary final word, matching the opening word of the act [\textit{bene}, 998]” and that it “strikes a note quite alien to Greek tragedy”. (Boyle 2011: 361)

\textsuperscript{81} As Pratt states, “the whole environment and social structure of Thebes are being destroyed.” (Pratt 1983: 97)

\textsuperscript{82} Mitchell-Boyask 2008: 27.

\textsuperscript{83} Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v. \textit{νόσος}. 62
λοιμός, which occurs very rarely in Greek tragedy. This word has a narrower semantic range (“plague”, “pest”), lacking the connotations of “madness” and “mischief” which are possessed by νόσος.

In Celsus, the words pestis, pestilenta, and the related adjectives pestifer, and pestiferus are altogether used a total of twenty one times, sometimes with connotations that recall Seneca’s representation of the pestis in Oedipus, but also with some significant departures in sense. I will first discuss some of the similarities. Pestilenta is first used near the beginning of De Medicina, when Celsus is describing the early days of medicine and its role in the distant past. Citing Homer, Celsus states that Podalirius and Machaon, the sons of Aesclepius, did not provide help with the pestilenta that ravaged the Greeks who fought in the Trojan War:

...quos tamen Homerus non in pestilenta neque in variis generibus morborum aliquid adulisse auxilii, sed vulneribus tantummodo ferro et medicamentis mederi solitos esse proposuit. Ex quo apparret has partes medicinae solas ab iis esse tentatas, easque esse vetustissimas.

...Homer did not state that they [Podalirius and Machaon] supplied any help in the plague or in the various types of illnesses, but only that their usual practice was to heal wounds by the knife and by medicines. Thus it appears that only those parts of medicine were attempted by them, and that they are the oldest. (1.Pr.3.4-4.2)

Celsus states that pestilenta, unlike vulnera, were not treated in the distant past. It is not made clear whether this was due to inability, or to unwillingness on the part of Podalirius and Machaon, but it is suggested that pestilenta posed a problem for healers during the time of the Trojan War. It appears that pestilenta cannot be helped, even by physicians descended directly

84 Boyask also suggests that the Greek tragedians generally avoid λοιμός because of superstitions concerned with its usage. (see Mitchell Boyask 2008: 59)
85 Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v. λοιμός.
from the semi-divine healer Aesclepius. This depiction of *pestilentia* as a harsh and untreated form of illness parallels the virulent representation of *pestis* in *Oedipus*. In addition, the use of *pestilentia* in the singular suggests a general, all-inclusive category of illness, in contrast with other forms of illness which are here expressed in the plural (*variis generibus morborum*). While there are various types of *morbi* (as I discuss further in the next section of this chapter), *pestilentia* appears to be a category of illness without subdivisions. The fact that Celsus identifies *pestilentia* separately from the *morbi* suggests that these are two different types of illness, and that these words are not “synonymous” or “interchangeable” in usage.

Celsus only hints about the highly severe nature of *pestilentia* in the above passage, but in other sections of *De Medicina* he uses the related adjectives *pestifer* (“dangerous to health”, “noxious”, “disastrous”), *pestiferus* (cf. *pestifer*), and *pestilens* (“full of disease”, “unhealthy”, “causing danger to life or health”) when describing serious and potentially life-threatening conditions.86 These include Celsus’ descriptions of κεφαλαία (a condition characterized by paralysis, blurred vision, mental displacement [*mentis alienatio*], vomiting, etc.)87 and *angina* (a condition characterized by difficulty breathing, and swallowing, swelling of the tongue and throat, revolving eyes, pallor, etc.).88 Celsus labels the former condition *pestifer*, and then

86 Glare 2012: s.v. *pestifer*; *pestiferus*; *pestilens*. Lewis and Short provide “destructive” as a possible translation of each of these words. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *pestifer*; *pestiferus*, *pestilens*). They also note that *pestifer* is more common than *pestiferus*, and state that the latter is a rare word, citing Celsus’ use of it in 2.6.

87 In capite autem interdum acutus et pestifer morbus est, quem κεφαλαίαν Graeci vocant; cuius notae sunt horror calidus, nervorum resolutio, oculorum caligo, mentis alienatio, vomitus, sic ut vox supprimatur, vel sanguinis ex naribus cursus, sic ut corpus frigescat, anima deficiat. (4.2.1.2)

88 Ut hoc autem morbi genus circa totam cervicem, sic alterum aequus pestiferum acutumque in faucibus esse consuevit. Nostri anginam vocant: apud Graecos nomen, prout species est. Interdum enim neque rubor neque tumor ullus apparat, sed corpus aridum est, vix spiritus trahitur, membra solvuntur: id συνάγχην vocant. Interdum lingua faucesque cum rubore intumescunt, vox nihil significat, oculi vertuntur, facies pallat, singultus est: id κυνάγχην vocant. Illa communia sunt: aeger non cibum devorare, non potionem potest, spiritus eius intercluditur. (4.7.1.1-12)
proceeds to note some very serious symptoms, culminating in death. Celsus calls the latter condition *pestiferus*, and also associates it with some rather serious symptoms, including obstructions to breathing (*vix spiritus trahitur; spiritus eius intercluditur*). In these examples, Celsus reveals little differentiation in usage between *pestifer* and *pestiferus*, as both adjectives are used to describe conditions which are severe and potentially fatal. As we have seen, the noun *pestis* is associated with death and destruction in *Oedipus*, notably when Oedipus relates that the *funesta pestis* (deadly plague) subdues people without regard for age or sex (51-55). Although Celsus does not use the adjective *funesta*, it is apparent that in both Celsus and Seneca the semantics of the root *pest-* often have to do with deadly forms of illness.

In another passage about general signs of health and illness, Celsus contrasts signs that are *pestifera* with signs that are *salutaria* (healthful). 89 Spencer observes that Celsus frequently uses *pestifer* in a way analogous to use of θανατώδης in Hippocratic texts 90, where it often has the sense of “deadly” or “fatal”. 91 Thus, the Latin root *pest-* itself is frequently associated with (or suggests or connotes) death, even though it does not denote it in the same way as the Greek word θανατώδης (a word which is built on the very root that denotes death, unlike the Latin *pestiferus*). At the same time, Spencer also observes that Celsus does not always reserve the use of *pestifer* for conditions that are fatal; in some instances, the word is associated with

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89 *Non si quid itaque vix in millensimo corpore aliquando decipit, id notam non habet, cum per innumerabiles homines respondeat. Idque non in iis tantum, quae pestifera sunt, dico, sed in iis quoque, quae salutaria; siquidem etiam spes interdum frustratur, et moritur aliquis, de quo medicus securus primo fuit: quaeque medendi causa reperta sunt, nonnumquam in peius aliquid convertunt.* (2.6.17.1-5) Cicero draws a similar dichotomy between things which are *pestiferae* and things which are *salutares* (*De Natura Deorum* 2.12.34; 3.27.69). In their gloss of *pestis*, Ernout and Meillet similarly assert: “*pestilens s’oppose à saluber*. ” (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *pestis*)

90 Spencer 1935: 112 note a.

symptoms or conditions that are merely “noxious” or “harmful”\(^\text{92}\), but not necessarily deadly. Celsus also describes certain kinds of serpents as \textit{pestifera}, indicating that these serpents are “poisonous”\(^\text{93}\); this use recalls the passage from \textit{Oedipus} where the chorus observes that the serpent has lost its poison (\textit{perdidit pestem latebrosa serpens}, 152) as a result of the plague. These examples from both Seneca and Celsus suggest that a \textit{pestis} is akin to a \textit{serpens} in that it may strike suddenly and have fast-acting, potentially lethal effects.

While the \textit{pestis} in \textit{Oedipus affects} the conditions of the surrounding environment, Celsus states that \textit{pestilentiae} can be \textit{caused or exacerbated} by meteorological, climatic, and geographical factors.\(^\text{94}\) Celsus asserts, for instance, that \textit{pestilentiae} brought by the south wind are especially dangerous\(^\text{95}\), and he also claims that \textit{pestilentiae} occur more frequently in certain “unhealthy locales (\textit{gravibus locis}).”\(^\text{96}\) In addition, Celsus suggests that outbreaks of \textit{pestilentiae} are particularly common in the winter.\(^\text{97}\) In another passage (which does not feature the words \textit{pestis} or \textit{pestilentia}), Celsus states that a change in location from Italy to the drier climate of Alexandria can be very helpful for people suffering from \textit{phthisis}, a condition discussed later in this chapter.\(^\text{98}\) Such ideas have precedence in the Hippocratic treatise \textit{Airs, Waters, Places}, which strongly identifies weather, climate, geography, and ethnicity as factors in the causation of illness (Celsus’ work, unlike this treatise, does not delve into the realm of

\(^{92}\text{e.g. 2.6.10.1.1-2; 2.6.11.1; 2.6.12.1.}\)
\(^{93}\text{Verum haec genera serpentium et peregrine et aliquanto magis pestifera sunt... (5.27.10-1-2)}\)
\(^{94}\text{Allbutt also notes that Celsus regards climate and the seasons to be factors in health and illness. (Allbutt 1921: 209)}\)
\(^{95}\text{Cum vero haec in omni pestilentia facienda sint, tum in ea maxime, quam austri excitarint (1.10.4.1-3)}\)
\(^{96}\text{Magis vero gravibus locis ista servanda sunt, in quibus etiam pestilentiam faciunt. (1.2.3.7-9)}\)
\(^{97}\text{Nec aliud magis tempus pestilentiae patet, cuiuscumque ea generis est; quamvis variis rationibus nocet. (2.1.9.6-8)}\)
\(^{98}\text{Opus est, si vires patiuntur, longa navigatione, caeli mutatione, sic ut densius quam id est, ex quo discedit aeger, petatur: ideoque aptissime Alexandriam ex Italia itur. (3.22.8.4-7)}\)
ethnography). Adverse weather, winds, and climate are also elements of the pestis in Oedipus (cf. 1-5; 37-51), but they are not presented as factors in the causation of the pestis. Instead, these elements are depicted as manifestations and results of the pestis, contributing to the larger sense that the environment itself is ill. Oedipus’ role in the causation of the illness and the polluting influence he has on the condition of the environment are also reinforced when Creon predicts that Oedipus’ departure from Thebes will usher in a vitalis aura (life-giving air, 651).

Celsus also connects pestilentia and “heat”, recalling the vapor and flammae associated with the pestis in Oedipus (47; 185). Celsus uses different vocabulary, however, stating in one instance that calor (heat) can make the body particularly susceptible to pestilentibus morbis⁹⁹, and in another instance Celsus describes pestilentia as a type of febris (fever).¹⁰⁰ In the former example, Celsus is stating that calor can render a person more susceptible to deadly illness; this is the reverse of the situation in Oedipus, where heat (e.g. vapor) is portrayed as a symptom, rather than a cause, of the Theban pestis. This is the only instance in De Medicina in which Celsus uses the adjective pestilens (as opposed to the more frequently appearing adjectives pestifer or pestiferus). It is also striking that pestilens is used to modify the noun morbus in this context; this speaks to the generic nature of the term morbus (which is further discussed in the ensuing section of this chapter), which is delimited as “harmful” by the adjective pestilens.

Celsus’ usage of pestis and pestilentia differs from the usage of pestis in Oedipus in other important ways. Perhaps the most striking difference pertains to the severity of these forms of

⁹⁹ Calor concoctionem prohibit, somnum aufert, sudorem digerit, obnoxium morbis pestilentibus corpus efficit. (1.9.6.6-8)
¹⁰⁰ Desiderat quoque propriam animadvorsionem in febris pestilentiae casus. (Among fevers, the case of pestilentia demands special consideration. 3.7.1.1-2)
illness in each text. In *Oedipus*, the *pestis* is repeatedly portrayed as an untreatable form of illness from which no one can escape, except for Oedipus himself (at least initially). Celsus often represents *pestis* and *pestilentia* as rather virulent and potentially deadly forms of illness, but this is not always the case. For instance, in one passage Celsus relates that it is actually possible for a person to remain healthy (*integer*) when exposed to a *pestis* by taking various precautions, which include avoiding fatigue, monitoring one’s diet, adhering to various forms of moderation in one’s lifestyle, and walking outside each day before it becomes too hot (which again suggests that heat can induce this form of illness).\(^1\)

In another passage, Celsus discusses possible treatments for people afflicted with *pestilentia*; he finds blood-letting to be the most effective, but if the patient is deemed to have too little strength for that treatment, other treatments are viable, including emetics, baths, and dietary restrictions.\(^2\) Celsus does not consistently present *pestis* or *pestilentia* as the greedy, all-consuming, manifestation illness that we find in Seneca’s play. Cure or treatment seem unimaginable with the *pestis* described in *Oedipus* (cf. 69-70\(^3\)), as does the possibility that one could avoid being affected by it in the first place (*nec ulla pars immunis exitio vacat*, 52).\(^4\)

From the opening lines of the play, the outlook of the *pestis* is extremely dismal—moreso, for purposes of comparison, than the situation in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos*, where there is at least initially some hope for remedy, as is expressed by both a priest (40-51) and Oedipus himself (69-77).

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\(^1\) See 1.10.1.1-4.3.

\(^2\) See 3.7.1.A.1-10. In this section Celsus also identifies certain treatments as generally *not* helpful when dealing with *pestilentia*, such as fasting (*fame*), medicines (*medicamentis*), and enemas (*ducere alvum*).

\(^3\) These lines are discussed more in depth in this chapter’s comments on *morbus*.

\(^4\) Despite the strong medical connotations of the English word “immune”, Celsus does not use the word *immunis*. 
Morbos

The noun *morbos* can be translated in various ways, including “illness”, “disease”, “sickness”, “infirmity”, “weakness”, and even “vice”.\(^{105}\) Lewis and Short note that it can be used with respect to either the body or the mind.\(^{106}\) *Morbos* occurs only ten times in Senecan tragedy, four of which come in *Oedipus*, the play in which it is used most often. The related adjectives *morbosus* and *morbidus* never appear in Seneca’s plays. In each of its four uses in *Oedipus*, *morbos* occurs in close context with the word *pestis*. The word first appears during Oedipus’ opening speech about the effects of the plague:

> Non vota, non ars ulla correptos levant:  
> cadunt medentes, morbus auxilium trahit.

> No prayers, no skill relieves those who are afflicted:  
> healers fall, the illness draws away remedy. (69-70)

As with his reference to the *funesta pestis* (deadly plague, 55) earlier in this speech, this use of *morbos* suggests a particularly virulent and pernicious form of illness.\(^{107}\) Having described the *pestis* as an unavoidable and untreatable form of illness (cf. 52), Oedipus now refers to the same illness as a *morbos* that cannot be treated by either means of prayer (*vota*) or skill (*ars*). The mention of healers (*medentes*) in the following line makes it clear that *ars* refers most obviously to the practice of medicine.\(^{108}\) Oedipus emphasizes that the sheer destructiveness of

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\(^{105}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *morbos*. Ernout and Meillet observe that its resemblance to *mori* (to die) is only coincidental, and that the two words have no etymological connection. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *morbos*)

\(^{106}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *morbos*.

\(^{107}\) Migliorini similarly observes that these lines emphasize “la gravità della peste.”

\(^{108}\) The use of the word *ars* in apparent opposition to *vota* is interesting in light of arguments, which go back as far as Hippocratic treatises such as *On the Sacred Disease*, about the relationship between medicine and what might be called magico-religious approaches to healing. The syntax of the sentence suggests that Oedipus views *vota* as separate from the *ars* of medicine, not unlike the author of *On the Sacred Disease*. Celsus frequently speaks of medicine as an *ars* (e.g. *vix ulla perpetua praecepta medicinalis ars recipit*, 1.Pr.63.2-3), and his summary of the history of medicine points to the eventual divergence of the medical *ars* from magico-religious approaches to
the *morbus* by observing that even healers are victims of its wrath, removing hope for the possibility of remedy or relief. The paradoxical notion of healers infected with and thus possibly spreading illness develops the idea that the *morbus* at hand is highly unusual, inexplicable, and ultimately untreatable.\(^{109}\)

Creon paints a similarly bleak image of *Morbus* in describing the various personified manifestations of illness and infirmity (*Furor, Horror, Luctus, Morbus, Senectus, Metus, Pestis*, 589-594) he observed during rites of necromancy conducted by Tiresias. Each manifestation of illness is said to be suffering in ways that call attention to effects it can have upon other people; *morbus*, for instance, is characterized as weak and weary: *aegreque lassum sustinens Morbus caput* (Illness bearing weary head in a sick way, 593). This description underscores the tendency of *Morbus* to bring about frailty and feebleness—not only upon others, but also upon itself, as even the figure “Illness” shows signs of being ill. This personified image accentuates the sense that *morbus*, much like *pestis*, affects all: this form of illness cannot be avoided or overcome by anyone or anything, including the very figure *Morbus*! There may also be a suggestion that *Morbus* has become exhausted from his own handiwork, having relentlessly inflicted illness upon everyone and everything.

An image of exhaustion is also put forth in the play’s closing speech, part of which I translated earlier in this chapter (1052-1061). As he goes out into exile, Oedipus observes that the people of Thebes are weary at heart (*fessi pectore*, 1052) and heavy with illness (*morbo graves*, 1052), with half-dead bodies (*semianima…corpora*, 1053) which are unable to hold up healing which tended to ascribe illness to the wrath of the gods (*…morbos tum ad iram deorum immortalium relatos esse*, 1.Pr.4.3-4). For an examination of Celsus’ use of the word *ars*, see von Staden 2007.

\(^{109}\) Boyle notes that “the uselessness of medical, religious, and other help was a theme which opened Thucydides’ famous account (2.47.4) and became a commonplace of Roman depictions of plague”. (Boyle 2011: 128)
their heads (*relevate colla*, 1054). Although the specific language associated with *morbus* in this passage differs from the language in 593, in both cases *morbus* is associated with life-sucking fatigue. *Morbus* is then used one last time in the play when Oedipus comments that his departure from Thebes will restore the city to health. He lists *tremor Morbi* (the shaking of Illness, 1059) among the various forms of illness and suffering that he will be taking away with him, including *Macies* (Wasting, 1060), *atra Pestis* (black Illness, 1060), and *rabidus Dolor* (raging Pain, 1060). Here, *Morbus* again takes on an element of personification and it is associated with Oedipus himself, but it is not strongly differentiated from the other manifestations of illness.

While *morbus* does not frequently occur in the plays of Seneca, it is very frequently used in Celsus, and an exhaustive analysis of all of Celsus’ uses of this word is beyond the scope of this study. Here I will focus primarily upon Celsus’ usage of the word in the Proemium of *De Medicina*. This preface to Book 1 gives an overview of the history of medicine up to Celsus’ time, describing and commenting upon various approaches to the detection and treatment of illness. Since the Proemium is deeply concerned with the conceptualization of illness, Celsus’ usage of the word *morbus* here is worth a closer look.

At no point in *De Medicina* does Celsus directly define what constitutes a *morbus*.¹¹⁰ This is in contrast with Cicero, who explicitly attempts to define *morbus* as *totius corporis corruptio* (a despoiling of the entire body) and distinguishes it from other words in the semantic sphere of

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¹¹⁰ Spencer’s translation of *De Medicina* usually renders *morbus* as “disease”, but it is not always consistent, sometimes opting for “illness” or “malady” instead.
illness, such as aegrotatio and vitium. Celsus’ usage is less specific, as he applies morbus to a vast array of conditions which have disparate causes, symptoms, and treatments. As previously noted, Celsus relates that there are various types of morbi (morborum varia genera, 1.Pr.23.2; cf. variis generibus morborum, 1.Pr.3.5). Later in the Proemium, Celsus outlines three general categories of morbi, which are associated with certain generic symptoms: unum adstrictum (constriction; e.g. constipation leading to intestinal obstruction), alterum fluens (flux; e.g. diarrhea and dysentery), and tertium mixtum (i.e. conditions not fitting into the other two categories). These are rather broad categories, applicable to diverse forms of illness that are identified throughout De Medicina. By contrast, Celsus does not specify that there are different genera of pestes or pestilentiae, although he does observe some variations in these forms of illness (e.g. some pestes and pestilentiae are fatal, while others are not). Complicating matters further, Celsus sometimes uses the adjectives pestilens and pestifer to modify morbus. As previously mentioned in the above discussion of pestis, Celsus notes that heat (calor) can render the body susceptible to morbis pestilentibus (1.9.6.7-8). In another instance, Celsus describes a pestifer morbus (4.2.2.1), using pestifer, as in other instances, to describe a form of illness as “deadly”. The fact that adjectives such as pestilens and pestifer are used to modify morbus while distinctions are made between morbi and pestilentiae in other sections of De

111 Morbum appellant totius corporis corruptionem: aegrotationem morbum cum imbecillitate: vitium cum partes corporis inter se dissident: ex quo provitas membrorum, distortio, deformitas. (Tusculanae Disputationes 4.13.28-29)

112 See 1.Pr.54.9-55.2. The examples provided above are mentioned in Spencer’s note on this section, which helps to clarify these categories. (Spencer 1935:30 note b) Note that Celsus also mentions the first two categories of morbi later in this Proemium (compressorum et fluentium morborum genera diversa, 1.Pr. 66.6-7). The importance placed upon excretions in categorizing and diagnosing illness in Greek and Roman medicine is discussed further in Chapter 3.
*Medicina* (e.g. 1.Pr.3.4-4.2) serves as another reminder that it is important to be attentive to differences in sense and usage when comparing nouns and adjectives built upon the same root.

The fact that Celsus uses a rich variety of adjectives to modify *morbi* is a further indication of his generic usage of the term, under which are lumped a vast array of conditions and experiences. These conditions need not be purely “physical” in nature—indeed, various forms of *insania*, which are characterized by mental symptoms and “cannot be assigned to any particular part of the body” (*qui certis partibus adsignari non possunt*, 3.18.3-4), are also called *morbi*. The fact that Celsus applies the word *morbus* to what might be called “mental illness” flies in the face of claims made by Szasz about conceptualizations of illness over history. Szasz, an influential and controversial critic of the moral and scientific foundations of psychiatry and psychotherapy, makes the broad-stroking assertion that, until the nineteenth century, the concept and label “illness” (and whatever similar words exist in other languages) was only applied to physical disorders displaying “an alteration of bodily structure.” Celsus, however, applies the word *morbus* to forms of illness which do not necessarily display any physical “alteration”.

Mudry also comments on Celsus’ usage of *morbus*, stating that “*morbus* désigne d’ordinaire chez Celse les maladies internes, c’est-à-dire les affections qui relèvent de la diététique.” It is certainly true that Celsus sometimes uses the word *morbus* in reference to forms of illness that are localized internally and that can be treated through dietetics, but Celsus also uses the word

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113 See 3.18.2.8; 3.18.16.4; 3.18.20.7; 3.18.20.10; 3.18.20.12. Celsus’s use of the term *insania* is discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4.
114 Szasz 1974: 11.
115 Mudry 1982: 68. Mudry makes this assessment in commenting on Celsus’ description of Dietetics (*Διαιτητικήν...quae victu morbos curat...* 1.Pr.9.3-6).
in reference to conditions that manifest external symptoms. Moreover, as I further explain in Chapter 3, Celsus presents a complex and dynamic relationship between the interior and exterior of the body, which problematizes a dichotomy of “internal” and “external” illnesses. Mudry also appears to overlook the fact that Celsus uses the word *morbus* when discussing forms of illness, such as the various forms of *insania*, for which he recommends treatments that would not fall into the category of dietetics. In fact, in Book 2 Celsus submits that most *morbi* should be treated by blood-letting\(^{116}\), which is not a dietetic treatment.

Celsus uses *morbus* in reference to forms of illness that are both acute and chronic in nature. Distinguishing between *morbi* that are *acuti* (short-lived) and *longi* (chronic) is an important delineation in the categorization of illness, not only for Celsus, but earlier Greek writers of medical prose as well.\(^{117}\) In fact, at the beginning of Book 3 Celsus observes that this distinction drawn between acute and chronic illnesses originated with the Greeks (3.1.1.1-4), and Celsus uses this as a way of classifying *morbi* throughout *De Medicina* (both before and after this remark).\(^{118}\) Celsus does not make such a distinction with his usage of the words *pestis* or *pestilentia*. Similar to Seneca’s representation of the *pestis* in *Oedipus*, Celsus associates both *pestes* and *pestilentiae* with the fickle forces of nature, including the winds, weather, and seasonal changes (which never take the exact same yearly pattern), thus emphasizing the unpredictable nature of these forms of illness themselves. A sudden change in one of these

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\(^{116}\) *Sanguinem incise vena mitti novum non est: sed nullum paene esse morbum, in quo non mittatur, novum est.* (2.10.1.1-3)

\(^{117}\) Examples include the Hippocratic treatise *Regimen in Acute Diseases*, and a work by the fifth-century Latin author Caelius Aurelianus’ entitled *On Acute and Chronic Diseases*. The latter work translated an earlier, non-extant Greek work by Soranus (first or second century CE), suggesting that the distinction between acute and chronic diseases remained important in Greek and Roman medical thought for a very long time. On this point, see Bosman 2009: 5.

\(^{118}\) Celsus first makes the distinction in the Proemium to Book 1 (*haec autem genera morborum modo acuta esse, modo longa...* 1.Pr.55.4-5)
elements could bring a quick end to an illness, while the persistence of these factors could cause an illness to continue indefinitely. These elements of unpredictability may help explain why Celsus does not use the labels “acute” or “chronic” in relation to *pestes* and *pestilentiae*, as he does with *morbi*,119

While Celsus often links the causes of *pestes* and *pestilentiae* with environmental conditions, he attributes a wide variety of possible causes to *morbi*. In a section of the Proemium (45-53) in which Celsus discusses his own stance in relation to the “rationalist” and “empiricist” schools of medicine120, he notes that a *morbus* may be caused by such diverse factors as fatigue, thirst, heat, cold, sleeplessness, hunger, overconsumption of food or wine, and even immoderate sexual desire.121 This list proceeds from exhaustion and deprivation as causes of *morbus*—factors also associated with *morbus* in *Oedipus* (cf. 593, 1054)—to hyperconsumption and hyperactivity as causes of *morbus*, thus covering a wide range of human experiences. This list again highlights Celsus’ highly generic usage of *morbus*, a word he applies to many different forms of mental and physical distress, thus bearing out the word’s wide semantic range. In Book 1, Celsus observes that many of the aspects mentioned in the above list should be avoided in the situation of a *pestilentia*,122 but he does not describe these aspects as potential *causes* of a *pestilentia*.

119 Commenting on the use of λοιμώς, the Greek word most often used to denote mass illness or “plague”, Ralph Rosen states that this term necessarily “implies an acute affliction.” (Rosen 2001: 239 n. 27) While I am not questioning this assertion, I would point out that the Latin words *pestis* and *pestilentia*, as used by Celsus, do not necessarily carry connotations of being either “acute” or “chronic” in nature.

120 See Mudry 1982: 139. These schools of thought are discussed more in depth in Chapter 3.

121 Interest enim fatigatio morbum an sitis, an frigus an calor, an vigilia an fames fecerit, an cibi vinique abundantia, an intemperantia libidinis. (1.Pr.52.4-53.1)

122 ...vitare fatigationem, cruditatem, frigus, calorem, libidinem, multoque magis se continere, si qua gravitas in corpore est. (1.10.1-7-9)
Seneca’s use of *morbus* (and *Morbus*) in *Oedipus* suggests that this form of illness can bring about physical debility. Celsus’ work also suggests as much, while also showing, conversely, that a weak constitution can make one more susceptible to *morbus*. In one passage of the Proemium Celsus states that the body can become more liable to *morbus* as a result of a “weakness” (*ex infirmitate*). Another possible translation of *infirmitas* is “sickness”, but Celsus does not consider *infirmitas* itself to be a “sickness” or “illness”, as he makes the distinction that *infirmitas* is a *cause* that can “give rise to illness” (*concitent morbum*). In passages throughout *De Medicina*, Celsus consistently uses *infirmitas*, and the related adjective *infirmus*, when describing weak bodily conditions that render the body susceptible to *morbi* or other formulations of illness. While *infirmitas* and *infirmus* are important to Celsus, they are not used in *Oedipus*; the former word never appears in Senecan tragedy, and the latter word is used only three times, and never in close connection with *morbus*.

Celsus also observes that physical weakness can result in a predisposition to *morbi* during his discussion of the origins of healing (*morborum curatio*) earlier in the Proemium. He connects the origin of healing with philosophy (*rerum naturae contemplatio*), explaining that philosophers had a special need for healing because their physical strength was constantly

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123 Possunt enim quaedam subesse corpora vel ex infirmitate eius vel ex aliquo aductu, quae vel in alio non sunt, vel in hoc alias non fuerunt eaque per se non tanta, ut concitent morbum, tamen obnoxium magis aliis inuriis corpus efficiant. (1.Pr.58.6-59.1)
124 Glare 2012: s.v. *infirmitas*.
125 A similar relationship between *infirmitas* and *morbus* is evident in remarks which Celsus makes about digestive processes: *...adsuescit enim non ali corpus, cum omnibus morbis obnoxia maxime infirmitas sit.* (1.3.26.3-5)
126 Celsus uses *infirmitas* in eight instances, and *infirmus* with significantly more frequency.
127 *Hercules Oetaeus* 1677; *Octavia* 118; *Phoenissae* 385.
sapped by contemplation and sleeplessness.\textsuperscript{128} At the same time, Celsus associates morbus with forms of excess, including an overindulgent sexual appetite (libido\textsuperscript{129}), suggesting that various forms of pleasure are in the realm of morbi. The language of morbus is connected with sexual behavior in some Latin texts, for example in reference to the condition of “effeminate men who seek to be penetrated”.\textsuperscript{130} These specific connotations are not apparent in Celsus’ usage of morbus. In other parts of the Proemium, Celsus relates that both idleness (desidia) and extravagance (luxuria) can compromise one’s health\textsuperscript{131}, but he does not connect these words directly with the language of morbus.\textsuperscript{132} In general, Celsus’ ideas about health are predicated upon maintaining a state of moderation—an idea familiar from earlier Hippocratic treatises, where health is frequently conceptualized in terms of equilibrium; illness, on the other hand, is a state of imbalance tending toward one extreme or the other.\textsuperscript{133} Celsus’ remarks in the Proemium and other sections of De Medicina leave a distinct impression that morbus is constantly lurking and threatening to act upon the human body, which is susceptible to morbus in a multitude of ways and thus constantly on the precipice of illness.

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\textsuperscript{128} Primoque medendi scientia sapientiae pars habebatur, ut et morborum curatio et rerum naturae contemplatio sub iisdem auctoribus nata sit: scilicet is hac maxime requirentibus, qui corporum suorum robora inquieta cogitatione nocturnaque vigilia minuerant. (1.Pr.6.3-7.4)

\textsuperscript{129} For other references to libido as a threat to health, see 1.Pr.70.7 and 1.10.1.8. Celsus similarly warns about the dangers of over- or underindulging in concubitus (copulation, 1.1.4.1-3).

\textsuperscript{130} Williams 2010: 199; see also 200. As Williams notes, morbus is used in this sense in Caelius Aurelianus’ De Morbis Acutis et Chronicis (4.9.131-7).

\textsuperscript{131} ...verique simile est inter nulla auxilia adversae valetudinis, plerumque tamen eam bonam contigisse ob bonos mores, quos neque desidia neque luxuria vitiarant... (1.Pr.4.7-5.1)

\textsuperscript{132} Stok has compared Celsus’ comments on desidia and luxuria with remarks Seneca makes in Epistula 18, where morbi are equated with supplicia luxuriae (the worship of extravagance). Von Staden points out that this passage suggest that desidia and luxuria—and thus morbi—exist in Roman society only because of the debasing influence of Greek culture: “the Roman body too has fallen into degeneracy, by following the deplorable Greek example (prius in Graecia, deinde apud nos).” Thus, according to von Staden, Celsus is implying that “Greek decadence” is responsible both for the necessity of “Greek scientific medicina” and “Roman physical degeneracy”—without which, in turn, “there would be no Latin text by Celsus, and no need for it.” (von Staden 1999: 259-260)

\textsuperscript{133} Cf. The Nature of Man 4.4-7. For discussions of the concept of balance in Greek and Roman medical thought, see Majno 1975: 178; Nutton 2013: 74, 78-79.
Although Celsus intimates that *morbi* are constant threats to human health, he also states that many kinds of *morbi* can be treated or cured. At various points in the Proemium, Celsus discusses the possibility of treating *morbi*, grouping this word with various verbs associated with treatment or healing.\(^{134}\) At the end of the Proemium, Celsus directly states that treatments of *morbi* will be a major focus of his forthcoming discussion (*tum ad ea transibo quae ad morbos curationesque eorum pertinebunt*, 1.Pr.75.6-8).\(^{135}\) This contrasts with Celsus’ comments on *pestes* and *pestilentiae*, which, as we have seen, are often depicted as deadly and untreatable. Celsus does make some remarks about treatments of *pestes* and *pestilentiae*, but they are much more limited than his remarks about treatments of *morbi*. Such distinctions in usage are not apparent in *Oedipus*, where there is no hope cure or treatment for the Theban illness (save for the eventual departure of Oedipus), whether the illness is referred to as a *pestis* or a *morbus*. This departure is in turn portrayed as a potential cure for *morbi*, *pestes*, and all the other manifestations of illness afflicting Thebes.

Celsus also indicates, however, that certain types of *morbi* pose problems for treatment, particularly *morbi* that are said to be *novi* (“new”, “strange”, “unforeseen”, “not previously known”\(^{136}\)). Celsus characterizes the appearance of *nova...genera morborum* as a phenomenon that is rare and perplexing in that it offers no precedent for understanding or treatment.\(^{137}\) In

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\(^{134}\) e.g. *curare* (9.6, 14.4); *mederi* (12.2-3; 19.8); *levare* (33.6); *tollere* (38.5-6).  
\(^{135}\) Celsus eventually goes on to devote a large section of Book 2 (9-33) to the treatment of *morbi*.  
\(^{136}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *novus*.  
\(^{137}\) 1.Pr.17.7-12. For other references to “new” (*novi*) types of *morbi* in Celsus, see also 1.Pr.36.9; 1.Pr.49.1; 2.1.9.3-4. For a discussion of Celsus’ views on the appearance of *novi morbi* (as well as views on this phenomenon in empiricist and rationalist schools of thought), see Mudry 1982: 128-129. Nutton also discusses references to “new diseases” in other Greek and Latin authors, emphasizing how Plutarch attributed this phenomenon not to any change in the human constitution, but to “the luxurious lifestyle of modern Rome, with exotic foods arriving from all over the Empire and beyond.” (Nutton 2013: 36) Another Roman author who discusses “new diseases” is Pliny the Elder; in the opening paragraphs of Book 26 of *Naturalis Historia*, he comments on the recent rise of new
one instance, Celsus describes a case of a *morbus novus* in which a woman died only a few hours after experiencing prolapsed and withered flesh around her genitals. Celsus’ description of this case emphasizes that “the most eminent physicians were able to determine neither the type nor remedy of the illness” (...*nobilissimi medici neque genus mali neque remedium invenerint*, 1.Pr.49.5-50.1). After initially identifying the woman’s illness as a *novus morbus*, Celsus then uses the word *malum* in reference to her condition. The word *malum* will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter, but here we are offered a revealing glimpse into Celsus’ conceptualization of a *novus morbus*, as this term is quite clearly being applied to a form of illness which defies identification, treatment, and understanding in general.\(^{138}\) Even though Celsus often portrays *pestes* and *pestilentiae* as highly unpredictable, he never speaks of “new” types of these illnesses.

The idea that new illnesses are continually emerging runs counter to earlier mythic narratives about the origin of illness. In works such as Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, the genesis of all forms of illness and suffering is traced to the single moment when Pandora, the world’s first woman, opens the jar in which they are all contained.\(^{139}\) Hesiod uses various pieces of vocabulary in relating the assorted form of illness and suffering that were introduced, including

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\(^{138}\) In his discussion of the Roman Empire’s “urban ecosystem”, Morley claims that processes of immigration would have “brought a regular influx of new diseases” into cities in the Roman empire. Celsus, however, does not draw a connection between such processes and the appearance of “new” diseases. (Morley 2005: 196)

\(^{139}\) See *Works and Days* (esp. 90-105). King observes that the notion that humanity was free from illness until the advent of Pandora also contrasts with the views expressed in the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine*. The author of this text claims that illness existed from the beginning of humanity and that it resulted from people consuming raw and uncooked foods in the manner of wild animals. Illness, according to this text, eventually came to be controlled by finding a diet suitable for human beings. (see King 2005: 7-8)
κήδεα (95), νοῦσοι (102) and κακὰ (103); all of these manifestations of illness are, in turn, closely associated with the advent of Pandora.141

The concept of a “new” illness is explored not only in Celsus, but also in Senecan tragedy. While the word novus is not directly associated with the word morbus in Oedipus, some aspects of illness are presented as “new” and described as novus. Notably, the chorus laments that the Theban illness is a dira novi facies leti / gravior leto (new form of death that is more severe than death, 180-181). Oedipus also relates that the illness brings a “new kind of grief” (novus luctus, 62) in that mourners succumb right behind the corpses they are mourning. In another instance, Manto, the daughter of the prophet Tiresias, relates that she is observing novus cruor (fresh/strange blood, 355) pouring out of the body of a sacrificed heifer when she performs a divinatory sacrifice along with Tiresias; Manto then proceeds to describe other unusual aspects of the heifer’s condition, such as the fact that it is pregnant despite not having mated (371-373). These examples show how the adjective novus is used to emphasize aspects of illness which are perceived as perplexing and/or untreatable, recalling the connotations of novi morbi in Celsus. In addition, it is noteworthy that Manto, while observing the strange condition of the heifer, states: natura versa est; nulla lex utero manet (nature is overturned, no rule abides in the womb, 371). The idea that nature has been overturned resonates not only with the heifer’s disordered physical constitution and with her “unnatural pregnancy”, but also with

140 Adjective used substantively here.
141 For further discussion of the link between the advent of disease and the appearance of the first woman in Greek myth, see Cyrino 1995: 50-53.
142 A parallel example from Greek tragedy, also commented upon by Kosak, occurs in Euripides’ Bacchae, when Pentheus states that Dionysus is introducing a “new disease” (νόσον καινὴν) into the city of Thebes. (see Kosak 2004: 189-190) Since Pentheus feels threatened by Dionysus and believes that Dionysus’ presence is inimical to Theban society, this rhetoric underscores the sense that “new diseases” are particularly dangerous and destructive.
the perplexed nature of Oedipus himself (and of course his “unnatural” impregnation of his mother\textsuperscript{143}). Indeed, the messenger reports that when Oedipus realizes the truth of his identity, he uses language highly similar to the wording used earlier by Manto (cf. 371): \textit{Illa quae leges ratas / Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda...} (Nature, which has overturned laws in the case of Oedipus alone... 942-943). Furthermore, even though Oedipus in his agony is exclaiming that \textit{natura} has turned upon him alone, we can also see a larger scale inversion of nature in the ill state of Thebes’ social and environmental conditions.

\textit{Aegritudo / Aeger}

The noun \textit{aegritudo} can be used in reference to either “physical sickness” or “mental distress”.\textsuperscript{144} It does not appear in any of Seneca’s tragedies. Nor does the related noun \textit{aegrotatio} (“physical illness” or “an unhealthy moral condition, morbid desire, or passion”).\textsuperscript{145} The adjective \textit{aeger} (“physically ill”, “unwell”, “sick”, “disturbed”, “weak”, “troubled”, etc.)\textsuperscript{146} does appear in Senecan tragedy, occurring more frequently in \textit{Oedipus} (six times) than in any other Senecan play. Senecan tragedy does not, however, make use of \textit{aegrotus}. According to the \textit{Oxford Latin Dictionary}, this adjective can be translated in various ways, including “physically ill”, “lovesick”, and “pinning”.\textsuperscript{147} Lewis and Short, on the other hand, contrast \textit{aegrotus} with \textit{aeger}, stating that the former “is generally used only of physical disease”.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{143} As Boyle puts it, “Oedipus has inverted nature and breached all laws of the womb.” (Boyle 2011: 200; see also Busch 2007: 249)
\textsuperscript{144} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{aegritudo}.
\textsuperscript{145} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{aegrotatio}. Lewis and Short, on the other hand, state that \textit{aegrotatio} is restricted to “only physical disease”. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. \textit{aegrotatio}). The slippery dichotomy of “physical” and “mental” illness is discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{146} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{aeger}.
\textsuperscript{147} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{aegrotus}.
\textsuperscript{148} Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. \textit{aeger}; cf. \textit{aegrotus}. 
Ernout and Meillet assert that *aeger* places special emphasis upon “l’idée de souffrance et de peine causée par la maladie”  

In *Oedipus* and other Senecan tragedies, *aeger* is used in diverse ways, sometimes modifying parts of the physical body that are “ill” (*e.g.* *aegro*...*in vultu*, 183; *cor...aegrum*, 356)\(^{150}\), and also in reference to an “ill” mind (*aeger animus*, 204). *Aeger* is applied not only to the body parts of humans but also those of animals, as we see when Manto examines the *cor aegrum* of a sacrificial bull in *Oedipus* (356). This particular use is noteworthy since other words in the semantic sphere of illness (*morbus*, *pestis*, etc.) are not used in this passage despite the passage’s emphasis on the unsound and “unnatural” (*natura versa est*, 371) state of the bull’s body. In addition to modifying parts of the body and the mind, *aeger* is also applied to people in *Oedipus*, both individually (*aeger parens*, 59) and collectively (*aeger populus*, 874).\(^{152}\) In Seneca’s *Thyestes*, *aeger* is even applied to an inanimate entity when Atreus refers to the house of Thyestes itself as “ill” (*domus aegra*, *Thyestes* 240), thus producing a sense of personification. Furthermore, *aeger* may be used in conjunction with other language of illness, such as *pestis*. In Oedipus’ opening speech, he makes reference to an *aeger parens* (ill parent, 59); here, it is clear that the parent is *aeger* as a result of the *pestis*, showcasing the semantic affinity between these two words.

\(^{149}\)According to Ernout and Meillet, the etymology of *aeger* and related nouns and verbs is unknown. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *aeger*)

\(^{150}\) This adjective is also applied to body parts in *Hercules Furens* (*pectori...aegro*, 1320) and *Hercules Oetaeus* (*aegro...pectore*, 1643).

\(^{151}\) As Fitch notes, there has been some debate about whether or not this line should be attributed to the chorus or to Oedipus (Fitch 2004: 33), and thus it is not clear which of the two would be describing their *animus* as *aeger*. Another reference to an “ill mind” occurs in *Agamemnon* (*mens aegra*, 418).

\(^{152}\) cf. *populus aeger* (*Agamemnon* 181)
In *Oedipus*, then, *aeger* is used to describe various aspects of illness, all of which are connected directly or indirectly to the *pestis* that affects the city of Thebes. In Celsus, *aeger* is used frequently and in diverse ways; in addition, the verb *aegrotare* is used five times, the positive adverb *aegre* is used four times, the comparative adverb *aegrius* is used twice; and the superlative adverb *aegerrime* is used in one instance. As is the case with Seneca’s tragedies, Celsus does not use the nouns *aegritudo* or *aegrotatio*; nor does the adjective *aegrotus* appear.\(^\text{153}\) Ernout and Meillet boldly state that “*aeger* est l’adjectif de *morbus*”\(^\text{154}\); obviously they are speaking in semantic, rather than etymological terms, but by simply equating these words, they diminish the semantic nuances of each word and the differences in what each word can connote. It is also worth noting that they draw a parallel between an adjective (*aeger*) and a noun (*morbus*), instead of comparing *aeger* with adjectives such as *morbosus* or *morbidus*\(^\text{155}\). Nonetheless, there are numerous instances in which Celsus’ usage does in fact point to a close semantic connection between *aeger* and *morbus*. This is evident, for example, in Celsus’ remarks on the treatment of a pulmonary illness:

In pulmonis *morbo* si sputo ipso levatur dolor, quamvis id purulentum est tamen *aeger* facile spirat, facile excreat, *morbum* ipsum non difficulter fert, potest ei secunda valetudo contingere.

In a case of pulmonary illness, it is possible to regain favorable health, if pain is relieved by expectoration (even if it is full of pus), if the person who is ill [i.e. the patient] breathes easily, excretes easily, bears the illness itself without difficulty. (2.8.2.1-3)

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\(^{153}\) Lewis and Short note that Celsus does not use *aegrotus*. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *aeger*) Langslow notes that neither Celsus nor Scribonius Largus use *aegrotus*, while observing that authors such as Plautus, Terence, and Cicero use it “in ordinary down-to-earth medical contexts.” (Langslow 1999b: 205 n. 62)

\(^{154}\) Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *aeger*.

\(^{155}\) These adjectives are listed as compounds of *morbus* under the entry for *morbus*, but are not included in the entry for *aeger*.
Here, as in other instances, Celsus uses *aeger* as a shorthand way to refer to a person who is affected by a *morbus*. But this relationship is not always present in Celsus’ usage of these words, and it would be an overstatement to suggest that *aeger* is an adjectival equivalent of *morbus*.

Celsus often uses *aeger* substantively\(^{156}\), as in the above passage, in reference to a person who is ill. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* cites “patient” as a possible translation\(^ {157}\), and Spencer often (but not consistently) translates substantive uses of *aeger* in this way. In English usage, the noun “patient” most often refers to “a person receiving or...registered to receive medical treatment, [especially] at a particular establishment or from a particular practitioner”\(^ {158}\); Celsus, however, does not always use *aeger* in the context of “treatment”. Given the usage of “patient” in English, Spencer’s translation misleadingly implies that the person who is “ill” *(aeger)* is receiving treatment. Furthermore, what it means to receive treatment as a “patient” in the modern world is far different from what it would have meant to receive treatment as a “patient” in the first century Roman Empire. For instance, no one was treated “at a particular establishment”\(^ {159}\), nor, as Celsus’ use of *aeger* shows, did a “patient” necessarily receive treatment at all. Therefore, Spencer’s tendency to translate *aeger* as “patient” is potentially confusing for readers accustomed to modern impression of patienthood—and all the more

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\(^{156}\) e.g. 1.Pr.55.1-4; 2.4.1.1-3.

\(^{157}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *aeger*.

\(^{158}\) See *OED Online*: s.v. *patient* (n.). The semantic range of the English word “patient” is significantly more restricted than the Latin verb from which it is derived (*pati*, to suffer). This reflects a process of semantic narrowing: “one suffering” becomes narrowed down to “one suffering an illness”, which then becomes further narrowed down to “one suffering an illness and being treated for it”.

\(^{159}\) Nutton observes that some Roman physicians might treat patients from their own home, while many others lived an itinerant lifestyle, travelling around and looking for “patients”. (Nutton 2013: 87) In both cases, it is clear that the Romans had no concept of a “public hospital” to house and care for the sick. (on this point, see also Scarborough 1969: 77; Contino 1988: 44-45)
because readers may also be deeply influenced by their own, highly personal experiences of being treated as a patient. Because these connotations do not closely align with Celsus’ substantive uses of aeger, I would offer up “the ill person” or “the sick person” as better possible translations, clunky though they are, because they are more neutral and have fewer connotations which would be inappropriate to Celsus’ cultural and medical milieus.

Celsus uses aeger (and related verbs and adverbs) in descriptions of many different forms of illness; as with his usage of morbus, aeger encompasses both physical and “mental” manifestations of illness. Overall, he uses aeger in a very open-ended way, seemingly applicable to any condition in which there is a problem with health. The generic nature of Celsus’ usage of the word is reflected in the very opening lines of De Medicina:

Ut alimenta sanis corporibus agricultura, sic sanitatem aegris Medicina promittit.

Just as agriculture offers nourishment for healthy bodies, so does Medicine offer health for the ill. (1.Pr.1.1-2)

In these opening lines, Celsus makes an analogy between agriculture and medicine, indicating that both arts are important to health. Interestingly, language of health appears in both parts of the analogy (sanis and sanitatem), but these words are not used in parallel ways, creating a complicated comparison. First, Celsus observes that agriculture puts forth nourishment for bodies that are already healthy (sanis corporibus); agriculture, in other words, helps to maintain health. When this effect is compared with the effects of Medicine, there is subtle but key difference: instead of just maintaining healthy bodies, medicine has the capability of restoring health (sanitatem) to people who are sick (aegris). The lack of parallel syntax in the two parts

160 Celsus uses aeger when describing a specific form of insania (3.18.2.2) which is discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.
of the sentence makes the comparison a bit jarring, even if Celsus is attempting to make a segue from his encyclopedia on agriculture (which, according to Spencer, immediately preceded *De Medicina*161). What is clear from this analogy, however, is that Celsus is using *aeger* in contrast with the language of *sanus* and *sanitas*162—words having the generic sense of a “healthy” or “sound” state (of body, mind, or both).163 At the same time, it is apparent that Celsus is also using *aeger* rather generically to convey an absence of health (*sanitas*) without referring to a specific kind of illness. This sets the precedent for the highly generic way in which Celsus uses *aeger* throughout *De Medicina*.

One scholar who has commented on the difficulty inherent to defining “disease” is Grmek, who observes that “definitions of disease tend to be caught in the vicious circle of stating that disease is the opposite of health...”164 Celsus’ use of language at the beginning of the Proemium tends toward this sort of diametric opposition, but he is more specific in his comments about what it means to be *sanus* in the opening sentence of Book 1:

> Sanus homo, qui et bene valet et suae spontis est, nullis obligare se legibus debet, ac neque medico neque iatroalipita egere.

A healthy person, who is both strong and self-sufficient, should be constrained by no rules, and need neither a doctor nor an anointer. (1.1.1-3)

Celsus indicates that a person who is *sanus* is not only free not from rules (by which he presumably means rules restricting one’s regimen), but also from the need for medical

161 Spencer 1935: 2 note a.
162 Celsus similarly juxtaposes language of *sanitas/sanos* and *aeger* in 1.Pr.29.1-3; 2.9.1.7; 2.13.3.6; 4.5.3.3.
163 Glare 2012: s.v. *sanus; sanitas*. I discuss Celsus’ use of these words, and their relationship to the words *insanus* and *insania*, more in depth in Chapter 4.
164 Grmek 1998: 123. King has also observed that “the construction of disease/health as an opposition...[is] not entirely straightforward.” (King 2005: 3)
attention. The phrase *sua sponte*\textsuperscript{165} underscores that *sanus* is to be independent and self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{166} For Celsus, however, this state seems to be only a theoretical ideal, and not a practically achievable condition. Indeed, Celsus quickly moves from defining health to explaining the many factors that frequently threaten health for all people, to discussing the need to monitor one’s regimen constantly (thus subjecting oneself to *leges*), and to describing situations that require medical treatment. Such impediments to health are at the forefront of Celsus’ discussion throughout much of *De Medicina*, collectively leaving the impression that it is ultimately impossible to be *sanus* for more than a fleeting moment. As have seen with instances involving Celsus’ use of *morbus* (e.g. 1.Pr.52.4-57.1), it is apparent that health or *sanitas* requires a very delicate balance to exist. Health, as described by Celsus, is so precarious that it seems he would be hard-pressed to find anyone who is not *aeger* in some way. Among Greek and Roman writers concerned with medicine, Celsus is hardly alone in his characterization of health as transient, if not altogether unattainable. Nutton points out the prevalence of these views in Hippocratic texts such as *Aphorisms*, which suggests that “even a trained athlete can only remain briefly at his peak”, and *The Nature of Man*, which presents “human health [as] perpetually endangered.”\textsuperscript{167}

As previously mentioned, Celsus occasionally uses the adverb *aegre*, as well as the comparative and superlative adverbs *aegrius* and *aegerrime*; these adverbs sometimes occur

\textsuperscript{165} For this particular phrase, the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* offers translations such as “in the exercise of one’s own will” and “one’s own master”. (Glare 2012: s.v. *spons*)

\textsuperscript{166} Formisano and Gourevitch also note this passage’s appeal to medical self-sufficiency. (Formisano 2004: 136; Gourevitch 1998: 122)

\textsuperscript{167} Nutton 2013: 81.
when Celsus is describing treatments which are carried out “painfully” or “with difficulty”\(^\text{168}\) (as opposed to ones that are carried out \emph{facile}). In such instances, the difficulty may have to do with suffering or discomfort brought upon the person being treated\(^\text{169}\), or it may have to do with the perception that a treatment is unlikely to be successful, as in the following passage:

\begin{quote}
Morbus quoque comitialis post annum XXV ortus \emph{aegre} curatur, multoque \emph{aegrius} is, qui post XL annum coepit, adeo ut in ea aetate aliquid in natura spei, vix quicquam in medicina sit.
\end{quote}

Also when \emph{morbus comitialis}\(^\text{170}\) has arisen after the twenty-fifth year, it is treated with difficulty, and with much more difficulty when it begins after the fortieth year, with the result that at this age while there may be some hope in nature, there is hardly any hope in the art of medicine. (2.8.11.1-4)

Here, Celsus uses both the positive and comparative forms of the adverb \emph{aegre} in order to emphasize that it is increasingly difficult to treat \emph{morbus comitialis} as the age of onset increases. In such instances, Celsus’s usage is not relating that an individual is ill (that much can be assumed from the necessity for treatment), but calling attention to the difficulty of a treatment.

\emph{Lues}

The noun \emph{lues} is, by my reckoning, used sixteen times in Senecan tragedy\(^\text{171}\), and it appears more often in \emph{Oedipus} (four times) than in any other Senecan tragedy. This is not surprising since, apropos to the themes of the play, it can be translated as “plague” or “pestilence”,

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\(^{168}\) See Glare 2012: s.v. \emph{aegre}.

\(^{169}\) For an example of this usage, see 7.29.3-6.

\(^{170}\) \emph{Morbus comitialis}, a condition often identified as epilepsy, is discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.

\(^{171}\) This count includes two occurrences of \emph{lues} in \emph{Hercules Oetaeus}, a work whose authorship has been questioned. Fitch identifies only thirteen total uses of \emph{lues} in the entire Senecan corpus, and he states that twelve of these instances occur in Senecan tragedies. (Fitch 1987: 220) It is not made clear whether Fitch’s count is excluding the two occurrences of \emph{lues} in \emph{Hercules Oetaeus}, but even if this is the case it would still leave one use of the word in Senecan tragedy unaccounted for.
senses that overlap significantly with the semantic range of *pestis* and *pestilentia*. *Lues* can also be translated as “a destructive force”, “scourge”, and “corruption (of morals, etc.)”—all senses that are also highly relevant to the situation in *Oedipus*. The breadth of the word’s semantic core is reflected in the variety of words Fitch uses to render it in his translations of Seneca’s tragedies: blight, cataclysm, contagion, death, disaster, infection, ruin, scourge, taint. In his commentary on *Hercules Furens*, Fitch states that “*lues* in all senses is uncommon before [Seneca]” and that Seneca uses it more times than all previous writers together.¹⁷³ Ernout and Meillet maintain that *lues* is “presque uniquement du vocabulaire poétique.”¹⁷⁴ While I would again question the usefulness of drawing distinctions between “vocabulaire poétique” and “vocabulaire technique”, it is in fact the case that *lues* does not appear in Celsus’ *De Medicina* or the work of Caelius Aurelianus, another Latin author concerned with medicine.¹⁷⁵

While the semantic range of *lues* is certainly broad, throughout Senecan tragedy *lues* is consistently depicted as a highly destructive force capable of large-scale devastation. This is apparent from the opening speech of *Oedipus*, when Oedipus expresses bewilderment about the nature of the plague:

Nam quid rear quod ista Cadmeae *lues*
infesta genti strage tam late edita
mihi parcat uni? Cui reservamur malo?

For what am I to think that this hostile plague
of the Cadmean race, having produced carnage so widely,
sparces me alone? For what evil am I being preserved? (29-31)

¹⁷² According to the *OED*, there is a possible etymological connection with ἀλειυ (to unbind, release, dissolve, destroy). (Glare 2012: s.v. *lues*)
¹⁷³ Fitch 1987: 220.
¹⁷⁴ Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *lues*.
¹⁷⁵ *Lues* does, however, appear once in Senecan prose (*Epistula* 95.30.1).
Here, Oedipus suggests that the *lues* is destined to destroy an entire race of people, while seemingly not bringing any harm upon him. This situation is of course ironic, as noted in our earlier discussion of *pestis*, since Oedipus is the leader of the Cadmean race and, as Tiresias later asserts, is actually the cause of the mass illness (see 631-634). This irony becomes even more pronounced when one reflects upon the use of the word by the shepherd Phorbas later in the play:

Ferrum per ambos tenue transactum pedes
ligabat artus, vulneri innatus tumor
puerile foeda corpus urebat *lue*.

A thin iron rod driven through both feet
was binding his limbs; the swelling born in the wound
was burning the young body with a foul pestilence. (857-859)

Here, Phorbas is informing Oedipus about an infant whom he long ago gave away, suspecting that the infant would not survive due to its injured condition. This information puts Oedipus on the path toward realizing that he is in fact the infant whom Phorbas describes. *Lues* is thus a defining aspect of Oedipus’ identity from infancy, but at the start of the play he is not able to recognize his role in the *lues* which is afflicting Thebes. This is one example of how focusing on vocabulary of illness sharpens our awareness of characteristic themes and motifs in the text (in this case, paradox and irony). Commenting on the usage of this word, Boyle states that it is not accidental that *lues* is used “to connote the ‘infection’ attacking the baby’s wounds. Seneca suggests verbally the origins of the Theban plague in the wounds of *Oedipus.*”¹⁷⁶

When we look to other Senecan tragedies, we find that the label *lues* is repeatedly applied to characters that are perceived as having the potential to wreak destructive effects upon an

entire race or a large group of people. In *Medea*, for instance, Creon calls Medea *pessimam...luem* (the worst plague, 183), foreshadowing the havoc Medea is about to inflict on Creon’s city. In *Troianes*, Andromache suggests that Helen brought great suffering upon both the Trojans and the Greeks, characterizing her as *pestis exitium lues / utriusque populi* (pestilence, ruin, plague of both peoples, 892-893). Similar language occurs in *Hercules Furens*, when Megara calls Amphitryon the *nostri generis exitium ac lues* (ruin and plague of our people, 358). In *Thyestes*, the ghost of Tantalus expresses concern that he has become a *gravem populis luem* (a severe plague upon people, 88), obviously referring to the suffering that is about to unfold for his family, which can be traced back to the transgressions he committed long ago. In *Phaedra*, Theseus calls Hippolytus himself a *generis infandi lues* (a pestilence of/from an unspeakable race, 905)—a phrase which invites multiple interpretations. If we understand *generis infandi* as an objective genitive, the phrase may suggest that Hippolytus is a disgrace even to the Amazons (whom he is a descendant of through his mother, Aerope), a race which is called “unspeakable”. On the other hand, if we understand *generis infandi* as a genitive of origin or genitive of description, the phrase then seems to imply that the source of Hippolytus’ perceived potential for destruction can be traced to his Amazonian lineage: in other words, Theseus is suggesting that Hippolytus is a *lues* simply because he is an Amazon. Under this interpretation, the phrase takes on undertones of ethnic intolerance, although these undertones are in keeping with mythic representations in which the Amazons

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177 As Boyle states, the term *lues* is “used figuratively in Senecan tragedy as a term of personal abuse”. Both Boyle and Stok trace the earliest use of the word to Cicero’s *De Haruspicu[m] Responsis*. (Boyle 2011: 141; Stok 1987: 278).

178 Similarly, earlier in the play the chorus implies that Helen is a *lues: dum luem tantam Troiae atque Achivis / quae tult Sparte procul absit...* (so long as Sparta, which is absent, bore such a plague for Troy and the Achaeans, 853)
are often shown in destructive combat with other peoples. In each of these examples, *lues* refers to destructive forces embodied by an individual character. These usage patterns recall the passage from *Oedipus* where Creon’s speech characterizes *Lues* (along with other manifestations of illness) as a personified being, and where he also suggest that *Lues* will depart from Thebes when Oedipus himself departs (652-653). While the word *lues* is often associated with human characters in Senecan tragedy, it can also be used in reference to catastrophic forces of nature. In *Phaedra*, for instance, the messenger refers to the huge wave that brought about the death of the exiled Hippolytus and threatened many other people as a *lues* (1017).

In *Oedipus*, the word *lues* is associated not only with the character Oedipus, but also with the Sphinx. Unable to comprehend the nature and cause of the Theban *lues*, Oedipus suggests that the Sphinx may be somehow responsible:

> Ille, ille dirus callidi monstri cinis
> in nos rebellat, illa nunc Thebas *lues*
> *perempta* perdit.

Indeed, the ill-omened ash of that devious monster is renewing war against us, that vanquished plague is now destroying Thebes. (107-108)

Even though Oedipus had previously vanquished (*perempta*) the Sphinx, which is here called a *lues*, by solving its riddles, Oedipus believes that the Sphinx (or more precisely its ashes) is paradoxically continuing to wreak havoc upon Thebes.

In *Phoenissae*, a play set after Oedipus’ departure from Thebes, the Oedipus character underscores the inexplicable

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179 Boyle compares this use of language to an oxymoronic phrase spoken by Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon: perde pereundo* (“kill by being killed”, 201). (Boyle 2011: 141)
(inextricable, 133) nature of the Sphinx. Oedipus also uses the language of lues in this passage, referring to the Sphinx as saeva Thebarum lues (a cruel plague of Thebes, 131). As with the phrase generis infandi lues (Hippolytus 905) discussed above, the grammatical construction of saeva Thebarum lues can be construed as either an objective genitive (a cruel plague upon Thebes) or as a genitive of origin or a genitive of description (a cruel plague from Thebes); this ambiguity underscores both the origins and effects of the cruel Sphinx. Here, as in other instances from Senecan tragedy, lues is depicted as an elusive and devastating manifestation of illness.

**Macies**

Macies can be used in the senses of “wasting”, “thinness of body”\(^{181}\), or “diminution”\(^{182}\); it can thus be used in reference to either the state or process of emaciation (one of its English derivatives). In Oedipus, it is mentioned at the end of the play as one of the personified manifestations of illness that are to serve as “guides” of Oedipus’ exile.\(^{183}\) This sentence includes macies along with other words that are in the semantic sphere of illness, such as morbus and pestis, but macies is more restricted in semantic range than those other terms (my translation “Wasting” is in keeping with Boyle and Fitch). Thus macies is decidedly more specific than the English word “illness”, and Celsus mentions it as a symptom of various kinds of

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\(^{180}\) Boyle suggests that the perplexing nature of the Sphinx is reflected in the hybrid composition of its body. A union of the incongruent parts of various animals (the wings of a bird, the head and breasts of a woman, and the body of a lion), the Sphinx “embodies to an unusually intense degree a confusion of disparate categories.” (Boyle 2011: 137)

\(^{181}\) Glare 2012: s.v. macies.

\(^{182}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. macies.

\(^{183}\) Violenta Fata et horridus Morbi tremor, / Maciesque et atra Pestis et rabidus Dolor, / mecum ite, mecum. Ducibus his uti libet. (1059-1061) A more extended form of this passage is translated and discussed in later in this chapter.
illness, as I discuss below. Aother work in which Macies is personified is Silius Italicus’ 1st century CE epic poem Punica; here, as Boyle notes, Macies is included in a list of personified “underworld abstractions” that accompany illness: malis comes addita morbis (an added companion to serious illnesses, Punica 13.581).\(^\text{184}\) Although Oedipus does not use the specific word comes in his speech at the end of the play, the arrangement of his words also suggests that Macies is a “companion” to more general manifestations of illness, namely Morbi and Pestis, since Maciesque inserted between these words. Moreover, the attachment of the enclitic –que further reinforces the idea that Macies is tagging along with the other forms of illness—all of which are in turn accompanying Oedipus himself as he departs from Thebes at the end of the play. The juxtaposition of noun morbus, and the adjective malus, which itself can be translated as “ill”, is also striking; I return to this particular combination of words when discussing Celsus’ usage of the adjective malus.

Macies is used only one other time in Senecan tragedy\(^\text{185}\); it appears in Hercules Oetaeus when the chorus of Oechalian women are bewailing the “wasting” Hercules has brought upon them:

\[
\text{Nos turpis macies et lacrimae tenent} \\
\text{et crinis patrio pulvere sordidus.}
\]

Foul wasting and tears hold us \\with hair dirtied by the dust of our fatherland. (119-120)

Here, we find a close parallel between the “wasting” of the Oechalian women and the ravaged condition of their city, as both experience a decline in physical condition. The noun macies is used four times by Celsus, who also associates it with various conditions marked by diminution.

\(^\text{184}\) Boyle 2011: 360.  
\(^\text{185}\) Macies appears only five times in Senecan prose.
He states that *macies* is a sign of *stomachus infirmus* (weak digestion, 1.8.2.2)\(^{186}\), as well as a possible consequence of both hyperurination (4.27.1-4) and the dislocation of bones or joints (8.11.5.1-6.1). Celsus also notes that *summa macies* (extreme wasting) can result from a lack of nourishment, thus giving rise to bodily decomposition. Celsus equates this particular type of *macies* with the Greek word *ἀτροφία* (3.22.1.5-6), a word sometimes associated with starvation.\(^{187}\) This aspect is reflected in Celsus’ comments that *macies* / *ἀτροφία* may result from a person not eating enough due to *nimio timore* (excessive fear), thus making the person weak (*infirmat*, 3.22.1.8-10). At the same, Celsus also observes that *macies* / *ἀτροφία* can result from overeating, which is attributed to *aviditate nimia* (excessive desire; 3.22.1.7-10) and is said to weaken a person’s physical constitution and cause the person to waste away (*corrumpitur*, 3.22.1.10). The verb *corrumpere* sometimes carries connotations of moral corruption\(^{188}\), a sense which may be apparent in this passage, as Celsus might be hinting that this form of *macies* stems from a moral flaw. If this is the case, it would serve as an example of Celsus’ tendency not to make sharp distinctions between “mental” and “physical” illness.

Celsus’ descriptions of *macies* also bring to mind what might today be called “eating disorders”—a subject I will return to later in this chapter.\(^{189}\)

Celsus also uses the related verbs *emacire* “to cause to waste away”\(^{190}\) (twice), and *emacescere* “to grow thin” or “to waste way” (six times).\(^{191}\) These verbs are typically used in

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\(^{186}\) On Celsus’ use of *stomachus* to denote the esophagus (and thus the process of digestion), see Mudry 1982: 104.


\(^{188}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *corrumpere*.

\(^{189}\) The application of the term “eating disorder” to conditions described in Latin literature is no doubt fraught with problems and complexities which, though fascinating, cannot be fully pursued in the present study. Here I use the phrase in a very general way, and in anticipation of relevant discussion later in this chapter.

\(^{190}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *emacire*. 
contexts where Celsus is describing particularly severe forms of illness; Celsus in fact makes this explicit: *Mali etiam morbi signum est nimis celeriter emacrescere* (To grow lean too quickly is the sign of a serious illness, 2.4.4.1-2). This sentence’s use of language also recalls Silius Italicus’ characterization of *macies* as *malis comes addita morbis*, again presenting *macies* as a symptom of *mali morbi*. These associations with harsh forms of illness are apparent when Celsus discusses how it is possible to tell whether a *morbus* will be long-lasting, with prolonged wasting (*aeger pro spatio parum emascrescit*, 2.5.3.1) being one of the signs.

**Tabes**

Like *macies*, the noun *tabes* can be used in the sense of a “physical wasting away”; it can also be used in the senses of “melting”\(^{192}\), “decay”, and “moral corruption”.\(^{193}\) The latter senses of the word have strong connotations of moral and/or physical debasement, degradation, and/or dissolution. One example of the word’s sense of “moral corruption” can be seen in Sallust’s work of historical prose *The Jugurthine War*, when *tabes* is used in reference to the vice of certain Roman soldiers who committed scandalous and unpatriotic deeds after being bribed with gold: *tanta vis avaritiae [in] animos eorum veluti tabes invaserat* (such power of greed, like a moral pollution, had assailed their spirits).\(^{194}\) *Tabes*, then, typically has a strong sense of corruption, contamination, and/or dissolution; in contrast, *macies* suggests a state of thinness or a process of thinning, or perhaps a more general decline in condition, but generally without a

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\(^{191}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *emacrescere*.
\(^{192}\) Ernout and Meillet note an etymological connection to the Greek τῇκελν (to melt, to waste away, to pine). (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *tabere*)
\(^{193}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *tabes*. Ernout and Meillet also note that *tabes* can be used in “sens physique et moral”. Their entry also labels the word “poétique”, but Celsus uses it more than twenty times. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *tabes*)
\(^{194}\) *Bellum Jugurthum* 32.4.2.
strong sense of moral or physical corruption, contamination, or dissolution. In addition, *tabes* can be applied to either a fluid *produced from* a melting, dissolving, or decaying substance, as well as to a fluid that *causes* such melting, dissolution, or decay (e.g. a “poisonous exudation”, or, according to Lewis and Short, simply a “poison”). While these senses of *tabes* are more specific than the aspects noted above, they are still connected with the idea of decay and dissolution which lies at the word’s semantic core. Overall, the semantic range of *tabes* is significantly broader than *macies*, and this relatively broad semantic range affords *tabes* a good deal of poetic potential, which may help explain why it is used more frequently in Senecan tragedy than *macies* (*tabes* appears only once in *Oedipus*, but a total of nine times in Senecan tragedy). *Tabes* is similar to *lues* in that both words can suggest moral corruption, but *lues*, as a word that can be translated as “plague” or “pestilence”, typically affects a larger number of people or spreads larger-scale destruction than what we find with *tabes*.

*Tabes* makes its sole appearance in *Oedipus* when Creon includes it in a list of various personified manifestations of illness (652) that he foresees as companions for Oedipus in his future exile; this recalls the use of *Macies* in the list at the end of the play (1059-1060). Given the related semantics of these two words, it could be argued that Seneca substitutes *Macies* for *Tabes* in the later list. This is not to say, however, that these two words should be considered simply interchangeable; *tabes* in fact has a broader semantic range than *macies* in both Senecan tragedy and Celsus. The moral sense of *tabes* is particularly relevant to Oedipus’ situation, since he is a cause of moral contamination (and morally contaminated himself).

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196 Senis has commented on the close relationship between these two words, noting that “*macies*...assimilato con *tabes*, indica il dimagrimento.” (Senis 1987: 297; see also Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *macer*)
As noted above, *tabes* can be used to refer to “poisonous exudations”, and it repeatedly assumes this sense (along with the sense of “physical wasting”) in *Hercules Oetaeus*, the Senecan play where it appears most frequently (five times), possessing several layers of significance. Poison has important connections to the plot and themes of the play, which portrays the myth in which Hercules’ body is painfully consumed by a poisoned shroud given to him by his wife Deianira. The play relates how the centaur Nessus had insidiously convinced Deianira that this poisonous substance was actually a love-potion capable of recapturing Hercules’ desire after his many infidelities. This is Nessus’ way of seeking revenge against Hercules for killing him with an arrow tipped in the poisonous blood of the Lernaean hydra, a many-headed creature which Hercules had destroyed in completing his second labor. Thus Nessus, while dying, gave Deianira a draught of his own blood contaminated by the fatal blood of the hydra. Deianira repeatedly uses the word *tabes* in reference to this poisonous mixture of bloods\(^\text{197}\), quite ironically even when she still believes that it is actually a love-potion (520, 528) and not a harmful “poison”.\(^\text{198}\) In these instances, Deanira’s usage of *tabes* draws attention to her state of ignorance, while also hinting at the physical wasting it will inflict upon her husband. It is also worth recalling that *tabes* can also be translated as “melting”; this sense is fitting in that Deianira was hoping for Hercules to “melt” metaphorically in desire for her. Deianira clearly does not expect Hercules actually to melt away physically; her usage of *tabes* is not intended to refer to wasting or physical disintegration, but rather to a specific substance that

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\(^{197}\) *Hercules Oetaeus* 520, 528, 716, 738. *Tabes* is also used in this sense in during the chorus’ description of Hercules’ death in Seneca’s *Medea*: *tabe consumptus gemini cruoris / munere nuptae* (consumed by the poison of the twofold blood, the gift of his wife, 641-642).

\(^{198}\) Similarly, the nurse also refers to this substance as a *pestem* even before she is aware of the fatal effects it will have upon Hercules (565).
she believes will help rekindle Hercules’ desire for her. Without discussing the word *tabes* specifically, Katz and Volk note in an article about the poetics of hardening andsoftening in Virgil’s Eighth Eclogue that melting is frequently portrayed as a symptom of erotic desire in Greek and Latin literature. One example of this (not discussed by Katz and Volk) can be seen in Ovid’s story about Narcissus in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid compares the way in which Narcissus is physically weakened by love (*attenuatus amore*) as he gazes at his own reflection in a pool of water to the melting of wax, using the verb *intabescere*, which is related to the noun *tabes*, to connote both physical and erotic “melting”. The sense of physical melting is again evident at the end of the story, when Narcissus’ body withers away and ultimately disappears, with only a flower left in his place.

Returning to *Hercules Oetaeus*, there is yet another way in which it is fitting that Deianira uses the word *tabes* to refer to the substance provided to her by Nessus, even though she is initially unaware that it is a harmful poison. After all, this substance (or at least the portion of it derived from the hydra) has previously brought wasting upon other figures, including the centaur Nessus. Although *Hercules Oetaeus* does not provide explicit details about Hercules’ act of killing of the hydra, an influential mythic account from Pseudo-Apollodorus’ *Bibliotheca* (first or second century CE) depicts Hercules subjecting the hydra to what could be described as

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199 Katz and Volk 2006: 172. Katz and Volk also note the practice of melting down physical objects as a way to induce erotic “melting” in the context of sympathetic magic. (Katz and Volk 2006: 171, 174; see also Faraone 1989) For a more general discussion of sympathetic magic, see Graf 1997.

200 *sed ut intabescere flavae / igne levi cerae matutinaeque pruinae / sole tepente solent, sic attenuatus amore / liquitur et tecto paulatim carpitur igni...* (Metamorphoses 3.487-490)

201 *...nusquam corpus erat; croceum pro corpora florem/ inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis* (Metamorphoses 3.509-510).

202 Littlewood suggests that there is an element of poetic justice in the fact that the poison is derived from the blood of a rapist (Nessus) and that it becomes the downfall of a man “whose labors, at least in Deianira’s eyes, were a mere pretext for rape.” (Littlewood 2014: 517; cf. *Hercules Oetaeus* 417-422)
physical wasting by decapitating each of the hydra’s heads and then scorching each of its necks until the creature was completely wasted away. In this respect, the effects of the tabes administered to Hercules by Deianira resemble Hercules’ treatment of the hydra. Ultimately, Hercules becomes a victim of the poison he had so daringly obtained and used against others, completing a cycle of “wasting” involving the hydra, the centaur Nessus, and finally Hercules himself. Thus it is highly ironic that, while dying and wishing that he had met a more heroic end, Hercules exclaims:

Utinam meo cruore satiasset suos
Nemeaea rictus pestis aut centum anguibus
vallatus hydram tabe pavissem mea!

I wish that the Nemean plague had satisfied its jaws
with my blood or that I had fed the hydra,
fortified with its hundred serpents, on my own wasting! (1192-1194)

As he starts to waste away and die from the poisonous blood of the hydra, Hercules wishes that he had instead wasted away earlier by having had his blood consumed by either the Nemean lion or the hydra. This wish is paradoxical on multiple levels. On the level of language, Hercules juxtaposes imagery of wasting (tabes) and feeding (pavissem), which becomes all the more jarring when one notes, as we will see in the discussion of Celsus below, that tabes is sometimes associated with starvation and “eating disorders”. In this way, Hercules’ use of language plays upon the idea of being “consumed” (to use an English word whose polysemy fits well with the ambiguity and paradox evoked in this passage). It is also ironic how Hercules uses the word tabes to refer to the wasting he wishes he had “fed” to the hydra at the very moment he is being overcome by the poison of the hydra—especially since this poison is referred to as

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203 e.g. Apollodorus’ Bibliotheca 2.5.2.
Tabes elsewhere in the play. The irony is heightened even more when one notes that Hercules’ wish is ultimately fulfilled, since he is in an important sense finally vanquished by the hydra. Hercules himself suggests as much when he is dying and speculates about the cause of his sudden illness: *Numquid cruore es genita Lernaeae ferae* (were you born of the blood of the Lernaean beast? 1256).

*Tabes* is only one of several words that Seneca uses to refer to “poison”; this list includes *pestis, venenum*, and *virus*. It should be noted that *virus* does not have the sense of “infectious disease” as in the modern English word “virus”. In addition to “poison”, *virus* can also refer to an “acrid juice or element in something (as affecting its taste or smell)” or a “secretion (in plants or produced by the body) having medical, magical, etc., potency”.204 The only Senecan tragedies in which *virus* appears are *Hercules Oetaeus* (536, 565, 719, 914, 916, 1396) and *Medea* (699, 778). In these plays it almost always has the primary sense of “poison”, while also possessing magical connotations. Indeed, in all but two uses in *Hercules Oetaeus*, *virus* is directly connected with the poison of the hydra and how it consumes Hercules. In the other two instances (536, 565), Deianira and then her nurse ironically use the word in the intended sense of a magical love potion, unaware that it is in fact a lethal “poison”, to much the same effect as Deianira’s ironic usage of the word *tabes*. In both of the instances in which *virus* occur *Medea*, it is again connected with the hydra’s poison and its effects on Hercules. In the latter instance, Medea states that the *virus* “drank” Hercules (*virus Herculeum bibit, 778*)—another example from Senecan tragedy in which an element of illness is personified. Medea’s references to this *virus* call to attention to Nessus’ revenge against Hercules while Medea

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204 Glare 2012: s.v. *virus*. Lewis and Short also note that it can refer to “a slimy liquid”. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *virus*. *Virus* is etymologically related to the Greek ιός (poison). (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *virus*)
herself is plotting revenge, which she accomplishes through the use of magical poisons. Thus, in both plays virüs is repeatedly connected with the themes of vengeance, magic, deception, poisonous animals, and quite specifically with the mythological figure Hercules. Celsus only uses virüs three times, and in each instance it is unambiguously used in reference to poisonous animal bites. He states that almost every animal bite has poison (Omnis autem fere morsus habet quoddam virus, 5.27.1a.6), and he expresses special concern about the poisonous bite of a rabid dog (rabiosus canis, see 5.27.2a.1-2; 5.27.2b.1-2). More frequently, Celsus uses the word venenum in reference to poison inflicted through animal bites205, while (unlike Seneca) he does not use tabes in the sense of poison. In Celsus, neither virüs nor venenum take on a more generalized sense of “illness”, as is sometimes the case with words used to refer to poison in Senecan tragedy (pestis, tabes).

As noted earlier in this chapter, Hercules also refers to his wasting away as a pestis (1225, 1230, 1260). Pestis, as we have seen, usually refers to a form of illness that affects a large group of people, but Hercules applies this term to his own personal suffering. Tabes, on the other hand, tends to be more associated with individual cases of illness (this, as we will see, is also the case in Celsus), but Hercules never directly applies the term tabes to his condition.206 In applying the word pestis to his current condition, Hercules is using a word that carries connotations of large-scale illness and devastation, thus emphasizing the magnitude of his illness, perhaps in keeping with the grandiose nature of the character. Pestis can also be used in reference to “death”, and this sense underscores the imminence of Hercules’ demise.

205 Venenum appears in De Medicina thirteen times.
206 It seems possible to make the interpretation that Hercules is identifying his current condition as tabes in 1192-1194, but it is also possible that he is simply stating that he wishes he could have fed the hydra with his own tabes. This usage is ultimately ambiguous.
In Book 3 of *De Medicina*, Celsus uses *tabes* in reference to a general category of illness which is considered to be long-lasting and dangerous:

> Diutius saepe et periculosius *tabes* eos male habet, quos invasit.

Wasting often has a longer-lasting and more dangerous effect upon those whom it has attacked. (3.22.1-2)

Celsus states that *tabes* is a chronic and dangerous form of illness, and he emphasizes its virulence and penetrativeness with the use of *invadere* ("to enter in a hostile fashion", "to attack"), a verb with connotations of militaristic violence. It is noteworthy that this verb occurs only two other times in *De Medicina*, and both uses occur in descriptions of rather severe conditions. Celsus’ usage thus demonstrates that *tabes* is a harsh and serious form of illness; these connotations are consistent with the connotations of *tabes* in Senecan tragedy, even though Celsus does not use the word in reference to “poison” as Seneca does in *Hercules Oetaeus*. Celsus’ meditations on illness do not address love-sickness, and there is no sense in which his usage of *tabes* has erotic connotations.

Celsus outlines three specific types of *tabes*. In contrast with the ordered classification schemes Celsus draws up in other sections of *De Medicina*, these categories do not appear to be arranged any particular order, although it is specified that the third type is the most dangerous (*periculosissima*, 3.22.3.1). Celsus’ first category of *tabes* is called *macies* (or

207 Glare 2012: s.v. *invadere*. As noted above, the Roman historiographer Sallust also uses *tabes* in connection with the verb *invadere*. (*Bellum Jugurthum* 32.4.2; see also 36.5.4)

208 In the first instance, Celsus uses this verb in relating that *lippitudo*, a condition characterized by ocular inflammation, can result in ulceration when each eye is “attacked” (*utrum oculum invaserunt*, 6.6.1b.8) by the condition simultaneously. In the other instance, Celsus uses the verb when describing the action of gangrene making an “attack” upon oral ulcers. (*ulcera oris cancer invasit*, 6.15.1.1)

209 The noun *amor* does not appear in *De Medicina*.

210 Celsus’ categories of *insania*, for instance, proceed from the shortest-lasting to the longest-lasting condition, as is discussed in Chapter 4.
ἀτροφία in Greek, 3.22.1.5-7), which makes it clear that *tabes* is a more general term than *macies*. As previously noted, *macies* is characterized by either a dearth or excess of eating (see 3.22.1.8-10; 3.22.1.7-10), which are said to result in the weakening of one’s physical constitution and concomitant physical degeneration. Celsus’ second form of *tabes* is given only the Greek name κακεξία. This condition, according to Celsus, can be marked by persistent pustulation (*adsiduas pustulas*), ulceration on the surface of the skin (*ulcera summa cutis*), or swollen body parts (*corporis partes intumescant*, see 3.22.2.8-11). These symptoms, which suggest a sort of physical decay or dissolution, are mentioned in addition to the typical “wasting” that should be expected, which Celsus again refers to by using the generic term *tabes* (3.22.2.9). As for the causes of κακεξία, Celsus states that the condition is brought about by a “bad habit of body” (*malus corporis habitus*) which may be found in “bodies that have been corrupted by a prolonged disease” (*longo morbo vitiata corpora*) or in a body that has been affected by bad medicines (*cum malis medicamentis corpus adfectus est*, see 3.22.2.3-6). Given the wide variety of possible symptoms and causes associated with κακεξία, this subcategory of *tabes* is also clearly rather generic. Celsus’ third and most threatening form of *tabes* is not given a specific Latin name; Celsus only notes that he is describing a condition “which the Greeks have called *phthisis*” (*quam Graeci phthisin nominarunt*, 3.22.3.1-2). Celsus notes that this condition begins in the head and trickles down into the lungs (*Oritur fere a capite inde in pulmonem destillat*), giving rise to ulceration (*exulceratio*) and slight fever (*febricula*, see 3.22.3.2-4).

211 Celsus also mentions this condition, without describing it, earlier in *De Medicina* when listing conditions that tend to arise during the season of autumn. (2.1.8.4)
Celsus’ usage of *phthisis* has also been discussed by Capitani, who argues that one specific use of *tabes* (2.1.8.4) is “sinonimo” with the Greek term.\(^{212}\) The idea that two words—and especially two words from different languages—are “synonymous” remains problematic, but Capitani goes on to point out an important inconsistency in Celsus’ usage: in Book 2 Celsus essentially equates the terms *tabes* and *phthisis*, whereas in Book 3 he considers *phthisis* to be a subcategory of *tabes*, thus making *tabes* the more general term.\(^{213}\) Grmek, however, notes that the Greek word φθίσις can denote wasting rather generally, not unlike *tabes* in Latin. Grmek notes that φθίσις “in its original sense is nothing more than a state of diminution or withering” applicable to the waning of the moon, the setting of the sun, or the “any diminution of an object that will conclude with its disappearance.”\(^{214}\) Similarly, Kudlien has observed that Herodotus’ *Histories* contain the earliest attestation of φθίσις, where it is used in reference to various forms of physical decline.\(^{215}\) In later works of literature, including certain texts in the Hippocratic Corpus, φθίσις takes on the more specific sense of “pulmonary consumption”\(^{216}\) which is evident in Celsus’ usage.

Celsus’s formulation of three categories of *tabes* appears to be influenced by the three categories of φθίσις which are described in the Hippocratic treatise *Internal Affections*\(^{217}\), even though the details provided in that text do not closely correspond to the details in Celsus’ account. It is worth noting that Celsus is not particularly systematic in his classifications of

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\(^{212}\) Capitani 1975: 502.
\(^{213}\) Capitani 1975: 502.
\(^{215}\) Kudlien 1967: 110.
\(^{217}\) *Internal Affections* 10-12. Grmek provides a useful overview of these categories of φθίσις. (Grmek 1991: 185-186)
*tabes*, as he focuses on different aspects with each category. He discusses, for instance, the causes of his first and second forms of *tabes*, but does not comment on the causes of the third form. In his comments on the third form of *tabes*, he points out the body part where the condition originates, but this is not discussed with the other forms of *tabes*. In addition, he gives a Latin name (*macies*) to the first form of *tabes*, but not to the others. These inconsistencies make it challenging to compare the different forms of *tabes*, and it is a bit peculiar that these rather disparate conditions are lumped together under the same general label. Indeed, the information provided by Celsus presents an amalgam of conditions, with differing causes, symptoms, and expected outcomes. Nor, considering these categories on the level of language, are there significant overlaps in the vocabulary used to describe the conditions. These conditions can only be connected insofar as they all involve forms of bodily degeneration\(^{218}\), but this is a characteristic of several other conditions which are described by Celsus but without being labelled *tabes*. Celsus’ usage of the *tabes* in other sections of *De Medicina* is similarly elusive, although he repeatedly states that *tabes* is especially dangerous for people who are already thin.\(^{219}\)

In his attempt to pin down the sense of *tabes* in Celsus’ usage, Spencer asserts that Celsus “means wasting or malnutrition, whether due to disease or want of food.”\(^{220}\) This explanation is vague and is predicated upon shaky dichotomies, but it encourages us to contemplate some important points. First, Spencer’s phrase “wasting or malnutrition [italics added]” implies that

\(^{218}\) Celsus’ use of the verb *tabescere* (which appears three times in *De Medicina*) also suggests a general sense of physical disintegration; in one instance it is used in reference to the process of dissolving salt into a solution to be used in the treatment of oral ulcers. (6.15.2.5)

\(^{219}\) e.g. 2.1.23.1-2; 2.6.4.1-2; 2.24.1-3.

\(^{220}\) Spencer 1935: 324 note a.
these are separate manifestations or aspects of *tabes*, an implication which would overlook Celsus’ observation that malnutrition can in fact *cause* certain forms of *tabes* (*macies* and κακεξία) and thus result in physical degeneration (i.e. “wasting”). Moreover, Spencer’s comments about the causes of *tabes* implies that “want of food” is necessarily separate from “disease”, but as we have seen above, Celsus considers “want of food” to be a cause of certain forms of *tabes*, thus drawing a close link between “want of food” and “disease”. In his phrase “want of food”, it is possible that Spencer is referring to a lack of *available* food, but Celsus does not describe any such circumstances; his comments on *tabes* only describe situations in which a person refuses to consume food due to “excessive fear” or when “unusual or unserviceable” (*inusitatos aut inutiles cibos*, 3.22.2.8) food has been consumed. In addition, since some of these conditions might, at least from a modern perspective, be labeled “eating disorders”, a diagnosis which brings them more into the realm of “illness” or “disease” and further problematizes the distinction Spencer draws up between “want of food” and “disease”. Spencer’s definition is thus not particularly helpful in its own right, but it provides a useful opportunity to look more critically at Celsus’ ideas concerning the causes of his various categories of *tabes* and conceptualizations of illness more broadly. Ultimately, Celsus’ usage of *tabes* is very broad, covering various specifically defined conditions, all of which involve some form of physical degeneration or “wasting”.

**Malum**

The adjective *malus* is one of the more common and semantically-broad words appearing in Senecan tragedy, where it is used as both adjectivally and substantively. The *Oxford Latin
Dictionary supplies a wide variety of possible translations for the adjectival usage, including “bad”, “unpleasant”, “painful”, “wicked”, “harmful”, “unfavorable”, “poor in condition”, etc.\textsuperscript{221} Lewis and Short’s entry also notes that \textit{malus} can also be used “of the sick”, citing a substantive use in Celsus (\textit{in malis aeger est}, 3.15.6.10).\textsuperscript{222} A similarly rich assortment of translations is offered for the substantive form \textit{malum}, including “trouble”, “misfortune”, “pain”, “misdeed”, “evil”, “harm”, “insult”, “injury”, “fault”, and—quite notably for this study— “illness”, “disease” and “sickness”.\textsuperscript{223} Ernout and Meillet note that the substantive \textit{malum} can be used in a “physical” or “moral sense”\textsuperscript{224}, not unlike its English derivative “malaise”.\textsuperscript{225} We can also relate the semantic breadth of \textit{malum} to the parallel semantics of the English word “ill”, which can be used in contrast with the adjective “good” (as in the phrase “for good or for ill”), as well as in contrast with the adverb “well” (as in “ill suited”, as opposed to “well suited”), while also of course having the senses of “sick”, “unhealthy”, “diseased”. Due to the frequency with which \textit{malum} is used by both Seneca and Celsus, an exhaustive discussion of the word is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, this section will focus on analyzing some particular instances in which \textit{malum} carries connotations of illness.

In \textit{Oedipus}, the broad semantic range of \textit{malum} repeatedly produces ambiguity and mystery, adding layers of complexity to the play’s theme of illness. This especially apparent early on in the play, when Oedipus, having observed the illness and suffering of his own people, fearfully

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{221} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{malus}.
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. \textit{malus}.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{malum}.
  \item \textsuperscript{224} Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. \textit{malus}.
  \item \textsuperscript{225} See \textit{OED Online}: s.v. \textit{malaise} (n.).
\end{itemize}
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wonders about the kind of evil for which he is being “saved” (*Cui reservamur malo?* 31).226

Here, the most obvious significance is a general “evil” or “misfortune” which Oedipus fears and is struggling to comprehend. The word is used in a similar way in *Hercules Furens*, when Amphitryon is puzzled and disturbed by Hercules’ violent, delusional state, and refers to Hercules’ condition as a *malum* (952). Oedipus’ use also suggests a sense of moral “evil”227, perhaps hinting at the pollution connected with Oedipus’ identity, while also foreshadowing the moral crisis Oedipus is destined to experience when he finally comes to understand his own nature and his role in bringing illness upon Thebes. This specific use of *malum* also points to plague or illness more generally, since Oedipus has just made reference to the “hostile plague of the Cadmean race” (*Cadmeae lues / infesta genti*, 29-30), and shortly thereafter doubts that he has a “healthy kingdom” (*regnum salubre*, 36).228 Through this sense of *malum*, Oedipus is observing that he has not yet become physically ill—unlike all of the other Thebans, and the Theban environment itself—and he that believes that a special kind of illness is awaiting him. It is apparent that *malum* is suggesting illness when the chorus, following Oedipus’ opening speech and immediately after describing the sickened, moribund conditions of the Theban environment, states: *omnia nostrum sensere malum* (everything feels our illness, 159).

Later in the play, Oedipus unwittingly highlights his own ignorance about the nature of the Theban plague while speaking with Creon. Creon is reticent about giving advice, but Oedipus continues to probe:

226 As Littlewood has commented, “the plague spares Oedipus alone (*mihi parcit uni* 31), yet his despair resembles that of the infected.” (Littlewood 2004: 82)


228 The words *malum* and *pestis* are also closely connected in a later speech by Creon (589).
Iners malorum remedium ignorantia est.
Itane et salutis publicae indicium obrues?

Ignorance is an unskilled remedy for illnesses.
Will you really bury information about public welfare? (515-516)

Oedipus uses language strongly associated with healing (remedium, salutis), which again shows how he is assuming that the mala confronting Thebes are only “medical” in nature. He admits his ignorantia about how to remedy the mala, but Oedipus does not realize just how unaware he is concerning the nature and cause of the mala. Even in acknowledging his own ignorance, Oedipus remains unaware about the extent of that ignorance—a paradox suggested by the ambiguity of mala.

The play also features the recurring theme that mala are lurking or hiding from Oedipus. This theme is apparent from early on in the play, for instance when Oedipus states:

Quisquamne regno gaudet? O fallax bonum, quantum malorum fronte quam blanda tegis!

Does anyone take pleasure in kingship? O deceptive good, how many evils you conceal with how pleasant an appearance! (6-7)

Here Oedipus contrasts the difficult realities of kingship (quantum malorum) with the deceptive impressions of glory (fallax bonum) often associated with being a king. Oedipus makes these remarks immediately after observing that the return of Titan (i.e. the sun) has made the effects of the avida pestis apparent (see 1-5). There is thus a strong association between the unexpected mala and the pestis. Oedipus is able to observe the mala that are molesting his city, but he cannot see the future mala that await him (cf. cui reservamur malo, 31), nor is he aware of mala he has already committed. This lack of awareness is in contrast with the knowledge possessed by the hypothetical audience of the play, which, as Boyle states, “knows
that the ‘evils’ hidden are the patricide and the incest already committed”.229 Oedipus’ initial use of *mala*, then, unknowingly calls attention to the transgressions he will learn of later in the play. In using this word, Oedipus reveals aspects of himself about which he is not yet aware, further underscoring the sense that reality is being concealed (cf. *tegis*) from him.230

The polysemous nature of the word *mala* also allows other characters to allude to Oedipus’ transgressions without directly acknowledging them. Tiresias, for instance, tells Manto: *Sunt dira, sed in alto mala.* (Terrible evils are here, but down deep. 330) Shortly thereafter, he informs Oedipus: *His invidebis quibus opem quaeris malis* (You will envy those illnesses for which you are seeking help. 387). The ambiguity of the word *mala* points toward Oedipus’ incomplete understanding of himself, while simultaneously keeping him in the dark about the exact nature of those *mala*. Even though Tiresias is a prophet with full understanding of these matters, he uses an open-ended word which is capable of evoking illness, suffering, and the like. In this way, Tiresias’ usage of *mala* highlight the riddle-like, obfuscatory nature of his speech (a characteristic commonly associated with prophetic figures in Greek and Latin literature). It is also possible to find an element of softening or euphemism in Tiresias’ usage of *mala*: Oedipus’ transgressions are so unspeakable, so taboo that Tiresias can only acknowledge them by using a fuzzy word like *mala*.

Oedipus’ mother, Jocasta, also uses the word *malum* with a sense of evasiveness during a conversation in which Oedipus is inquiring about the ill-fated circumstances of his birth:

```plaintext
Sive ista ratio sive fortuna occult
latere semper patere quod latuit diu:
saepe eruentis veritas patuit *malo*.
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229 Boyle 2011: 108.
230 In Chapter 3, I further discuss themes of concealment and revelation in Senecan tragedy and in Celsus.
Whether reason or chance has concealed these things
Allow what has long been concealed always to be concealed
Truth when exposed is often an ill to the one who digs it out. (825-827)

Jocasta hopes to keep the truth buried, and thus speaks only vaguely about the *malum* which is often experienced by those who pry too deeply into the truth. The character of her speech is highly general and impersonal\(^{231}\), not identifying any potential danger to Oedipus himself, only to whomever “digs out” truth which has long been concealed. Jocasta uses verbs associated with both concealment (*occulere, latere* [twice]) and revelation (*patere*)\(^{232}\), with concealment ultimately winning out as she prefers for the *malum* to remain buried. As Busch has observed, “in Seneca’s drama, rational inquiry, such as that conducted by Oedipus...does not resolve enigmas; it perpetuates them.”\(^ {233}\) As we are seeing, the perpetuation of these enigmas is in part enabled by the use of the word *malum* by characters such as Jocasta and Tiresias.

Jocasta’s use of the participle *eruentis* is also worth noting, as the messenger uses the exact same form of this word when relating how Oedipus prepared to dig out his eyes (cf. *iamiam eruentis*, 961) after finally uncovering the truth which Jocasta is warning him not to pursue in the above lines. In his response to Jocasta’s attempts to bury the truth, Oedipus can only speak about the matter in the vaguest terms, mimicking his mother’s use of *malum*: *Malum timeri maius his aliquod potest?* (Is it possible that there is any ill to be feared more than these? 828).

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\(^{231}\) Boyle comments that “Jocasta strikes a high philosophical note here, as in [other parts of the play where] she offers *sententiae* as a solution.” (Boyle 2011: 300)

\(^{232}\) Also noteworthy is Jocasta’s use of the verb *patere* (826), which is an imperative form of the verb *pati* (to suffer) and not related to the verb *patere* (to be exposed), but constitutes an instance of wordplay (*latere / patere / latuit / patuit*).

\(^{233}\) Busch 2007: 241.
Oedipus’ use of this highly ambiguous word once again draws attention to his own ignorance, and by contrast the understanding possessed by other characters.

Another noteworthy instance in which the use of *malum* highlights a character’s state of ignorance is seen in Seneca’s *Phaedra*, when the nurse, who is struggling to understand the nature of Phaedra’s illness, refers to her condition as a *malum* (*Spes nulla tantum posse leniri malum*, 360). Phaedra also uses this word to describe her own condition (*alitur et crescit malum*, 101), also employing vagueness in attempting to keep the true nature of her illness concealed. Casamento comments that this particular use of *malum* “traduce il greco νόσος con cui nell’Ippolito euripideo è designata la malattia della regina (40, 394 e 405).” \(^{234}\) While Casamento makes an interesting comparison of terminology used by Seneca and Euripides, the relationship between *malum* and νόσος is not so straightforward. The assertion that *malum* is a “translation” of the Greek word νόσος is problematic because no two words from different languages (or even two words from the same language) possess the exact same senses and connotations. Compared with the Latin word *malum*, the Greek νόσος has a significantly narrower semantic range, restricted to the senses of mental or bodily “illness”/“sickness”/“disease” and plague, without the possible senses of “misfortune”, “fault”, “evil-doing”, etc. as with *malum*.\(^{235}\) In this respect, Seneca’s usage of *malum* in *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, and other plays evokes certain connotations that are not available with the usage of νόσος in Euripides’ play.

As these examples from both *Phaedra* and *Oedipus* bear out, the polysemous nature of *malum* lends itself to usage in situations in which illness is concealed and/or not fully understood.

\(^{234}\) Casamento 201: 173.

\(^{235}\) Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v. νόσος.
The above examples from *Oedipus* illustrate how the usage of *malum* contributes to the play’s complexly interwoven themes of concealment, illness, and self-awareness. The multi-faceted and versatile nature of this word is acknowledged somewhat directly when Creon makes a comparison between Oedipus and the Sphinx:

…fratres sibi ipse genuit—*implicitum malum*,
magisque monstrum Sphinge perplexum sua.

...he has produced brothers for himself—an entangled illness,
a monster more confused than his own Sphinx. (640-641)

Creon’s use of *ipse* and *malum* in apposition emphasizes that Oedipus is a *malum*, an embodiment of illness and evil. As in other parts of the play, illness is personified as a living being\(^{236}\) and explicitly connected with Oedipus. Creon describes Oedipus, and therefore the *malum* or illness that he embodies, as “entangled” (*implicitum*) and “confused” (*perplexum*)—even moreso than the Sphinx, a monster known for its riddles. Creon’s use of the adjectives *implicitum*, which Renger renders as “muddled”\(^{237}\), and *perplexum*—a word built on the same root *plec(t)*, “weave”, “entangle”—emphasizes both that Oedipus is a complex, many-layered manifestation of illness, and that Oedipus’ confusion runs deep. The illness caused by Oedipus is linked to his own convoluted identity as an incestuous patricide. In addition, Creon’s comments call to attention the perplexing irony that Oedipus has become a greater plague to Thebes than the dreaded Sphinx, which he subdued in trying to protect the city. Creon’s usage of *malum* highlights the multitude of paradoxes wrapped up in the singular figure of Oedipus.

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\(^{236}\) *Malum* is used with a similar sense of personification in *Hercules Oetaeus* when the nurse refers to the hydra as a *malum vivum* (living illness, 917) and when Hercules himself refers to his fatal poison as *malum simile Herculi* (an illness akin to Hercules, 1264).

\(^{237}\) Renger 2013: 42-43. Here Renger also notes that Oedipus and the Sphinx are alike in that they both have perplexing and “liminal” qualities.
Like Seneca, Celsus uses *malum* frequently, in both adjectival and substantive ways\textsuperscript{238}.

Throughout *De Medicina*, the adjectival *malus* is used to modify a variety of nouns; some examples of this use include: *mala signa* and *mala indicia* (bad symptoms, e.g. 8.4.21.1 and 8.4.6.9, respectively), *malus corporis habitus* (bad habit of the body, e.g. 2.1.22.3), *mala ulcera* (bad ulcers, e.g. 5.18.18.3), *malus odor* (2.6.10.4, bad odor)\textsuperscript{239}, *mala urina* (bad urine, e.g. 2.4.8.1), and *malum vulnus* (a bad wound, e.g. 5.26.3b.3-4). In such cases, *malum* often underscores the severe or troublesome nature of symptoms or conditions. In three instances, Celsus also makes reference to *mali morbi*—a combination of words which is particularly interesting, as the adjective *malus* is used to modify illness (*morbus*) itself. Despite the fact that these instances occur in close context with each other (all are mentioned in Book 2.4), Celsus does not present a monolithic picture, as he identifies various symptoms that can indicate a *malus morbus*, including breathing irregularities (2.4.3.1-2), throbbing blood vessels (2.4.4.1-2), and awakening from sleep in a state of fright (2.4.7.2). In these instances of usage, *malum* is used not to construct a formal category of illnesses (as he does with phrases such as *acuti morbi* and *longi morbi*), but to convey that a particular symptom is indicative of an illness that may be particularly severe or life-threatening.

Celsus’ substantive uses of *malum*, on the other hand, produce some rather generic categories of illness. This is apparent with phrases such as *in recentibus malis* (in recent illnesses, 6.6.8e.2), *in levoribus malis* (in slight illnesses, 7.18.5.7), and *in omnibus corporis malis* (in all illnesses of the body, 5.Pr.3.5-6). These are roughly-defined, unspecific classifications.

\textsuperscript{238} Langslow briefly comments on the substantive usage of *malum* in Celsus, noting that the “meaning of the word has not changed—it still means ‘a bad thing’—but its reference is restricted to a particular set of bad things.” (Langslow 1991a: 114)

\textsuperscript{239} Celsus makes especially frequent reference to *mali odores* throughout *De Medicina*. 
encompassing various types of illness—and, with the latter example, in fact all types of physical illness. In such instances, *mala* functions in much the same way that *morbus* does in phrases such as *in...recentibus morbis* (2.14.4.5) and *omnibus morbis* (1.3.26.4), suggesting a high-degree of semantic overlap between such uses. Commenting of the apparent interchangeability of these words in such contexts, Mudry has observed that Celsus while typically uses *morbus* to refer to “maladies internes”, he sometimes uses the terms *malum* or *vitium* instead. 240 These semantic parallels are on display in the Proemium, for example when Celsus mentions *nova genera morborum* (new types of illnesses, 1.Pr.36.10) and then refers to *mali genus aliquod ignotum* (an unknown type of illness, 1.Pr.37.1-2) in the sentence that immediately follows. Here, Celsus closely relates “unknown” illnesses and “new” types of illness (the similarity being that they are both not well-understood), alternating between using *nova* and *ignotum* as well as *morbus* and *malum*. Whereas Celsus needs to use a modifier such as *ignotum* to indicate that a *malum* is not well-understood, in *Oedipus malum*, used simply on its own, suggests a form of illness that is perplexing. Celsus also does not use the substantive *malum* with the ambiguity that is apparent in many uses of the word in *Oedipus*. As we might expect from a writer of medical prose, he does not use *malum* with the senses of irony, paradox, or euphemism that are repeatedly activated by uses of the word in *Oedipus*.

**Vitium**

Seneca and Celsus also use the word *vitium* in the sense of “illness”. Like *malum*, *vitium* has an extremely broad semantic range; other possible translations include “fault”, “defect”,

240 Mudry 1982: 68.
“shortcoming”, “imperfection”, “vice”, “and “disorder”.\textsuperscript{241} As this list makes quite apparent, \textit{vitium} can have both physical and moral connotations, and both sets of connotations are evoked each of the three times the word is used in \textit{Oedipus}.\textsuperscript{242} This goes against the claim made by Ernout and Meillet that \textit{vitium} specifically denotes a “défaut physique”\textsuperscript{243}, and it also goes against the opposite view, which is taken by Pisi, that \textit{vitium} is restricted to the moral sphere.\textsuperscript{244}

Near the end of his speech at the beginning of the play, Oedipus lists various forms of devastation that he wishes he could escape: \textit{contacta regna} (infected kingdoms, 78), \textit{lacrimas} (tears 78), \textit{funera} (funerals), and \textit{tabifica caeli vitia} (the consuming maladies of the sky, 79).\textsuperscript{245} This list evokes deterioration of both physical bodies and society as a whole, particularly with the phrase \textit{tabifica caeli vitia}. These \textit{vitia} bring about “consuming” or “wasting” through physical illness; this idea is emphasized by the use of \textit{tabifica}, a word that is etymologically connected to \textit{tabes}.\textsuperscript{246} These \textit{vitia} are associated with the sky, once again illustrating that the Theban environment is in a state of illness.\textsuperscript{247} There is also the sense that Thebes is being consumed not only by physical illness, but also by a form of moral corruption. Earlier in this

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{vitium}. The semantic bread of \textit{vitium} is very evident in Spencer’s translation of Celsus, which renders \textit{vitium} variously as “lesion”, “disorder”, “disease”, “defect”, “ill-effects”, “affliction”, “trouble”, “fault”, and “malady”.
\item Vitium appears a total of 13 times in Senecan tragedy.
\item Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. \textit{vitium}. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. \textit{vitiare})
\item Pisi 1989: 73. Here Pisi also asserts that \textit{pestis} is a “sinonimo di \textit{vitium}”, but this point could be more nuanced, especially in light of my earlier points about synonymy.
\item I borrow from Fitch’s translation in rendering \textit{vitia} as “maladies”.
\item Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{tabificus}. This word does not appear in Celsus.
\item Here, it is possible for \textit{caeli} to be understood as either a genitive of possession or a genitive of source; the former reading would suggest that “illness” is merely present in the sky (cf. 1-5), while the latter reading would suggest that “illness” is originating from and possibly spreading from the sky. Boyle’s translation renders the phrase “the corrupted sky”, but in his commentary he states that the phrase should be translated more literally as “sky’s corrupting ills”—a translation which is nice because it could suggest both that the sky itself is ill and that ills are coming from the sky. (Boyle 2011: 9, 130)
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\end{footnotesize}
speech, Oedipus bemoans the corruption of Theban societal conventions, citing a neglect of the customary funereal rites, which is said to occur due to a “loss of shame” (*nullus*...*pudor*, 65). Oedipus’ use of the word *vitia* later in the speech thus calls attention to how his city is being consumed by both physical illness and moral corruption, paradoxically while Oedipus himself is unaware of the own role he has played in this illness and corruption. 248

Immediately before he lists the personified manifestations of illness that will become his companions end of the play, Oedipus states: *mortifera mecum vitia terrarum extraho* (I am dragging out the deadly maladies of the land with me, 1058). As Boyle has noted, the phrase *mortifera...vitia* echoes Oedipus’ earlier reference to *tabifica...vitia* (79). 249 These lines are also metrically equivalent, further contributing to this element of ring-composition, which suggests that the entire play is encompassed by *vitia*. At 1058, Oedipus uses *vitia* to introduce various forms of illness (*Morbi, Macies, Pestis*) as well as “faults” with moral implications (*Violenta Fata*). But unlike Oedipus’ earlier reference to *vitia*, which are connected with the sky, the *vitia* at the end of the play are associated with the land (*terrarum*), indicating a downward motion with respect to the *vitia*. 250 Boyle notes this transposition, stating that “Oedipus began by pointing to the heavens (1-5); he ends by summoning hell.” Boyle does not, however, comment on the fact that *vitia* are involved in this reversal.

*Vitium* is used in one other instance in the play, when Oedipus is speaking with an old man (*Senex*) and inquiring into the circumstances of his birth. Responding to Oedipus’ question about how his feet became disfigured, the old man explains:

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248 Pratt has similarly noted that “the corruption caused by Oedipus’ crimes is portrayed as a total corruption of nature.” (Pratt 1983: 97)
249 Boyle 2011: 130.
Forata ferro gesseras vestigia,
tumore nactus nomen ac vitio pedum.

Your feet had been pierced with iron, and your name was born from the swelling and defect of your feet. (812-813)

Here, *vitium* is clearly used to refer to a physical wound, and this is underscored by the old man’s reference to its swelling (*tumore*). This *vitium* is associated with a specific part of the body, namely the feet (*pedum*), but *vitium* can also be used in reference to a moral “fault” or “defect”. This act of foot-binding, which was intended to prevent Oedipus’ survival, set into motion the tragic faults of Oedipus’ life: his lack of knowledge about his family and his origins, and his subsequent, unwitting acts of patricide and incest. The old man draws a direct link between the *vitium* of the foot binding and Oedipus’ identity, as he informs Oedipus that his name came about from this very act. The fact that Oedipus was unable to make the connection between his name and his wound or *vitium* once again showcases his self-ignorance. It is also telling that, in the line prior to the old man’s explanation, Oedipus refers to his wounds merely as *notas* (marks, 811). The word *nota* does not possess the sense of moral blemish conveyed by *vitium*, which suggests that Oedipus does not comprehend the moral implications of his wounds. It is also that *nota* can—as I discuss further in Chapter 3—be used to refer to “signs” or “symptoms” of illness. Interpreted in this way, Oedipus is asking the old man to help diagnose his condition, even though Oedipus has little awareness about the actual extent of his illness.

251 The old man is thus providing an etymological explanation for Oedipus’ name, which in Greek can be understood as “swollen-footed” (*Οἰδίπους*), although this etymology has been debated.
Vitium occurs very often in Celsus, and the related adjective vitisosus and the verb vitiare also appear, though much less frequently. Celsus often uses vitium in reference to a specific body part where an illness arises or is centralized. For instance, Celsus states:

At qui spumantem sanguine excrean, iis in pulmone vitium est.

But with those who cough up blood, the illness is in the lungs. (2.7.16.1-3)

The prepositional phrase in pulmone vitium est is example of a formulaic construction which Celsus uses throughout De Medicina. Celsus describes vitia in various other parts of the body, such as in renibus (2.7.13.1), in eadem vesica (2.7.13.4), in umero (2.10.14.3), in stomachi (2.15.4.9), and in cute (3.6.17.1). In such instances, it is clear that a specific body part is impaired or afflicted in some way, but it is not always possible to tell whether Celsus is only suggesting that the illness is localized in that particular body part, or whether he is also implying that the body part is the cause of the illness.252 This sort of ambiguity is apparent in the sentence above, in which it is not clear whether the illness is simply thought to reside in the lungs, or whether Celsus is also attributing the cause of the illness to the lungs. In other cases, it is more clear that Celsus is using vitium in reference to the causation of an illness, as in the phrase si in umidis omne vitium est (if the entire fault lies in the humours, 1.Pr. 15.1). The fact that the humours are thought to exist throughout the body and are not localized to any single body part suggests that vitium implies a sense of causation in this context.253

252 Serbat’s French translation of this sentence (“En revanche, ceux qui crachent un sang écumeux ont une affection pulmonaire”) does not suggest an element of causation, but the ambiguity remains in the Latin. (Serbat 1995: 65)
253 Another example in which Celsus uses vitium with a sense of causation is apparent in his observation that pain may occur “either from the fault of weather, or from the fault of the body” (sive tempestatium vitio sive corporis, 6.6.8d.8).
In other instances, it is fairly clear that Celsus is using *vitia* without any sense of causation, such as when he refers to *vitia pulmonum* (illnesses of the lungs, 2.7.28.5) and *vitia articulorum* (illnesses of the joints, 2.8.10.1). In such examples, Celsus is simply relating that an illness is localized or confined to a particular part of the body. In one way, this usage recalls the old man’s use of *vitio pedum* in *Oedipus* (813) in reference to the “defect” of a particular body part. At the same time, the old man’s usage also suggests an element of causation, since the binding of Oedipus’ feet brings about other woes, moral and physical. Celsus’ usage of *vitium*, on the other hand, remains firmly grounded in the physical sphere without any apparent moral implications.

One can find a possible moral element, however, in one instance where Celsus employs the verb *vitiare*. Discussing the state of health in the distant past, Celsus asserts that health was then more common due to *bonos mores, quos neque desidia neque luxuria vitiarant* (good habits, which were blemished by neither idleness nor extravagance, 1.Pr.4.7-5.1). Interestingly, Seneca expresses rather similar sentiments in one of his epistles where he lists various physical illnesses that currently plague humankind, and he then poses the rhetorical question: *Quid alios referam innumerabiles morbos, supplicia luxuriae?* (Why should I mention the other innumerable illnesses, the punishments for extravagance? *Epistula* 95.18)\(^{254}\) Here, Seneca makes quite explicit the idea that illness (*morbus*) can occur as a result of “immoral” behavior.

\(^{254}\) Earlier in this letter, Seneca also asserts that people’s bodies were healthier in the past because they were not as spoiled by art (*ars*) and pleasure (*voluptas*): *Nec est mirum tunc illum minus negotii habuisse firmis adhuc solidisque corporibus et facili cibo nec per artem voluptatemque corrupto*... (*Epistula* 95.15)
(luxuria), whereas Celsus uses morally-tinged words such as luxuria and desidia without explicitly criticizing these qualities as “immoral”.255

Celsus’ usage of the adjective vitiosus does not appear to have any moral implications, and, like the noun vitium, is often used in reference to body parts or bodily processes where illness is localized.256 It is noteworthy that vitium is not used during Celsus’ discussion of insania in Book 3, which generally avoids moralizing and instead focuses on physiological explanations for insania (which, as we will see in Chapter 4, contrasts sharply with conceptualizations of insania and other forms of “mental” illness in Senecan prose and tragedy). The fact that vitium does not appear in Celsus’ discussion of insania may also relate to the fact that he considers insania to be one of the forms of illness “which are not able to be assigned to specific parts” (qui certis partibus adsignari non possunt, 3.18.1.3-4).

As with malum, Celsus uses vitium in reference to broad, generic classes of illness. He refers, for instance, to longa vitia (chronic illnesses 4.12.1.2)—a phrase whose sense and construction parallels longi morbi.257 Celsus also describes vitia that affect not just a particular body part, but the entire body, thus requiring the aid of medicines (quae per totum corpus orientia medicamentorum auxilia desiderant, 6.1.1.1-2). This use of vitia in reference to broad categories of illness recalls the generic, all-encompassing categories of illness suggested by Oedipus’ usage of the word (79, 1058). It should also be noted that certain Latin authors use

255 Von Staden has also noted Celsus’ use of “evaluative terms that resonate powerfully within the Roman moral register” in this passage, although he does not discuss the use of vitiare specifically. (von Staden 1999: 260; see also 264 and von Staden 1996: 405)
256 e.g. stomachus bile vitosus (4.12.6.1); vitiosi unguès (6.9.3.11-12); vitiosus sinus (7.13.2.3), vitiosi ossis (8.3.4.2)
257 Similarly, Celsus refers to viti genus (a type of illness, 6.7.8a.1; cf. 7.7.1a.1), which recalls his use of the phrase genera morborum (types of illnesses, 1.Pr.55.4-5; cf. 1.Pr.66.6-7).
the word *vitium* in naming one specific condition, namely “epilepsy” (*comitiale vitium*). Celsus, however, calls this condition as *morbus comitialis* (e.g. 2.1.6.5-6), and he does not use the word *vitium* in naming any other specific condition. In calling the condition *morbus comitialis*, Celsus avoids the suggestions of moral fault which are implicit with a term like *comitiale vitium*.

**Chapter Conclusions**

Like the English language, Latin contains a rich vocabulary pertaining to illness. The various words in both English (illness, sickness, disease, disorder, plague, pestilence, et al.) and Latin (*pestis*, *pestilentia*, *morbus*, *infirmitas*, *aegritudo*, *lues*, *macies*, *tabes*, *vitium*, and *malum*, et al.) each possess subtly different nuances in sense and connotation, which in turn emphasize different aspects of “illness”. While I have identified some semantic overlaps between these words, it would be an oversimplification to suggest, as some scholars have, that any of these pieces of vocabulary are simply “synonymous” or “interchangeable”. To attribute a single, generic concept of “illness” to these words, without attention to nuance or context, is to overlook the semantic range of such words and thus miss out on significant interpretive opportunities. Nonetheless, throughout this chapter I have typically translated or glossed such diverse words as *morbus* and *malum* with the English “illness” with the intention of allowing the various possible connotations and implications of the Latin words to speak for themselves.

Latin’s complex and diverse vocabulary of illness is on display in Seneca’s *Oedipus* and Celsus’ *De Medicina*. Although these works approach the experience of illness from different

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258 This includes Seneca (*De Ira* 3.10.3.1-4.1; this passage is discussed in Chapter 4). See also Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 20.191.7.
perspectives, they employ similar constellations of vocabulary, offering fascinating opportunities for comparison and interpretation. Examining the vocabulary of illness across genres of literature in this way offers a broader window for understanding the semantics and connotations of the vocabulary, thus offering further insight into the conceptualization of illness in each work. We find, for instance, that a plethora of words that appear in Celsus are used to describe the condition of the Theban environment, and when this is noted it becomes even more apparent that the environment itself, and not just the people of Thebes, is mired in a medicalized state of illness.

Certain sections of Celsus’ work demonstrate a distinct interest in medical taxonomy (as we will see with the discussion of *insania* in Chapter 4), but Celsus is neither explicitly systematic nor always consistent in his usage of vocabulary in the semantic sphere of illness. Unlike other Latin writers, such as Cicero, Celsus does not attempt to make a firm distinction between *morbus, malum*, and *vitium*, using all of these words in the generic sense of “illness”; moreover he applies the adjective *aeger* to individuals who suffer from a great variety of conditions. Although Celsus uses these pieces of vocabulary in a general way and often without clear categorical distinctions, other words (e.g. *pestilentia, tabes, virus*) are more specific and tend to occur in certain contextual environments. The connotations and usage patterns of these words in Celsus can enrich our understanding of Seneca’s vocabulary usage and representations of illness, and vice versa.

Seneca uses a wide variety of words to refer to the mass illness of Thebes; in the opening speech alone, it is figured as a *pestis, morbus, lues, macies, tabes, vitium*, and *malum*; neither “illness” nor “plague” nor any other English word can possibly cover the rich array of
connotations associated with this group of vocabulary. Throughout the play, these various Latin words are in turn connected with Oedipus’ experience, sometimes by Oedipus himself, and he is thus closely aligned with the plague. The play’s vocabulary of illness calls attention to how the topsy-turvy condition of Thebes mirrors the sick, entangled identity of Oedipus.

In comparison with Seneca, Celsus tends to use certain words, such as *lues*, *macies*, and *tabes*, in a more specific sense. Celsus generally uses these terms to denote individually-experienced forms of illness, rather than mass illness (to which Celsus often applies the term *pestilentia*). In light of Celsus’ usage, the Theban plague can be seen as embodying many different forms of illness all at once, which in turn highlights the apparent impossibility of diagnosis and treatment. Indeed, even though Oedipus recognizes and identifies various elements of the illness at the beginning of the play, he cannot arrive at a coherent understanding of the situation. Even after the cause of the plague has been revealed, it still cannot be encapsulated by a single word. Furthermore, this focus on medical language highlights the peculiar, paradoxical, and painful situation of Oedipus himself, who is once a patient and ostensible healer.

Seneca also personifies aspects of illness, thus giving them a sense of agency, and in certain ways Oedipus himself is characterized as a personification of illness. This blurs the distinctions between Oedipus and the plague, and thus between cause and effect. Celsus, on the other hand, does not use vocabulary of illness with a sense of personification, nor with the irony, paradox, ambiguity, and euphemism evident in *Oedipus* and other Senecan tragedies. These differences speak in part to the differing aims of the authors: as a tragic poet, Seneca is interested in exploring the complexities of illness, both as a phenomenon in and of itself, and in
terms of its effects on individual human beings and societies, whereas Celsus, as a writer of an encyclopedic prose text on medicine, seeks to categorize, diagnose, define, and otherwise pin illness down. This difference is apparent, for instance, with their respective uses of *malum*: Celsus uses this substantive adjective in the very general sense of “illness”, and this is the sense understood by Seneca’s character Oedipus. Oedipus, however, is oblivious to the moral connotations the word takes on in the context of the play, and the word’s relevance to his own situation and identity. In this and many other instances in Senecan tragedy, vocabulary of illness is used to draw attention to matters of ignorance and self-awareness, themes we will continue to examine in the following chapters of this study. In *Oedipus*, then, the vocabulary of illness and with it the experience of illness are not funneled into specific categories or identified with particular conditions, but are instead jumbled together in a complex conundrum.
Chapter III

Illness Unveiled: Language of Concealment and Revelation

The human body is a subject of great interest in both the medical prose and tragic poetry of the Greek and Roman literary tradition. The internal structure and internal operations of the body are special concerns, as is reflected in the works of both Celsus and Seneca, whose representations of the body’s internal (and usually invisible) organs are frequently marked by opacity and obscurity. These representations are in certain ways indicative of the limited knowledge of the body afforded by the Greek and Roman medical traditions, both of which largely eschewed practices of human dissection. Some of the reasons why dissection was so rarely performed will be discussed in this chapter’s forthcoming comments on Celsus. Because there were limited opportunities for direct observation of the interior of the human body, such as examining battle wounds and the rare instances of dissection, understandings of the interior of the human body were largely derived from what was externally apparent. This meant that bodily processes and phenomena break the divide between the interior and exterior of the body, such as bleeding, excretions, and visible indicators of distress, came to play an integral role in shaping understandings of the interior of the body.¹ In this way, the symptom—a disruption “either to the experience of self or to the outward presentation of the self”²—was thought to provide valuable insight about the interior of the body, and thus served as an

¹ In the words of Grmek, practitioners of medicine in the ancient world “were obliged to reconstruct the internal structures of the human body, either by working from what they saw or felt through an external examination or else by making use of what they observed in dissections of animals.” (Grmek 1991: 56) See also Kuriyama 1999: 121-122; Padel 1995: 146.

² This is the crux of the definition that Holmes assigns to the word “symptom” in her book The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece. (Holmes 2010: 2).
important tool for the detection and diagnosis of illness. Without the surfacing of interpretable symptoms, on the other hand, illness would often lurk in an undetectable state of obscurity, posing problems for diagnosis and treatment.

Celsus’ *De Medicina* and Seneca’s tragedies, we will see, frequently reflect this conceptual paradigm in their themes and use of language. Their works often employ terminology and metaphors of concealment when describing conditions of illness in which there are no apparent symptoms, or in which symptoms are apparent but are not comprehensible. Conversely, in contexts in which illness is thought to be well understood, or in which the causes of an illness seem more obvious, illness is often described in terminology and metaphors suggesting transparency and revelation. This chapter will examine this dichotomy of concealment and revelation, and in particular the relevant terminology used by Celsus and Seneca. Scholars such as Ruth Padel have previously explored some of the conceptual and semantic nuances associated with “the known or seen and the unknown or unseen” in a variety of genres of Greek literature, including the Hippocratic treatises, but these issues have not been thoroughly examined in Latin literature. This chapter will move the discussion in that direction while building upon the work of scholars such as Holmes and Patel.

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3 Holmes goes on to state that “symptoms point to an imperceptible dimension of reality that cuts across the world that we do perceive. In one sense, this hidden world can be laid bare.” (Holmes 2010: 2; see also ix, 121-122)

Throughout her book, Holmes stresses the importance placed upon symptoms in ancient conceptualizations of the body, showing that symptoms are repeatedly portrayed as a source of insight into internal state of the body in various genres of Greek literature. Padel similarly observes that external bodily conditions play an important role in conceptualizations of the internal body in Greek literature. (Padel 1992: 67; Padel 1995: 30, 120). On the importance of the symptom as a tool for understanding the interior of the body in classical literature, see also Ferrini 1978: 60; Webster 2014: 30 (although Webster’s dating of Celsus to the 2nd century BCE is erroneous).

4 Padel 1992: 67
Celsus’ Vocabulary of Concealment and Revelation

I begin with an overview of Celsus’s terminology pertaining to the concealment and revelation of illness, and then in the following section I will compare this terminology with language in Seneca. In this section, my comments will focus mainly upon the Proemium to Book 1 of Celsus’ De Medicina, where Celsus provides his account of the history of medicine, including an overview of the dominant medical schools of thought in his time, which scholars generally refer to as rationalism (see esp. 1.Pr.13-26) and empiricism (see esp. 1.Pr.27-44).

Here, Celsus’ use of language underscores how the concepts of concealment and revelation were central to each school’s attempts to understand the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of illness. As Celsus explains, the rationalists, on the one hand, sought to gain insight into what Celsus refers to as abditae causae (hidden causes, 1.Pr.14.1) in their approach to diagnosing and treating illness. This approach sought to obtain insight into the body’s internal state through indirect means, first by making inferences about internal conditions based upon external signs of health or illness. This included, for instance, drawing conclusions about the state and proportions of the four humors which were supposed to circulate through the body, despite the fact that their operation within the body could not be observed directly (1.Pr.15.1).

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5 Abditas causas vocant, in quibus requiritur, ex quibus principiis nostra corpora sint, quid secundam, quid adversam valetudinem faciat. (They call “hidden” the causes in which people inquire into the principles of which bodies are composed—that is, what acts favorably and what acts adversely to health. 1.Pr. 14.1-3) The rationalists inquired into such “hidden causes” because—in contrast with the empiricists—they “assert[ed] that no treatment was possible unless the underlying causes of the disorder were known.” (Rey 1995: 26)

6 Due to its belief that knowledge can be gained independently of sensory experience, the rationalist school is sometimes referred to as the “dogmatic school” in scholarly discourse on the history of medicine and science. See Barnes, Brunschwig, Burnyeat, Schofield 1982: 2.
The rationalist emphasis on interpreting “hidden” causes of illness through processes of deduction and intuition has roots in Hippocratic works such as *On the Tekhnē*\(^7\):

\[\text{ὅσα γὰρ τὴν τῶν ὀμμάτων ὄψιν ἐκφεύγει, ταῦτα τῇ τῆς γνώμης ὄψει κεκράτηται. (11.7-8) … Ὄταν δὲ ταῦτα μὴ μηνύωνται, μηδὲ αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις ἐκουσά ἀφίη, ἀνάγκας ἐυρηκεν, ἦσον ἡ φύσις ἄξιομος βιασθεῖσα μεθήισιν. ἀνεθεῖσα δὲ δηλοῖ τοῖσι τὰ τῆς τέχνης εἰδόσιν, ἡ ποιητέα.}\]

Whatever escapes the vision of the eyes is grasped by the vision of the mind. (…)
When these signs\(^9\) are not revealed, and when nature does not willingly send them forth, medicine has found ways to set them loose without harm; having released them, it makes clear to experts\(^10\) what must be done. (12.9-11)

This passage reflects the rationalist idea that it is possible to gain insight into hidden aspects of the body through the application of mental reasoning (γνώμης ὄψει); when this fails, insight can be gained by finding a way to release (μεθήισιν; ἀνεθεῖσα)\(^11\) internal signs so that they can be observed more directly. The wording in the passage underscores the body’s propensity for concealment (τῶν ὀμμάτων ὄψιν ἐκφεύγει; μὴ μηνύωνται), which can inhibit

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\(^7\) This text is often referred to as *De Arte* or *The Art*, but these titles are misleading because the text seeks to show that medicine is “an exact science, not an undefinable art.” (Lloyd 1983: 139) Recognizing the polysemy of τέχνη (art, science, craft, trade, skill)—and also of the Latin *ars* and English “art”, for that matter—I have simply transliterated the word here.

\(^8\) In Littre’s text, which is followed by most commentators, μὴ is placed in square brackets to indicate that the negation of μηνύωνται can be assumed, based upon the use of the negative conjunction μηδ’ in the following phrase.

\(^9\) “Signs” does not translate any specific word in the above section of Greek, but picks up on a previous sentence’s reference to σημεῖα ταύτα (these signs, 12.8). This phrase refers back to a list, given earlier in this section, of various aspects of the human body which are not visible but which can be observed by means of the other senses. These include the quality of the voice, respiratory rate, and the smell and color of fluids flowing from the orifices of the body (12.4-8). These are all listed as ways to gain insight during the process of diagnosis when the causes of disease lurk deep inside the recesses of the body. “Signs” also follows the translation of Chadwick and Mann in Lloyd 1983: 146-147. For other discussions of the conceptualization of “signs” in Hippocratic writings, see Padel 1992: 52, 55, 88-98 and Padel 1995: 43.

\(^10\) Lit. “it makes clear to those who know the tekhnē”

\(^11\) My translation of these terms is meant to reflect their similar semantics and their shared root - ἴμι (to set loose, let go). One distinction between the two terms that is noteworthy for the present discussion is that ἄνιμι, (unlike its cousin μεθίσιμος) carries with it connotations of sending/releasing in an *upward* direction, which may be seen as relevant to the idea of a “sign” or symptom emerging from a state of concealment beneath the surface of the body.
understanding until internal signs (visible or otherwise observable) are outwardly exposed. With such understanding, according to the passage, understanding and treatment become clear. We have seen that Celsus speaks of abditae causae (1.Pr.14.1), considering them problematic for detecting illness; similarly, the author of this treatise declares that the very nature of the human body hinders—but does not totally prevent—recognition and diagnosis of illness.\textsuperscript{12}

The empiricists, on the other hand, were not disposed to using deduction or making conjecture about internal states of the body based upon observations of external signs and conditions. Instead, the empiricists concentrated their attention upon evidentes [causae] (1.Pr.18.1)\textsuperscript{13}—“obvious causes”, which encompass directly observable symptoms, such as calor...an frigus, fames an satietas, et quae similia sunt (heat...or cold, hunger or satiety, and the like, 1.Pr.8.2-3).\textsuperscript{14} The empiricists thus found it impossible to treat states of illness that originate in interioribus partibus (in the internal parts, 1.Pr.23.1), and that it was futile (supervacuus) to try to expose the body’s internal signs, since they ultimately believed that “nature cannot be comprehended” (non comprehensibilis naturalis sit, 1.Pr.27.5). The empiricists, then, prioritized the knowledge acquired through medical practice and experience (1.Pr.31), rather than abstract reasoning about uncertain causes and attempts to expose hidden

\textsuperscript{12} Von Staden also discusses the notion that On the Tekhnē portrays nature as having “a tendency to conceal”, and he also points out that this idea is evident in Celsus’ representation of the human body. (von Staden 2007: 366-367; cf. On the Tekhnē 12.3)
\textsuperscript{13} According to Mudry (1982: 87), the Latin phrase evidentes causae is closed modeled upon the Greek phrase πρόδηλοι ἀιτίαι.
\textsuperscript{14} Gourevitch nicely summarizes this in her discussion of Celsus’ Proemium, explaining that obvious causes are “perceived directly by the senses”. This is in contrast with hidden causes, which “lie in the state of the body’s component elements, [and] are accessible only to the mind” (Gourevitch 1998: 108). This description of hidden causes recalls the phrase ταύτα τῇ τῆς γνώμης ὄψει κεκράτηται in the Hippocratic text On the Tekhnē (11).
signs from the interior of the body. The rationalists, on the other hand, believed that investigating the interior of the body could provide insights about otherwise hidden signs of health and illness, thus furnishing a better understanding of natura. To pursue this idea further, I will discuss Celsus’ remarks on human dissection, providing some historical background information about the place of dissection in the Greek and Roman medical traditions, and then some observations concerning the language Celsus uses to describe these practices.

In his discussion of the rationalists’ perspective, Celsus describes experiments which the Greek physicians Herophilus and Erisistratus performed upon condemned criminals while those criminals were still living (ex carcere acceptos vivos inciderint, 1.Pr.24.1). These experiments were allegedly conducted in Hellenistic Alexandria in the early third century BCE, but Celsus is the earliest Greek or Latin source to mention them. Such experiments constitute acts of vivisection, or cutting into a living body, resulting in exposure of the body’s internal structures; by contrast, the better-known term “dissection” generally refers to the act of cutting into a body which is not alive. While the veracity of Celsus’ remarks about vivisection is ultimately impossible to confirm\(^{15}\), scholars have observed that these remarks are astonishing in light of Greek and Roman restrictions and inhibitions toward opening up the human body. As Heinrich von Staden notes, barriers to human dissection—let alone vivisection—existed for a variety of reasons, including “religious, moral, and aesthetic considerations, as well as the sheer tenacity

\(^{15}\) As Vallance notes, the veracity of Celsus’ reports of vivisection have been “fiercely disputed in modern times”, although “the balance of modern opinion...seems to be in favor of accepting” these reports as true. (Vallance 2004: 763, 772)
of taboos"¹⁶, not to mention the Hippocratic Oath’s famous prohibition on “cutting”. For most of Greek and Roman antiquity—both before and after the vivisections supposedly performed by Herophilus and Erisistratus—the interior of the human body would remain largely inaccessible and inadequately understood, and this would remain very much the case until the Renaissance.¹⁷ One can find descriptions of certain surgical procedures in Books 7 and 8 of Celsus’ De Medicina¹⁸, as well as in some of the later treatises from the Hippocratic Corpus, but these descriptions suggest that cutting into the human body was generally limited to “relatively superficial surgical incisions and excisions”¹⁹—a far cry from systematic investigation into the internal organs and structures of the human body. According to Lang, the apparently short-lived practices of dissection and vivisection in third century Alexandria may have been enabled by “the power of [the Ptolemaic] rulers to transgress social norms...[in a society] in which political power was ultimately individual, arbitrary, and hierarchical.”²⁰

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¹⁷ For an overview of the history of dissection and vivisection in Greek and Roman antiquity, and discussion concerning why these practices were so infrequently performed, see Lloyd 1975: 113-147 (esp. 131-134) and von Staden 1992: 223-241.
¹⁸ In Book 4, Celsus also provides a detailed description of the internal anatomy of the human body (4.1.1.1-4.1.13.5), but he does not indicate where this information is derived from (whether from surgical procedures, dissection/vivisection, inference, comparative anatomy, earlier texts, or other methods). Craik has argued that this passage may have been influenced by the Hippocratic treatise “On Anatomy”, which in turn seems to have been based at least in part upon observations of animal bodies. Whatever the case, Celsus does not connect this description of the human body to the treatment of illness, and despite the revelatory nature of the passage, it features very few pieces of vocabulary associated with revelation.
¹⁹ von Staden 1992: 225. Prohibitions on cutting into the human body were also a well-known aspect of the Hippocratic Oath (οὐ τεμέω δὲ οὐδὲ μὴν λιθιῶνται), although other Hippocratic texts, and Books 7 and 8 of Celsus, suggest that this prohibition was far from universally heeded by physicians during Greek and Roman antiquity.
²⁰ Lang 2013: 256. Von Staden echoes this view, while also attributing the brief rise of dissection and vivisection to a unique confluence of various other possible factors, including the open intellectual and cultural atmosphere of third century Alexandria, the influence of Aristotelian philosophical views concerning the ontology of dead bodies, and the influence of native Egyptian customs pertaining to the treatment of the dead. (von Staden 1992: 231-234) Mattern encapsulates many of these possible factors in suggesting that Alexandria’s “atmosphere of frontiersmanship” contributed to the rise of these practices. (Mattern 2013: 72)
The remarks of Aristotle in his zoological encyclopedia *Historia Animalium* reflect the fact that opportunities to examine the interior of the human body were quite limited in Greek and Roman antiquity, thus calling for alternative heuristic methods:\textsuperscript{21}

Ἀγνωστα γάρ ἐστι μάλιστα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὡστε δεῖ πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἄλλων μόρια ζώων ἀνάγοντας σκοπεῖν, οἷς ἔχει παραπλησίαν τὴν φύσιν.

The \[inner parts\textsuperscript{22}\] of human beings are especially unknown; in consequence, it is necessary to make examination in reference to the parts of other animals whose nature is very similar. (1.16.494b21-4)

Experimental dissections of animals could have provided familiarity with the internal parts of animals for those engaged in science or medicine, and ritualized animal sacrifice would have provided such familiarity to many other types of people.\textsuperscript{23} The interior of an animal body, however, of course does not offer a perfect analogue for understanding the internal workings of the human body. Aristotle suggests as much in stating that there are some animal species with bodies that are “very similar” (παραπλησίαν) to the human body, while not saying that they are “the same”. In the century after Celsus, the physician Galen would famously revive the practices of animal dissection and vivisection, while forgoing performance of these procedures on human beings.\textsuperscript{24} Celsus’ comments on dissection and vivisection, then, represent a highly unique opportunity to gain insight into understandings of the interior of the human body in Greek and Roman antiquity. This much is intimated by Celsus himself, as he states that the

\textsuperscript{21} Nutton also discusses Aristotle’s attempts to derive knowledge about the human body through the dissection of animals. (Nutton 2013: 121)

\textsuperscript{22} In the previous sentence, Aristotle makes reference to these unknown, inner parts (τὰ δ’ ἐντὸς τούναντιον), contrasting them with the parts of the body which are externally visible and thus familiar (1.16.494b17-20).

\textsuperscript{23} See Grmek 1991: 56. Craik also notes that certain ideas about the interior of human body were derived from investigations of animal bodies. She argues, for instance, that the Hippocratic treatise “On Anatomy”, which describes the internal structure of the human torso, was highly influenced by “extensive observation of animals”. (Craik 1998: 135, see also 160)

\textsuperscript{24} von Staden 1992: 223. See also Mattern 2013:75; 150-155.
experiments of Herophilus and Erisistratus allowed for the observation of *quae natura ante clausisset* (what nature had previously concealed, 1.Pr.24.2); this phrasing suggests that these experiments defy and subvert nature in unprecedented ways, thus bringing the structure of the human body into sharper focus. Summarizing the rationalists’ views on these practices, Celsus goes on to provide a thorough list of various physical qualities and aspects of the internal organs that would be revealed when a living body is laid open:

...eorumque positum, colorem, figuram, magnitudinem, ordinem, duritiem, mollitiem, levorem, contactum, processus deinde singulorum et recessus, et sive quid inseritur alteri, sive quid partem alterius in se recipit...

...their position, color, shape, size, arrangement, hardness, softness, smoothness, how they are connected, the extensions and retractions of each, and whether something is inserted into something else or else receives into itself a part of something else. (1.Pr.24.3-6)

The storehouse of information contained in this list demonstrates the vast amount of knowledge thought to be concealed (*claudisse*)\(^{25}\) by *natura*, and, in turn, the vast amount of knowledge which the rationalists thought vivisection could reveal. Later in the first century CE, Pliny the Elder hinted at the medical knowledge that could be gained through dissection in stating that Herophilus was the first one who delved into the causes of illness, presumably *because* he engaged in this practice.\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) As Marioni notes, the verb *claudere* has a specialized usage in medical contexts, where it is often highlights the potential of the *uterus* (the abdomen or belly) to conceal. (Marioni 1995: 16 n. 59) In later patristic authors such as Vindician and Tertullian, the idea that the inner-workings of the human body were concealed by “nature” came to be replaced by the idea that the interior of the human body had been concealed by God. With that idea, there is an implication that exposing the insides of the body through the process of dissection is a violation not only of nature, but also of God’s designs (cf. von Staden 1989: 143). Tertullian, for one, questioned the knowledge that could be gained through such inquiry, suggesting that Herophilus should be considered more a “butcher” (*lanius*) than a “doctor” (*medicus*; see *De Anima* 10.4).

\(^{26}\) ....*causas morborum scrutari prius Herophilus instituerat*... (*Naturalis Historia* 26.14.4)
Celsus goes on to explain the rationalists’ view that, contrary to popular opinion at the time, the dissection of criminals is not a cruel practice because of its potential to furnish the discovery of remedies for innocent people of future ages.²⁷ Near the end of his Proemium Celsus states that he himself is opposed to the practice of vivisection, not only on the grounds that is a cruel (crudele) practice, but also because he finds it supervacuum (futile). This is because he believes that a dead body displays the interior of the human body better than a living body does (1.Pr.74.1–75.4).²⁸

Rather than taking sides between the rationalists and empiricists, Celsus generally treads a fine line in describing each school of thought, offering critiques of both schools and using language marked by a tone of neutrality.²⁹ It is thus no surprise that Celsus’ descriptions of illnesses throughout De Medicina display concerns for both “hidden” and “obvious” causes and origins of illness. Celsus makes his moderate perspective explicit when he declares that

²⁷ Neque esse crudele, sicut plerique proponent, hominum nocentium et horum quoque paucorum suppliciis remedia populis innocentibus saeculorum omnium quaeris. (Nor is it, as most say, cruel that in the punishment of guilty men, and but a few of them, remedies are sought for the innocent men of all ages. 1.Pr.26.6-8) Scarborough has argued that Celsus must be referring to vivisection here, while not actually endorsing the practice, as he is reporting the rationalists’ view. (Scarborough 1976: 27-28; on Celsus’ views concerning vivisection, see also Meißner 1999: 204) But it is worth noting that Celsus does not explicitly identify the exact nature of the treatment of the “guilty men” (i.e. dissection or vivisection), as suppliciis can be used to refer to punishment rather generally, as well as specific forms of punishment including torture and execution. Moreover, this reference to punishment does not actually specify any cutting into the body, although Celsus’ preceding remarks strongly suggest that here he is referring to a form of medical inquiry that involves cutting. Spencer translates hominum nocentium...suppliciis as “the execution of criminals” (Spencer 1935: 15), which still does clarify whether the criminals’ bodies are cut into after they have been executed, or whether they are vivisected during the process of execution. Celsus does refer to the vivisections performed by Herophilus and Erisistratus (1.P.23.4-24.1) a little earlier in this part of the Proemium, but there remains some ambiguity whether he is still talking about vivisection in 1.Pr.26.6-8.

²⁸ This critique differs from the typical empiricist objection to dissection. The empiricists believed that a dead body was qualitatively different from a living body, and thus unable to provide insight into how illness would affect the bodies of the living. (see 1.Pr.42.1-11; see also Lang 2013: 256; Mudry 1982: 203)

²⁹ Conte 1994: 388. For further discussion of Celsus’ neutrality, as evident in his use of impersonal verbal phrases and in his critiques of both schools of thought, see von Staden 1994b: 79; von Staden 1999: 281-283; Flemming 2001: 130-131; Allbutt 1921: 209, 211. Some scholars have attempted to identify Celsus with methodism or Pyrrhonian skepticism, but connecting Celsus with a specific medical or philosophical school remains elusive. (see Mudry 1994; Hornblower, Spawforth, and Eidinow 2012)
practitioners of medicine should concentrate upon *evidentes causae*, while maintaining that it is still possible to learn from *obscrae [causae]*. In taking this stance, Celsus adopts a model that associates hidden causes of illness with concealment within the body, while associating “obvious causes” with that which can be observed externally. What is less consistent, however, is the terminology that Celsus uses to speak of “hidden” and “obvious” causes. Just a few paragraphs after speaking of *abditae causae* (1.Pr.14), Celsus refers to the same phenomenon by the periphrasis *in obscuro positas causas* (causes located in obscurity, 1.Pr.17). Moreover, the above remarks concerning the role of rationalism and empiricism in medicine (*obscrae [causae],* 1.Pr.74) represent a variation upon the periphrasis used earlier (1.Pr.17), where the *causes* themselves are said to be obscure. Another variation in terminology comes when Celsus is commenting on the lack of concern that certain physicians have for the causes of an illness, whether obvious or hidden, in preference for their concerns about the treatment of the illness. Here, Celsus refers to inquiry into the “hidden” causes as *latentium rerum coniecturas* (conjectures into the hidden causes, 1.Pr.38.4); similar language is used elsewhere in both the

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30 Igitur...rationale quidem puto medicinam esse debere, instrui vero ab evidentibus causis, obscuris omnibus non ab cogitatione artificis sed ab ipsa arte reiectis. (Therefore...I think that medicine ought to be rational, but to be built upon obvious causes, with all the obscure [causes] being rejected from the [practice of] the art itself, but not from the consideration of the practitioner, 1.Pr.74.1-4)

31 Celsus also uses this noun-adjective combination at 1.Pr.27.3 (*obscurum...causarum*).

32 Earlier in the Proemium, there are also the phrases *obscirus causis* (1.Pr.32.6) and *obscuras causas* (1.Pr.48.1-2). Following the latter example, Celsus elaborates upon instances in which causes may be “obscure”, stating that such instances lay beyond both the art of conjecture (*coniectura*, 1.Pr.48.5) and experience (*experientia*, 1.Pr.48.6), as illnesses may not follow their expected course in such situations. Celsus also mentions that in rare situations, one may be faced with a *morbis...novus* (new illness, Pr.49.1)—a situation in which the causes of illness often defy explanation (as I discuss in Chapter 2). Celsus then goes on to mention, as a specific example of this phenomenon, a case in which a woman suffered from prolapsed, gangrenous genitals and died after only a few hours. In this situation, Celsus observes that doctors of the highest standing were able to discover neither the *genus mali neque remedium* (type of illness nor the remedy. 1Pr.49.1-50.1).
Proemium and other sections of *De Medicina*. The verb *latere* is one of the primary terms that Celsus uses in reference to “hidden” causes of illness, but it is not strongly differentiated in usage from other words Celsus uses in reference to “hidden” causes. In fact, during one specific passage in the Proemium, Celsus essentially equates the phrase *rebus latentibus* with the adjectives *dubiae* and *incertae* by placing each of these words in opposition with *evidentibus causis*. Along with *abdita* and *obscura*, these are words that Celsus frequently uses in reference to situations in which the cause(s) of an illness is thought to be concealed.

It is also important to note that Celsus uses the phrase *causa incognita* (an unknown cause, 4.2.7.7-8), in reference to treating an illness whose cause cannot be discerned. The specific illness that Celsus is discussing in this section is a headache accompanied by fever (*...auxilia sunt capitis, ubi cum febre dolor*, 4.2.4.9-10); the possible causes of the condition are said to be *calor* (4.2.6.4) and *frigus* (4.2.7.1). The use of *causa incognita* in this case, rather than *causa abdita* or *causa obscura*, is consistent with the idea that, even if the exact cause of illness is not known, there are still some suspected causes (*calor* or *frigus*). It is also noteworthy that treatment (*auxilia*) is still considered possible, despite the fact that the cause is unknown. I would argue, then, that Celsus uses the phrase *causa incognita* to refer to a cause of illness.

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33 See 1.Pr.52.2 (*rebus latentibus*); 1.Pr.57.6 (*rerum latentium*); 2.7.25.1-2 (*latentium vel futurum reum*); 6.6.8.c.8 (*intus latentia acria*); 8.4.15.2 (*nihil latens in eo osse*; note that the text is corrupt here).
34 1.Pr.52.2. Celsus also refers to hidden causes by using the adjectives *incertus* and *dubius* in close context earlier in the Proemium (1.Pr.31.3).
35 This is of course not the default terminology for all Latin authors. In Cicero’s *Academica*, the term *incerta* (given as a translation of the Greek *ἀδηλα*) is used to describe such conditions (2.54). The fifth century writer Caelius Aurelianus renders the Greek *ἀδηλοι αἰτίαι* as *occulta causae* (*De Morbis Acutis et Chronicis*). See also Mudry 1982: 86.
36 In antiquity a “fever” (often expressed by the Latin term *febris*, or its Greek counterpart *πυρετός*) was generally thought to be a disease itself, unlike how fever is regarded as a symptom of illness in modern medicine. (see Nutton 2013: 32)
which may be unknown, but which is not necessarily unknowable, as contrasted with causes so "hidden" as to be unknowable, which are described as *abdita causa* or *obscura causa*.

One can also find that Celsus uses various expressions to express that the causes of illness are known. Celsus alternately refers to known causes with the adjectives *evidens*37 and *manifesta*, both of these words suggest perception by the senses—*evidens* through its connection to the verb *videre* (to see) and *manifesta* through its etymological connection to *manus* (the hand).39 While different in their etymologies, these words are not strongly differentiated in Celsus’ usage, as they are both used to emphasize perceptibility. It is worth mentioning, however, that in each of the two instances where the phrase *manifesta causa*40 appears in Celsus’ work, this phrase is preceded by the word *sine*, indicating that there is not any observable cause present, which, in effect, seems conceptually equivalent to the phrases *abdita causa* or *obscura causa*.

In circumstances where the causes of illness are known, Celsus also uses the verb *apparere*. This verb appears when Celsus is discussing the empiricists’ ideas concerning the relationship between the observation of causes and the treatment of illness41:

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37 For example, in the aforementioned sections of the Proemium (1.Pr.18.1; 74.3). Von Staden observes that the terms *evidens* and *manifestus*—along with *experimentum* (experience) and *usus* (practice) embody concepts central to empiricist thought. (1999: 283)
38 *...nam si longae febres sine dolore, sine manifesta remanent* (2.7.29.2); *quidam sine ulla manifesta causa* (6.6.37b.2).
39 The etymology of the verb *manifestare* can be explained as “to strike the hand” (*manus* + *festus*). (cf. Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. *manifestare*; Glare 2012: s.v. *manifestus*). Senis notes the etymology of the adjective *manifestus* (“a portata di mano”; see Senis 1987: 346), citing a passage from Isidore’s *Origines: manifestum dicitur quod in manu est promptus*. (10.183) Here Isidore’s use of *promptus*, translatable as “visible” or “exposed to view”, underscores the sense of perceptibility intrinsic to the word *manifestus*.
40 2.7.29.2; 6.6.37b.2.
41 The sentences are in indirect statement because they continue a report of the empiricists’ views, which Celsus begins at 1.Pr.27.
Saepe etiam causas apparere, ut puta lippitodinis, vulneris, neque ex his patere medicinam. Quod si scientiam hanc non subiciat evidens causa, multo minus eam posse subicere, quae in dubio est.

Often, too, the causes are apparent, as, for example, [the causes] of inflammation of the eyes, or [the causes] of wounds, and even so the cure is not revealed by these causes. For if the obvious cause does not supply this knowledge, much less can a cause which is in doubt supply it. (1.Pr.30.6-7)

Here, both apparere and evidens are used in reference to situations in which the causes of illness are plainly known. These words are used without much differentiation in sense, both emphasizing visual perceptibility. Also noteworthy is that Celsus' assertion that even in situations where the causes of illness do reveal themselves, treatment can still be elusive. This idea is expressed using the verb patere, which can be translated “to be open”, “to be accessible”, “to be obvious”, etc. Here, this verb is negated, and rather than being used in reference to the inaccessibility of the body itself, it is used to convey that treatment (medicina) is not always obvious even when causes of illness are apparent. Celsus’ summary of the empiricist view then goes on to observe that if this is the case with obvious causes, there is little hope to be able to treat causes which are in dubio—a phrase contrasted with evidens causa similarly to the way in which abdita causa and obscura causa are contrasted elsewhere with evidens causa.

To return to Celsus’ usage of apparere, this word also occurs in contexts where it is negated, making reference to unknown causes of illness. One example comes when Celsus is discussing the symptoms of various illness in Book 2, and comments on women who suffer from inguinal swelling:

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42 Glare 2012: s.v. patere. As Monami notes, patere has a wide semantic range which includes “‘essere accessibile’, ‘estendersi’, ‘essere manifesto’—to be accessible, to extend, and to be manifest.” (Monami 1987: 1012)
Si mulieri inguen et febricula orta est, neque causa apparet, ulcus in vulva est.

If, in the case of a woman, a swelling in the groin has arisen with a slight fever, and there is no apparent cause, there is ulceration in the womb. (2.7.10.5-11.1)

The phrase *neque causa apparet* represents yet another way Celsus has to describe conditions of illness in which the cause is not visible. In this case, the source of illness—*ulcus*, or ulceration—is not readily apparent because it is concealed within the *vulva*, or womb, a part of the body particularly opaque to Greek and Latin writers on medicine. In her analysis of descriptions of the body in the Hippocratic treatise *On the Tekhnē*, Brooke Holmes notes that the “mysterious inner space of the female body...[was believed to be especially] capable of concealing and nourishing disease...” Thus, Celsus’ assertion that there is no apparent cause for the ulceration in the womb is in keeping with a larger tendency seen in Greek and Latin writings on medicine, which frequently present the female body as difficult to understand and inclined to conceal disease. It is striking, then, that in this case the illness is ultimately diagnosed (*ulcus in vulva est*) despite the lack of an apparent cause, and this diagnosis is only

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43 The Latin term *vulva* generally refers to the womb (of humans or animals), and should not be confused with the English word “vulva”, which of course traces its origins back to this word, but refers to external parts of the female genitalia. As Adams acknowledges, by the early Empire *vulva* was also being used to refer to other internal parts of the female genitalia, including what English calls the vagina. (Adams 1982: 103) A sense of concealment is apparent in the etymology of the Latin word *vulva* or *volva* (literally a “wrapper” or “covering”); this word is related to the verb *volvere* (“to wrap”) and cognate with the Greek “ἐλυεῖν (“to roll” or “to wrap”). Von Staden points out that *vulva* “has its origin in ordinary language...but it is not an obscenity and...is freely welcomed into literary Latin by Celsus...[unlike] obscenities such as *cunnus*”—an “obscenity” which Celsus entirely eschews. Not all writers of medical prose avoid using this word, as von Staden notes, citing the example of Mustio, an author of a gynecological treatise dating to circa 500 CE. (von Staden 1991: 290) In post-Republican era literature, the Latin word *uterus*, it should be noted, typically refers not to the “womb”, but to the abdomen or belly (see Adams 1982: 100; von Staden 1991: 281), unlike the English word “uterus”, which corresponds more directly to the Latin “vulva”. Regarding the use of *uterus* in Seneca’s tragedies and works by other authors, see Marioni 1995: 16 n. 58 and André 1991: 138. Yet another Latin word used to refer to the “womb” is *matrix*; this term does not carry connotations of “concealing” or “wrapping”, and it is not used by either Celsus or Seneca.

44 Holmes 2010: 122 ; see also 185. Celsus directly acknowledges a qualitative difference between the bodies of men and women, stating that *sexus* must be taken into account when diagnosing and treating illness (1.3.1.3) See also Padel 1995: 61; von Staden 1991: 271.
possible because of the outward signs (inguen et febricula) that emerge from the body.

Without these symptoms coming to light, the ulcus would continue to lurk in a hidden state and diagnosis would be elusive.

These examples thus far examined have demonstrated conditions in which we have the causa of illness has been said either to be concealed (abdita, obscura, neque...apparet, etc.) or revealed (manifesta, evidens, etc.), not the illness itself. Celsus also describes conditions said to have no cause. In one such instance, Celsus refers to a form of madness in which a person may experience laughter, or have feelings of sadness or dejection “without a cause”: Interest etiam, ipse sine causa subinde rideat, an maestus demissusque sit... (It also matters whether [the patient] repeatedly laughs without cause, or if he is sorrowful and dejected..., 3.18.22.3-4) The expression sine causa is also used when Celsus describes the fearful prognosis of a condition in which a person starts to grow thin “without a cause”. Celsus also uses this terminology when describing head pain which spreads to the shoulders sine causa, fevers that occur sine manifesta causa, and the sudden onset of blindness sine ulla manifesta causa. As with Celsus’ descriptions of hidden and obvious causes, one finds slight variations in terminology or phraseology in cases where there is said to be “no cause” responsible for a condition of illness. It is possible that Celsus’ phrase sine causa functions as a shorthand expression for sine manifesta causa (although Celsus does not make this explicit). In some instances, Celsus’ use of

45 Si sine causa quis emacrescit, ne in malum habitum corpus eius recidat, metus est. (2.7.2.4-5)
46 Si sine causa longus dolor capitis est, et in cervicis ac scapulas transit, rursusque in caput revertitur, aut a capite ad cervices scapulasque pervenit, perniciosus est... (2.8.36.1)
47 Suppuratio vero pluribus morbis excitatur: nam si longae febres sine dolore, sine manifesta causa remanent... (2.7.29.2) Note that in this example, the fevers occur not only without no apparent cause, but also without pain (sine dolore).
48 Quidam in posteriore vitio calidis aquis usi relevatique: quidam sine ulla manifesta causa subito obcaecati sunt. (6.6.37b.2)
the qualifier *manifesta* (negated by *sine*) raises questions about exactly what Celsus means when describing an illness as being *sine causa*. Does he mean that certain conditions actually occur without there being any cause? Or, is suggesting that certain conditions occur without any *discernible* cause? Under the latter interpretation, the phrases *sine causa*, *sine manifesta causa*, and *sine ulla manifesta causa* would serve as yet another way in which Celsus refers to “hidden” causes. This would be in keeping with the dichotomous framework of “hidden” and “apparent” causes that Celsus sets forth in the Proemium to his work. At no point in his Proemium does Celsus mention a school of thought that believed in the possibility that an illness could occur completely without a cause⁴⁹, and while he himself does acknowledge cases in which certain conditions occur *sine causa*, he does not specify that those conditions *always* occur without a cause. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that Celsus uses *sine causa* as an alternate way to convey that there is a “hidden” cause. I would argue then, that while Celsus is not always consistent with the terminology he uses for conditions occurring “without a cause” / “without an apparent cause” and conditions resulting from “hidden causes”, all of these phrases express the same basic idea, which is that the cause of a condition is unknown, and not that the cause is non-existent. At the same time the examples cited above illustrate that when Celsus uses the phrases *sine causa*, *sine manifesta causa*, and *sine ulla manifesta causa*, the illness in question is often rather serious, with harsh symptoms and potentially fatal outcomes.

⁴⁹ The closest Celsus comes to saying as much is when he discusses certain practitioners who, apparently following the ideology of Themison (a first century BCE physician and the founder of the methodic school of medicine), believe that knowledge of causation is not pertinent to treatment (*...contendunt nullius causae notitiam quicquam ad curationes pertinentem*, 1.Pr.54.6-7). But the idea that having knowledge of causation is not relevant to healing is not tantamount to believing that illness might occur without a cause.
Concealment and Revelation in Senecan Tragedy

Like many works of tragedy, Seneca’s plays are concerned with both internal and external symptoms and causes of illness, and thus the ways in which illness, and its causes, can be concealed or revealed. As we will see, Seneca’s representations of the concealment and revelation of illness use some of the same language as Celsus, but Seneca also uses words that do not appear in Celsus, as well as metaphorical imagery. My observations in this section will focus primarily on scenes from two Senecan tragedies, *Thyestes* and *Phaedra*, which are particularly concerned with the concealment and revelation of illness.

**Thyestes**

I will begin by analyzing some scenes from *Thyestes*, a work that explores themes of concealment in various ways, some of which are relevant to matters of illness. In this play Atreus reunites with his estranged brother, Thyestes, and prepares a feast to be masqueraded as an offering to solidify their fraternal reconciliation. In truth, this feast is intended to bring great anguish to Thyestes, since Atreus surreptitiously conceals the blood and body parts of Thyestes’ murdered sons in the meal, stating *implebo patrem / funere suorum* (I shall fill the father with the death of his sons, 890-891). Thus the action itself climaxes with an especially disturbing image of concealment: Thyestes' body, unbeknownst to him, contains within itself the flesh of his own sons. Along with concealment, the theme of revelation, likewise anchored

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50 Kosask has noted the emphasis on both internal and external factors in Euripidean tragedy, as well as in Hippocratic writings on medicine. She observes that the Hippocratic writer may see “both external, physical forces (e.g. air, water, geography) and internal forces (e.g. blood, bile, water, phlegm) as essential elements in causing disease, [and that] tragedy too considers the relative weight of external (e.g. divine, social) and internal (e.g. hereditary) factors in stories it represents.” (Kosak 2004: 1-2; see also 67) Commenting on Greek tragedy, Holmes similarly observes that “the tragedians themselves were deeply interested in ‘internal’ as well as ‘external’ causes...” (Holmes 2010: 239) Neither Kosak nor Holmes discuss these themes in relation to Latin literature.
in the body and just as disturbing, is important too. At the end of the fourth act of the play, the messenger reports to the chorus how Atreus dismembered Thyestes’ sons, providing a description that recalls the precise procedures of a medical dissection:

Erepta vivis exta pectoribus tremunt
spirantque venae corque adhuc pavidum salit;
at ille fibras tractat ac fata inspicit
et adhuc calentes viscerum venas notat.
Postquam hostiae placuere, securus vacat
iam fratris epulis: ipse divisum secat
in membra corpus, amputat truncus tenus
umeros patentes⁵² et lacertorum moras,
denudat artus durus atque ossa amputat…

Torn from living chests, the organs are still trembling,
the sinews still breathing, and the hearts still leaping in terror.
But he handles the innards and investigates the fates,
and he observes the sinews of their innards, still hot.
After he is satisfied with the sacrificial victims, he relaxes, free from care,
ready for his brother’s feast: he himself cuts the body, divided up, into parts,
he cuts back all the way up to the trunk
the exposed shoulders and the upper arms that delay him,
pitiless, he lays bare the joints and cuts up the bones... (755-763)

Various scholars, including Mattern, have observed that it is rare, outside of Celsus’ comments, to find references to human dissection—let alone vivisection—in Greek and Latin literature⁵³, but this conclusion seems to be heavily based upon the medical prose of authors like Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen, seemingly overlooking depictions of dissection and

⁵¹ Most also notes this passage’s high degree of anatomical detail, which he associates “more with cookbooks than with tragedies.” (Most 1992: 395) A close relationship between medicine and cooking is evident in works such as the Hippocratic treatise On Ancient Medicine, which suggests that the beginnings of medicine were rooted in observation of how people reacted to the consumption of different foods. According to the author of this treatise, these beginnings help explain why dietetics came to play such a prominent role in Greek and Roman medicine. (On Ancient Medicine 3-4, 6; see Nutton 2013: 96-97)

⁵² Here, my quotation of the Latin (patentes) departs from the Oxford Classical text (patentis), following the textual editions of Fitch and Tarrant. (see Fitch 2004a: 294; Tarrant 1985: 74, 199)

⁵³ Mattern 2013: 72.
vivisection in other literary genres. Although vivisection is often associated with anatomical study and medical experimentation, and Atreus’ acts are not specifically dedicated to those purposes, in the above passage we nevertheless see bodies which are opened up, having their internal features exposed and described in “medicalized” language. The messenger notes how the functioning of various organs (exta, venae, corque) can be observed (some of them apparently still functioning as if inside a fully living body), and these organs are the subject of verbs (tremunt, spirantque, salit, respectively; 755-756) which reinforce the sense of continued animation. The use of these verbs, all of which strongly suggest lively human activity (trembling, breathing, leaping), endows the organs with an element of personification, ironically while the children themselves are being deprived of life. Indeed, it is not the children who are said to be still living, but their chests (vivis...pectoribus, 755), and the vivacity of the organs becomes evident only through the children’s brutal deaths. This gruesome ambiguity, along with the ambiguity concerning the precise moment of the children’s deaths, evoke a macabre scene of vivisection, thus casting Atreus in the role of a rogue physician. In keeping with Celsus’ views on vivisection, this passage portrays the cutting up of living bodies (or at least parts of the body that are still “alive”) as pitelessly cruel and sadistic.54

54 The elder Seneca also emphasizes the sadistic nature of vivisection in a passage from the Controversiae which relates how an Athenian painter, Parrhasias, vivisected a slave in order to make a realistic painting of Prometheus as the eagle ate his liver. Throughout this passage (10.15), allegations and language of torture (torquere, tormentum) abound. In response to these allegations of torture, Parrhasias offers the argument that certain license has always been granted to the arts, and he singles out the art of medicine in particular, observing that doctors have been allowed to open up the body in order to investigate illness: quantum semper artibus licisset: medicos, ut vim ignotam morbi cognoscerent, viscera rescidisse; hodie cadaverum artus rescindiri ut nervorum articulorumque positio cognosci possit. (Controversiae 10.5.17) While the passage overwhelmingly portrays Parrhasias’ actions as a form of torture, the defense which Parrhasias offers in his own defense resembles the rationalist justifications for vivisection described in Celsus’ Proemium (26.6-8). Samellas and Squire also note the element of torture in this passage (Samellas 2010: 27 n. 15; Squire 2011: 64).
The liveliness of the children’s bodies is also emphasized by other elements in the passage. In his commentary on *Thyestes*, R.J. Tarrant observes that Atreus behaves like a Roman priest conducting an *extispicium* on the bodies of victims, and he points out that “only the organs of freshly killed victims were thought suitable” for this practice of divination. The phrases *fata inspicit* (he investigates, 757) and *notat* (he observes, 758) also serve to characterize Thyestes as priest examining the organs of a sacrificial victim, and the fact that the internal vessels are still warm (*calentes...venas*, 758) further suggests that the bodies as still suitable for a perverted form of *extispicium*. It is important to note that Atreus is preparing the bodies for a feast; as ghastly as this feast may be, these preparations further cast Atreus in the role of a Roman priest, since in Roman culture “all sacrifices, except those addressed to the divinities of the underworld, were followed by a sacrificial banquet.” Furthermore, the use of the noun *exta* (755) in reference to the children’s organs adds further support to reading this passage as a scene of *extispicium*. In Seneca’s *Oedipus*, for example, *exta* is used in reference to the organs of a bull which are examined during a scene depicting a more clear-cut example of *extispicium* (354; 372). If we accept the etymology of *exta* posited by Ernout and Meillet (*ex-secta*—i.e. “cut out”), we find that the use of this word heightens the sense that the internal body is being exposed through the act of cutting into the body.

The messenger’s use of the phrase *umeros patentes* (762) raises some translation issues that are important to the theme of concealment and revelation. I choose to translate *patentes*

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55 Tarrant 1985: 198; see also Pratt 1983: 105.
56 The verb *inspicit* (757)—with its roots *in + spicere* (literally to *look into*)—also reinforces the sense that the internal body becomes observable in this scene.
57 Scheid 2004: 630.
58 I return to discuss this scene in more depth later in this chapter.
as “exposed”, noting that the passage places emphasis upon Atreus’ revealing the internal features of the children, and that the verb denudare (to lay bare, to uncover) is used in the following line. In his commentary on this line, Tarrant acknowledges that the word patens can have the sense of “bare” or “exposed”, but he also states that “this sense seems out of place here.” Tarrant instead chooses to translate umeros patentes as “spreading shoulders”, taking patens in a sense that is, for example, more closely aligned with Celsus’ use of patere in 5.28.9.4-5. Admittedly, this translation makes good sense, but in the context of Atreus’ dismemberment of Thyestes’ sons we can also recognize the word’s connotations of revelation. In other words, I am arguing for sensitivity to the polysemy of the word patens, particularly in connection with the imagery of concealment of revelation, while acknowledging that an English translation probably needs to narrow it down to a single word which will not reflect the Latin word’s semantic range.

Tarrant, however, dismisses the polysemy of patens in this passage, somewhat surprisingly in view of his comments on the phrase lacertorum moras (762)—literally, to borrow from Tarrant’s translation, “the delays caused by the [upper arms].” This phrase, according to Tarrant, refers to the sinews of the upper arm “slow[ing] down the process of dismemberment.” Tarrant goes on to call this reference “brilliant in its clinical exactness”, a phrase which again calls to mind the process of a doctor revealing internal parts of the body during a surgical procedure. Indeed, in this passage the lines between careful dissection and

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Tarrant 1985: 199.

One detects a possible bilingual pun involving the word moras (delays), which resembles the Greek μέον / μόρια (parts), resonating with the references to membra and artus in the lines that come immediately before and after.

Tarrant 1985: 199.

Tarrant 1985: 199.
violent mutilation are blurred, very much through Seneca’s use of language. The repeated use of the verb *amputare* (761, 763), which can be translated “to trim” or “to prune” (careful, controlled actions), as well as “to mutilate” (a destructive action, often with impulsive connotations), reinforces this ambiguity. It appears that Atreus is at first performing a vivisection, and then a dissection of some of the body parts that have been cut off, but it is not clear where the vivisection ends and the dissection begins. This in turn has some unsettling and paradoxical implications pertaining to the continuity of personal identity. As Most asks in his discussion of the themes of dismemberment and mutilation of the body in Neronian poetry more generally, “at what point [does] the mutilation of the body lead to the loss of personal identity of the body’s owner?” This question, which has no straightforward answer, is particularly germane to the above passage, where body parts become increasingly animated after being severed from the rest of the body. As we will see later in this chapter, *Thyestes* contains other examples in which a discontinuity of personal identity occurs as a result of the disturbance of the body’s normal mode of operation.

The language used in lines 755-757 strikingly echoes wording from another passage where the lines of vivisection and dissection are blurred: Ovid’s description of the flaying of the satyr Marsyas in the *Metamorphoses*. Tarrant recognizes similarities in the diction of these two

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64 Although the word *amputare* is used in this quasi-medical context, it does not appear in Celsus.

65 Most 1992: 406; see also 409-410. Most speculates that the recurrence of dismemberment scenes in Neronian literature may reflect the contemporary popularity of spectacles in which participants were torn limb from limb by animals. Sedley also discusses paradoxes of identity resulting from amputation and the place of such paradoxes in Stoic philosophical thought. (see Sedley 1982: 267-270)

66 In turn, Marx has argued that Celsus borrows words, phrases, and other stylistic elements from Ovid. (Marx 1915: 466; see also Spencer 1935: vii) Serbat notes Marx’s observations in the introduction to his edition of *De Medicina*, without explicitly stating his own views on the matter. (Serbat 1995: ix-x) Önnerfors, on the other hand, strongly disputes the idea of any Ovidian influence on Celsus, arguing that the resonances cited by Marx are not
passages, but he does not discuss their common theme of vivisection.\textsuperscript{67} Ovid’s mythological narrative recounts how the god Apollo punishes the satyr Marsyas for challenging him to a flute-playing contest by removing Marsyas’ skin—thus exposing Marsyas’ internal organs—while he is still alive:

\begin{quote}
Clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus, 
nec quicquam \textit{nisi vulnus erat}; cruor undique manat 
\textit{detectique patent} nervi trepidaeque sine ulla 
pelle micant \textit{venae}; \textit{salientia viscera possis} 
et \textit{perlucentes numerare} in pectore fibras.
\end{quote}

The skin is snatched from the surface of the limbs as he cries out, and he was nothing if not a wound; blood gushes everywhere, the uncovered sinews lay exposed, and the trembling vessels quiver without any skin; you can count out the jumping internal organs and the tissues clearly visible in the chest. (Ovid, \textit{Metamorphoses} 6.387-391)

Numerous pieces of vocabulary in the above passage resemble vocabulary used in the messenger’s report of Atreus’ “dissections”\textsuperscript{69}. While Atreus is carving up the limbs and bodies of Thyestes’ sons, Seneca is metapoetically cutting up—and reassembling—phrases (or \textit{membra}\textsuperscript{70}) from Ovid’s poetry. Seneca’s apparent appropriation of language from Ovid’s

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\textsuperscript{67} Tarrant 1985: 199.  
\textsuperscript{68} von Staden discusses various mythological narratives in which valorizations of human or animal skin either reflect or reinforce the “taboo” element of dissection and vivisection in Greek culture. This discussion somewhat surprisingly makes no mention of the Marsyas myth. (von Staden 1992: 227-230)  
\textsuperscript{69} These similarities include \textit{patent} (cf. patentes 762); \textit{trepidaeque} (cf. tremunt, 755); \textit{venae} (cf. venae, 756; venas, 758); \textit{salientia} (cf. salit, 756); \textit{viscera} (cf. viscerum, 758); \textit{pectore} (cf. pectoribus, 755); \textit{fibras} (cf. fibras, 757).  
\textsuperscript{70} The word \textit{membrum}, which is used to refer to dismembered body parts in 761 and in other parts of \textit{Thyestes} (60; 1062), can also refer to “a small section of a speech or literary work”. (Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{membrum}) To be clear, in pointing out the possibility of this metapoetic interpretation I am not attempting to argue that metapoetry was necessary intended by Seneca here (on the relationship between metapoetic readings and authorial intention in Latin literature, including some comments on examples from the Senecan corpus, see Liebermann 2014a: 419). At the same time, Seneca would not be the first to employ this sort of play on words. As Most notes, Horace, for instance, makes a pun using \textit{membra} in reference to both “limbs” and “a section of a poem” with his phrase
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account of Marsyas is highly fitting, seeing that in both contexts murderous acts of revenge expose internal features of the body which continue to operate in their usual, living function.

Ovid is explicit about the observability of Marsyas’ organs, as indicated by the phrase *possis...numerare* (you can count out, 6.390-391. The use of the second person verb *possis* makes the observation of Marsyas’ internal body into more of a first-hand experience for the reader, as if including the reader in the process of examination. In Latin, the second person singular can, of course, be used impersonally (translatable into English as “one can...”), but in this particular context the verb makes the vivisection especially vivid, as the reader is being put into the role of an observer, who, like the perpetrator of the act, can see and count everything. In addition to this phrase, the revelation of Marsyas’ body is strongly conveyed by the words *detectique* (uncovered, 6.389), *patent* (lay exposed, 6.389), and *perlucentes* (clearly visible, 6.391). While the movements and animation of Marsyas’ various internal features become apparent, Marsyas himself is transformed into *nec quidquam nisi vulnus* (nothing if not wound, 6.388); this phrase recalls the paradoxical way in which Seneca emphasizes the liveliness of the organs of Thyestes’ children after the children themselves have been killed. The notion of being “nothing if not a wound”, and thus gaping and open, suggests the absence of solidity and being while essential parts of Marsyas’ body are being revealed. This is another

disciecti membra poetae (Sermones 1.4.62), and Aristophanes uses the analogous Greek word μέλη simultaneously in reference to “limbs” and the “songs of tragedy”. (Frogs 862; see Most 1992: 407)

71 Similarly, Anderson observes that Ovid also uses “the present tense to make his account of the flaying grotesquely vivid”. (Anderson 1972: 202-203)

72 This phrase also recalls language used by Ovid in his description of the death of Hippolytus: *unum erat omnia vulnus* (he was all wound, Metamorphoses 15.529). As Erasmo notes, Ovid characterizes Hippolytus’ corpse “as a living wound”. (Erasmo 2004: 132; see also 133) Hippolytus’ corpse is characterized similarly in Seneca’s Phaedra, as seen in the messenger’s report: *haesere biijges vulnere* (horses cling to the wound, 1101). Most has also noted the Ovidian influence in Seneca’s description of Hippolytus’ death. (Most 1992: 393)
way in which Ovid’s phrase approaches Senecan paradox, even if *Thyestes* does not have an exact parallel for the specific language used by Ovid. Indeed, in both descriptions, the internal state of the body “comes to life” in vivid descriptions only when the individuals to whom the bodies belong die or enter into a near-death state. Since Marsyas possesses the body of a satyr, and thus not an entirely “human” body, it is even more interesting that the revelation of these bodies is described in such highly similar terms. By modeling his use of language upon language in the passage from Ovid, it appears that Seneca imagined the interior of the human body to be analogous enough to that of a mythological satyr.73

In the messenger’s report, the exposure of the children’s internal parts is also emphasized by *patentes* (762)—echoing the use of *patent* in Ovid’s description of Marsyas (6.389)—as well as by *divisum* (760) and *denudat* (763). Celsus also uses the words *patere* and *dividere* in close proximity when describing a large, boil-like swelling called a *phyma*. Explaining this condition, Celsus states that a *phyma* typically extends over a larger area (*latius patere consuevit*, 5.28.9.4-5) than a boil (*furunculus*). The use of the comparative adverb *latius* suggests that Celsus intends *patere* in the sense of “extending” or “spreading out”74—a sense which, as we have

73 It is also noteworthy that many of the words which occur in both the passage from Seneca and the passage from Ovid also appear in a description of necromancy in Lucan’s *De Bello Civili* (6.719-722; 750-755). While not exactly a description of dissection or vivisection, this passage describes a process in which the witch Erichtho’s reanimates a dead soldier, thus blurring lines between life and death as in the passages from Seneca and Ovid. Furthermore, Lucan, similar to Seneca and Ovid, emphasizes how the organs of the corpse come to life (*Percussae gelido trepidant sub pectore fibrae*, 6.752; *Tunc omnes palpitat artus, / tenduntur nervi*, 6.754-755), while in other ways the soldier remains in a death-like state (*et nova desuetis subrepens vita medullis / miscetur mori*, 6.753-754; *Nondum facies viventis in illo, / iam morientis erat*, 6.758-759). I thank Dylan Bloy for bringing this passage to my attention.

74 Spencer also interprets the term this way, as shown by his translation: “a phyma commonly extends even over a wider area.” (Spencer 1938a: 143). In a separate passage, Celsus uses *patere* in a different sense, describing how suppuration can be detected by observing various symptoms (the list of symptoms is long and I do not quote that part of the sentence): *Omnis etiam suppuratio, quae nondum oculis patet, sic deprehendi potest…* (Also, every suppuration, which is not yet visible to the eyes, can be detected thusly…, 2.7.35.1-3) Here, the verb *patere* is tied
seen, can be understood in the Seneca’s polysemous phrase *patentes umeros*. Celsus goes on
to state that when one “divides” the *phyma*, pus then appears (*ubi divisum est, pus eodem modo apparat*, 5.28.9.6-7). Here, *divisum* refers to creating an incision, and it is clear that this process can provide insight (emphasized by *apparet*) into aspects concealed within the interior of the body (in this case, *pus*). Thus, cutting into the body is depicted as a revealing act, as in the case of Atreus’ surgical operations. In another example, Celsus uses a very similar construction when discussing a surgical procedure that one can perform upon a follicular abscess called a κηρίον75: *Si divisum est, multo plus intus corrupti quam in furunculo apparat...* (If it is cut into, there appears much more internal decay than in a boil..., 5.28.13a.5) Here, the act of incision is said to provide insight into the internal state of the body (*intus*), and the verb *apparere* is again used to convey the idea of revelation.

After the messenger describes Atreus’ apparent act of vivisection and the subsequent dissection, he proceeds to explain how Atreus cooked the body parts of Thyestes’ sons. The messenger then closes out his speech by stating that these horrors will soon be revealed to Thyestes, who is still unaware of the nature of the feast Atreus is preparing:

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Verterit curru licet
sibi ipse Titan obvium ducens iter,
tenebrisque facinus obruat taetrum novis
nox missa ab ortu tempore alieno gravis,
tamen videndum est. Tota patefient mala.
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Even though the Titan has turned his chariot, taking a path counter to himself,

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75 Celsus does not offer a Latin term for this condition. The Greek word κηρίον can be translated as “honeycomb”, a name derived from the resulting appearance of the skin.
and although the heavy night, having arisen from the east and at an unusual time, covers up the repulsive crime in unheard-of shadows, it nevertheless must be seen. All the ills will be exposed. (784-788)

At the end of the messenger’s speech, the verbal stem *pate-* is again employed to convey a sense of revelation: *Tota patefient mala* (All the evils will be exposed, 788). The theme of revelation is also highlighted by the passive periphrastic *videndum est*. This phrase, which comes at the end of a complex sentence about the inauspicious motion of the sun (i.e. *Titan*, 785) reversing its usual course across the sky, emphasizes the connection between revelation and sight. The messenger acknowledges that the revelation of Atreus’ crimes will be seen despite the unusual presence of *nox* (night, 787), which covers things up with *tenebrae novae* (unheard-of shadows, 786). These references to night and shadows serve as metaphors for Thyestes’ state of ignorance, and are echoed by Atreus when he prepares to unveil his plot and initiate the revelation of sorrows for Thyestes. In addition, apropos to Thyestes’ experience the idea of illness is accentuated by the use of the adjective *gravis* (modifying *nox*).

I have translated *gravis* as “heavy” to underscore the figurative gravity of the events that are about to unfold, as well as the idea that the heavens are weighed down by what is transpiring. *Gravis* can also be translated as “seriously ill” when used in reference to the body or health. Celsus, in fact, uses this word quite frequently when describing serious forms of illness. Thus it is noteworthy that the messenger also describes Thyestes as *gravisque vino* (heavy/sick with

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76 *Titan* is often used, especially by post-Augustan poets, to refer to the sun. (Coffey and Mayer 1990: 152; see also Grimal 1965: 111)
77 Commenting on the complexity of this sentence, Tarrant observes that the “length and involved syntax parallel the Sun’s efforts at concealment. In the end, though, symbolizing the failure of resistance, the language descends to the minimal: *videndum est, tota patefient mala.*” (Tarrant 1985: 203)
78 Glare 2012: s.v. *gravis*.
79 e.g. *in gravi morbo* (2.7.36.6), *gravior febris* (3.4.14.7)
wine, 781), thus activating the polysemy of *gravis* to suggest that Thyestes is both “full” from eating and “sick” (though at this point he is unaware of it) because he has in fact consumed his own sons (778-779). Tarrant observes that *gravis* is “insistently repeated” in the last act of the play, and that this word “relate[s] the oppressive external darkness to...the abnormal heaviness with Thyestes”80, but he does not note the word’s connotations of sickness, which are highly relevant to Thyestes’ experience. Noting these connotations of the word *gravis* raises some interesting questions about the nature of sickness: can a person in fact be “sick” if s/he does not feel “sick” or reveal any outward symptoms of sickness, and if so, how would it be possible for either that person or for other people to know that the person is sick? Inherent to these questions is an element of Senecan paradox, and later in this chapter we will see that the play continues to explore such paradoxical questions about the nature of sickness.

After a long choral passage describing the occurrence of various cosmic calamities81, Atreus directly addresses Thyestes’ present state of ignorance concerning his plot. He describes this ignorance as a darkness which is concealing sorrow from Thyestes, while noting that the darkness will soon be dispelled when the true nature of the feast is revealed:

Sed cur satis sit? Pergam et implebo patrem
funere suorum. Ne quid obstaret pudor,
dies recessit: perge dum caelum vacat.
Utinam quidem tenere fugientes deos
possem, et coactos trahere, ut ultricem dapem
omnes *viderent*—quod sat est, *videat* pater.
Etiam die nolente discutiam tibi

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80 Tarrant 1985: 203-204.
81 This list of calamities includes the disruption of the natural cycles of day and night (813-814), as well as the disappearance of the moon and stars (825-827). These events are linked to Phoebus’ reversal of course (802-804), which produces a sense of concealment, as is reflected in the language used in the passage: *noctis opacae* (791); *non Luna graves digerit umbras* (827); *Natura tegat* (834). This language and imagery reinforces the idea that Thyestes is unaware of his brother’s subterfuge.
tenebras, miseriae sub quibus latitant tuae.
Nimis diu conviva securi iaces
hilarique vultu; iam satis mensis datum est
satisque Baccho: sobrio tanta ad mala
opus est Thyeste. Turba famularis, fores
templi relaxa, festa patefiat domus.

But why should it be enough? I shall proceed and fill the father
with the funeral of his sons. Lest shame provide any obstacle,
the day has departed: proceed while the sky is empty.
Indeed I wish that I could restrain the fleeing gods,
constrain and drag them so that they all
might see the feast of vengeance—but it is enough that the father should see it.
Although the day is unwilling, I will disperse for you
the shadows in which your sorrows lie hidden.
Too long do you lie about with a cheerful expression
at an untroubled feast; now enough has been given for the dinner table,
enough for the wine: for such great evils, it is necessary to have
Thyestes sober. You group of slaves, open up the doors
of the temple, let the festivities of the household be exposed. (890-902)

Various elements in Atreus’ language draw attention to the dichotomy of concealment and
revelation. In observing that Thyestes will soon see the nature of the feast—and thus
understand the cause of his impending illness—Atreus uses the words viderent (895) and videat
(895). The verb videre is obvious and common enough, to be sure, yet it is worth recalling that
one of Celsus’ terms for causes of illness that are obvious and able to discerned is evidentes
causae. These words link revelation to perception by sight, also recalling the passive
periphrastic videndum est used near the end of the messenger’s speech (788). Presently,
knowledge of Atreus’ crimes is concealed from Thyestes’ perception, as are the feelings of
illness that will he will soon begin to detect. Referring to Thyestes’ “hidden sorrows”
(miseriae...latitant, 897), Atreus uses a verb that recalls one of Celsus’ terms (latens) for
“hidden” causes of illness.
Atreus’ language also plays upon the dichotomy of day and night (cf. *dies recessit*, 892; *die nolente*, 896), with the day corresponding to states of exposure and knowledge, and the night corresponding to states of concealment and ignorance. Thyestes is metaphorically “in the dark” as his illness and sorrows are hidden by shadows (*tenebras*, 987), and meanwhile he sits with a cheerful expression (*hilarique vultu*, 899). It is, on the one hand, deeply ironic that Thyestes is characterized as *hilaris*<sup>82</sup> after consuming his own children, but this depiction also suggests that Thyestes is mad or deluded because of his ignorance. Indeed, Celsus repeatedly uses the adjective *hilaris* and the noun *hilaritas* when describing various forms of *insania*<sup>83</sup>, as I discuss more in depth in Chapter 4.

Preparing to inform Thyestes about the true nature of the feast, Atreus asks the household slaves to open up the doors of the palace, setting the stage for the truth to be revealed (*festa patefiat domus*, 902). Here, the verb *patefier* underscores the theme of revelation at a key moment in the text, as it also does at the end of the messenger’s speech (*tota patefient mala*, 788). This usage also recalls how Celsus uses the related verb *pater* when discussing revelation of the internal parts of the body. Atreus’ use of *patefier* foreshadows the tragic realizations that Thyestes is about to experience, while perpetuating the sense of concealment in sarcastically referring to his horrible acts as *festa* (festivities). While the messenger’s use of *patefier* acknowledges the reality of the situation more straightforwardly, both characters use this word in relation to Thyestes’ emergence from a state of ignorance as he begins to realize the true nature of what had been concealed from him.

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<sup>82</sup> This usage is all the more noteworthy because it is only instance in which the adjective *hilaris* is used in Senecan tragedy.

<sup>83</sup> E.g. 3.18.3.6; 3.18.9.8; 3.18.20.2; 3.18.20.3; 3.18.22.5; cf. *exhilaretur*, 3.24.5.5.
Following his order to have the doors of the household opened, Atreus gives a candid description of the reactions he expects to observe in Thyestes when the truth is revealed:

Libet videre, capita natorum intuens
quos det colores, verba quae primus dolor
effundat aut ut spiritu expulso stupens
corpus rigescat. Fructus hic operis mei est.
Miserum videre nolo, sed dum fit miser.
Aperta multa tecta conlucent face.

I am eager to see what colors he gives off,
looking at the heads of his children, what words
his initial pain pours out, and how his body goes stiff,
stunned, having breathed out his spirit. This is the fruit of my work.
I do not wish to see him in a wretched state, but to see him becoming wretched.
Opened up, the house is bright with much light. (903-908)

Immediately before the palace is opened up (aperta, 908), Atreus enthusiastically anticipates observing Thyestes suffer, and he predicts a variety of symptoms that Thyestes will experience. The signs of illness which Atreus so gleefully imagines are all perceptible by the senses, including the colores (904) that will be revealed in Thyestes' appearance, the verba (904) that will emerge from his mouth, and the spirit or breath that will pour out (spiritu expulso, 905) as his body goes stiff (rigescat, 906). Atreus also predicts that Thyestes will experience dolor, a symptom which is not always physically observable, but even this will be apparent in the words Thyestes is expected to utter (904). Indeed, Atreus anticipates that Thyestes' physical body (corpus, 906), as well as his mind, will be stunned (stupens, 905). The idea that Thyestes will

84 Color as a symptom of illness is also discussed in Chapter 2.
85 The word spiritus can refer to “respiration”, and thus the phrase spiritu expulso might suggest a deep exhalation of breath. It can also refer to one’s “life”, “spirit” or “soul”—in which case spiritu expulso would suggest the escaping of life and the onset of death. (cf. Glare 2012: s.v. spiritus) Due to this ambiguity, it is not clear what Atreus is expecting as the ultimate fate of Thyestes, whether he should live or die. Atreus' statement in line 907 (miserum videre nolo, sed dum fit miser) implies that he is in fact not very concerned about whether Thyestes will live on in a miserable condition, or whether he will die. Instead, Atreus is most interested in observing symptoms of illness arise in Thyestes.
experience an externalized—and thus observable—form of illness is also underscored by words prefixed by e-/ex- in this passage (effundat, 905; expulso, 905). Atreus’ interest in observing Thyestes’ symptoms, even before they are revealed, situates him simultaneously in the roles of sadistic, voyeuristic spectator and medical observer, while Thyestes is thrust into the role of “the patient” even though he has yet to manifest any symptoms of illness. Commenting upon the characterization of Atreus, Fitch suggests that Atreus is “playing the role of…director or régisseur of the drama, providing a spectacle to be watched by himself and by the implied spectators.” In this respect, Atreus is placed in a position of agency and control, while everyone else—especially Thyestes—must watch and wait. Similar power dynamics can be seen in the aspects of “doctor” and “patient” that are respectively embodied by Atreus and Thyestes. Fitch does not explore these specific aspects of characterization, but we can see that Atreus, as “doctor”, wields control over the medical situation of his brother, who is relegated to suffering and struggling to understand his own condition. These elements of characterization also resonate with the characteristically Senecan theme of self-awareness, a topic I will return to later in this chapter.

Immediately after the above remarks from Atreus, Thyestes begins to describe symptoms of illness starting to take hold in him, and he notes that his perceptions have been dulled (hebetata, 920), making his sensations of the illness slow to develop. The verb hebetare also appears in Celsus, who suggests that inactivity, in contrast with work, “dulls” the body

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87 Fitch 2000: 3. Schiesaro similarly observes that Atreus assumes an “authorial role” in this particular play, and that other characters do much the same in other works of Senecan tragedy. (Schiesaro 2003: 13-16; 55-69)
(...siquidem ignavia corpus hebetat, labor firmat, 1.1.1.7-8). This idea resonates with the plot of *Thyestes*, since Atreus has been working hard to prepare the feast for Thyestes, who in contrast has remained comparatively idle, underscoring the active and passive roles played by these characters. While Thyestes continues to be unaware that he has unwittingly consumed the flesh of his sons, symptoms of illness begin to materialize in him. These symptoms are manifested both mentally and physically:

...quid flere iubes,
nulla surgens dolor ex causa?
Quis me prohibet flore decenti
vincire comam, prohibet, prohibet?
Vernae capiti fluxere rosae,
ingui madidus crinis amomo
inter subitos stetit horrores,
imber vultu nolente cadit,
venit in medias voces gemitus.

...why do you direct me to weep,
pain arising without any cause?
Who prevents me from girding my hair
with decorous flowers, who prevents me, who prevents me?
The springtime roses have slipped from my head,
my hair, infused with dense myrrh,
has stood on end amidst sudden fright,
a downpour falls from my unwilling face,
a groan interrupts my words. (943-951)

Even while various symptoms of illness are revealed to Thyestes, they continue to defy his understanding and therefore the sense of revelation remains incomplete. He observes, for instance, that he is paradoxically experiencing *nulla surgens dolor ex causa* (pain arising from no cause, 944). The present participle *surgens* underlines the oncoming symptoms which are just beginning to surface, while the words *nulla...ex causa* emphasize that there is no obvious cause for the disturbance which Thyestes is beginning to experience. Thyestes speaks in very strong
terms about the causes of his illness: it is not as if there is a “hidden” cause, but rather he supposes that there is no cause at all. In addition to nulla...ex causa, Thyestes uses other expressions to state that there is no cause for his symptoms, including sine causa (964) and nec causa subest (967). As we saw earlier in this chapter, Celsus uses a variety of comparable expressions, such as sine causa (2.7.2.4-5; 2.8.36.1; 3.18.22.3-4), sine manifesta causa (2.7.29.2; 6.6.37b.2), and sine ulla manifesta causa (6.6.37b.2). In each instance, however, Celsus uses these phrases in stating that the cause of illness is unknown, not that there is no cause of illness at all. Thyestes, on the other hand, is not necessarily saying that there is no cause for his illness, but at this point he cannot imagine what that cause would be, and as a result he, unlike Celsus, leaves open the possibility of illness occurring without any cause.

Paralleling Thyestes’ inability to understand the causes of his symptoms, earlier in the play the chorus states that it cannot understand why Phoebus has reversed his celestial path:

Quid te aetherio pepulit cursu?
Quae causa tuos limite certo
deiecit equos?

What has propelled you out of your heavenly course?
What cause has tossed your horses from their fixed path? (802-804)

Like Thyestes, the chorus struggles to understand the causes behind unexpected phenomena which have recently become apparent. These situations problematize the relationship between cause and effect, as well as the relationship between what can be observed and what can be known or understood. This presents a bleak view of sensory perception, very much in line with
the Stoic view that the senses are an untrustworthy means by which to understand reality.\textsuperscript{88} Celsus also acknowledges the limitations of the senses when explaining the empiricist view that even an \textit{evidens causa} (obvious cause) sometimes cannot supply \textit{scientia} (knowledge) or hope for \textit{medicina} (treatment); such knowledge, he adds, is even less assured when a \textit{causa} is in \textit{dubio} (in doubt, i.e. uncertain). Even the empiricist school, then, is cautious about the knowledge that can be gleaned from the senses, and similarly Seneca’s play is suggesting that the revelation of symptoms does not necessarily provide a possibility for understanding or treatment.

Thyestes’ inability to comprehend the cause of his own symptoms is also emphasized by the repetition of the word \textit{prohibet} (945-946) in a direct question introduced by \textit{quis} (945), as Thyestes futilely searches for understanding. According to Wills, the form of repetition seen in 946 (known as adjacent gemination, or “twinning”), is common in Senecan drama, even though it is generally unusual to find gemination of indicative verb forms in Latin poetry.\textsuperscript{89} In this instance, gemination underscores the insistence—and futility—of Thyestes’ inquiry into the cause of his present experience. Interestingly, even though Thyestes speech is richly colored by vocabulary of illness, his rhetorical question assumes that a \textit{person} (\textit{quis}, rather than the \textit{quid} we might expect) is behind this. This is a particularly fine example of dramatic irony, as the audience knows what he does not (i.e. that indeed a person is behind it, and that it is his own brother); here, as throughout Seneca’s tragedies, the audience can understand that there are

\textsuperscript{88} On this point in Stoic thought and its role in Senecan tragedy more generally, see Busch 2007: 259-261.
\textsuperscript{89} Wills 1996: 102-103. Wills explains that “imperatives are the foremost expressions of verbal geminations.”
larger forces at work, while these forces remain concealed from Thyestes, and thus contribute
to his decreasing sense of self-awareness.

In this confusion, Thyestes experiences a growing sense of dissociation from his own body.
This is apparent in the deluge that pours forth unwillingly from his face (imber vultu nolente
cadit, 950) and in the groan (gemitus, 951)—an uncontrolled kind of utterance—which
interrupts the words (voces, 951) he tries to articulate.90 A few lines later, Thyestes compares
the incomprehensible nature of his present sensations to the seas becoming tumultuous
without any wind:

Mittit luctus signa futuri
mens ante sui praesaga mali:
instat nautis fera tempestas,
cum sine vento tranquilla tument.

The mind, perceiving its own ills beforehand,
sends signs of future grief:
a wild storm looms upon sailors
when a calm sea swells up without any wind. (957-960)

In this metaphor, the phrase cum sine vento tranquilla tument (960) is used to imply that the
onset of Thyestes’ symptoms defies explanation. The expression sine vento closely parallels
Thyestes’ use of the phrase sine causa a few lines later (964), while also recalling Thyestes’
earlier reference to nulla causa (944). In addition, the use of the verb tumere (to swell up) also
resonates with Thyestes’ reference to the pain that is arising in him (surgens dolor, 944), as the
verbs tumere and surgere convey the similar actions of swelling (tumere)91 and rising

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90 It is worth noting that Celsus does not use the word gemitus, nor does he indicate that “groaning” is a sign of
illness.
91 Glare 2012: s.v. tumere.
(surgere).\textsuperscript{92} Celsus uses both of these verbs, along with related nouns and verb forms, such as tumores (swellings)\textsuperscript{93}, adsurgere (to rise up)\textsuperscript{94}, and resurgere (to rise up; to become active again).\textsuperscript{95} Especially prominent are Celsus’ comments on tumores, which are discussed in every Book of \textit{De Medicina} except for Book 1. Tumores are associated with a great variety of conditions, serving as visible indicators of illness. In one passage, Celsus describes a condition in which tumores arise, subside, and then recur once more\textsuperscript{96}, using the verb adsurgere to express their recurrence. In another passage, Celsus uses the verb resurgere in reference to the recurrence of tumores (5.28.7a.1-8). The use of these words in close context with each other recalls how the verbs tumere and surgere\textsuperscript{97} are used in reference to the onset of Thyestes’ illness. Indeed, in the above passage from \textit{Thyestes}, we see that the swelling of the seas, as expressed by the verb tumere, metaphorically alludes to the emergence of physical symptoms in Thyestes, even though the nature of the illness is still not apparent to him.

**Excursus: Agamemnon (456-474)**

Thyestes’ reference to the sea swelling up \textit{sine vento} recalls a passage from Seneca’s \textit{Agamemnon} in which the Greek herald Eurybates describes the stormy scene that arose when the Trojans sailed away from their destroyed city. Eurybates’ speech is rife with language and imagery of concealment and revelation:

\textendnotes{92}{Glare 2012: s.v. surgere.}
\textendnotes{93}{Glare 2012: s.v. tumor.}
\textendnotes{94}{Glare 2012: s.v. adsurgere; cf. assurgere.}
\textendnotes{95}{Glare 2012: s.v. resurgere.}
\textendnotes{96}{Quibusdam etiam in hoc morbo tumores oriuntur, deinde desinunt, deinde rursus adsurgunt. (2.8.26.7-8)}
\textendnotes{97}{Celsus usually uses the verb surgere in reference to rising from bed in the morning (e.g. 1.2.2.5; 1.2.2.6; 4.5.8.3).}
Now the whole shore is hidden and the plains are concealed
and the peaks of Mount Ida are barely apparent;
and the smoke of Ilium is scarcely visible as a black mark
(the only thing which a steady eye sees).
Now the Titan was releasing weary necks from the yoke,
now the light is sinking toward the deep, now the day is hurtling headlong.
A slight cloud, growing into a foul mass,
tarnishes the shining splendor of the setting Phoebus;
its variegated setting makes the sea concerned.
The early night splashes the sky with stars,
while the sails lie slack, abandoned by the wind. Then a deep groan,
threatening much more, falls from the highest hills,
and the shore and rocks roar in a long and drawn out way;
the waves swell, stirred up by winds that will come:
when suddenly the moon is hidden, the stars concealed;
the sea is hoisted up to the stars, and the sky vanishes—
there is not just one night: a thick fog covers up
the shadows, and, with all light removed,

98 Here, my quotation of the Latin (parent) departs from the Oxford Classical text (pereunt), following the reading of Fitch. I find Fitch’s reading persuasive as it is in keeping with the passage’s language of concealment. (see Fitch 2004a: 164)

99 Here also my quotation of the Latin (alta) differs from the Oxford Classical text (astra), following the reading of Fitch and Tarrant. (see Fitch 2004a: 164; Tarrant 1976: 127; see also 261)
it mixes up the sea and the sky. (456-474)

In this passage, a sense of concealment arises in the natural environment, as forces of darkness pervade the atmosphere, overcoming the day (460-463) and even overshadowing the moon and the stars: *luna conditur, stellae latent* (the moon is hidden, the stars concealed, 470). The verb *latere* also appears at the beginning of this passage: *campi latent* (the plains are concealed, 456). While Celsus uses the verb *latere* in reference to causes of illness which are “hidden” by the human body, here *latere* is used in reference to aspects of the environment which are hidden by darkness. The herald uses various other words to set the mood of concealment that runs throughout this passage, beginning with the verb *tegere* (*litus omne tegitur, 456*). This verb occurs repeatedly in *Thyestes* (nine times total), in connection with the concealment of Atreus’ plot, the concealed causes of Thyestes’ illness and suffering, and Thyestes’ desire to conceal his shame after the plot is revealed. Celsus uses this verb nine times, but never in connection with the concealment of illness or shame.  

In the above passage from *Agamemnon*, the theme of concealment is also conveyed through the use of the verb *obruit* (472), and the nouns *nubes* (clouds, 462) *tenebras* (shadows, 472) and *caligo* (fog, 473). As a cumulative effect of this language, there is a deep, multi-layered impression of concealment. As the herald notes, the darkness is greater than could be furnished by any single night (*nec una nox est, 473*). As in the opening lines of *Oedipus*, the natural environment is thrown into confusion by the pervasive darkness, as indicated by the

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100 Celsus uses *tegere* in variety of other contexts, including in references to covering a patient’s body with blankets (e.g. 4.31.4.4), in references to covering body parts with wrappings (e.g. 6.19.2.8; 7.19.11.5) or clothing (7.19.7.3), and in reference to how the knee cap covers the joints of the leg (8.1.25.2).

101 This passage is discussed more in depth in Chapter 2.
phrases in astra pontus tollitur, caelum ferit (the sea is hoisted up to the stars, and the sky vanishes, 471) and fretum caelumque miscet (it mixes up the sea and sky, 473-474). Unlike in Oedipus, however, the tumultuous state of the environment is not figured as a condition of illness with medicalized symptoms.

Despite the passage’s overbearing imagery of darkness and concealment, the scene is not one of complete obscurity. Indeed, two famous symbols of Troy—Mount Ida, and the city’s smoldering ruins—remain visible, but in a qualified way (457-459). The idea that these ruins are observable is conveyed by the verbs parent (457), videt (458), and apparet (459). As previously noted, the verbal roots vide- and appare- play an important role in contexts of revelation from both Thyestes and De Medicina. Nevertheless, in this passage from Agamemnon, the idea of revelation is still downplayed: even though there is a clear line of sight (pervicax acies, 458), Troy only appears as a “black mark” (atra...nota, 459). This use of nota resonates with usage in Celsus; he uses this word, along with signum and indicium, to refer to “signs” or (“symptoms”) of illness. According to Romano, Celsus does not make a strong distinction in his usage of these words; indeed, each word is used in contexts in which Celsus appears to be translating passages from Hippocratic texts in which the Greek word σημειον appears. Celsus uses the word nota, for instance, when discussing signs of oncoming illness:

Ante adversam autem valetudinem, ut supra dixi, quaedam notae oriuntur... (Yet before an

102 The immediate juxtaposition of the words fretum and caelumque reinforces the notion that the sea and the sky have been placed into a state of unusual proximity (and thus a state of disorder). The enjambment employed in these lines (with fretum in 473, and caelumque in 474) also contributes to the impression of disarray. In his commentary on Agamemnon, Tarrant observes that the cause of this disarray is ambiguous: “there are two ways in which sky and sea may be mingled: by darkness so thick that all boundaries of sea and sky disappear..., or by waves rising to the level of the clouds, where they mix with the falling rain.” (Tarrant 1976: 263)

103 See Jocelyn 1985: 315.

104 Romano 1991: 50 n. 2. See also Langslow 1987: 194. The word σημειον is discussed earlier in this chapter.
adverse state of health, as I have said before, certain signs arise..., 2.2.1.1-2). Just a few lines later, Celsus employs the word *signum* in a highly analogous manner: *Peius tamen signum est, ubi aliquis contra consuetudinem emacuit et colorem decoremque amisit* (It is a still worse sign when someone, contrary to habit, becomes thinner and loses their complexion and appearance, 2.2.2.1-3). While Celsus uses words like *nota* in reference to the condition of the body, in the above passage the herald applies this word to the condition of an entire city experiencing its demise.

Another element common to this passage from *Agamemnon* and the metaphor from *Thyestes* (957-960) is the imagery of waves swelling up on the sea. In the herald’s speech, this seems to occur for an obvious reason—oncoming winds: *agitate ventis unda venturis tumet* (469). The reason for the swelling of the sea appears to be clearer than in *Thyestes* (cf. 959-960), but even here there is a qualification: the waves are stirred up “by winds that will come”. The future participle *venturis* suggests that the winds have not yet arrived, but they are nonetheless already affecting the waves. In this way, both passages complicate ideas of causation by presenting an image of the sea swelling although winds are not present, while using similar language to express this idea (in each passage, “the sea”, expressed by the respective words *unda* and *tranquilla*, governs the verb *tumere*). In the passage from *Agamemnon*, however, the cause for the swelling of the waves is known and identified, which is

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105 Romano also notes how *signa* is used in reference to “symptoms” in these sections of *De Medecina* (Romano 1991: 49).
106 A similar phrase is also used in *Medea*: *tumuit insanum mare / tacente vento* (the madden sea swells up with silent wind, *Medea* 765-766). In this instance, Medea is providing an example of her ability to undermine nature through her use of magic. Tarrant discusses other contexts in which the swelling of the seas serves as an “obvious sign of an approaching storm” the verb *tumere* is employed in some of these contexts.
paradoxical since it has not yet appeared. In *Thyestes*, the causes of illness remain even more deeply concealed for Thyestes, as he is not able to identify any possible cause.

**Thyestes (Continued)**

As Thyestes gradually becomes more aware of the various symptoms he is experiencing, he begins to suspect that these symptoms are “signs of future grief” (*luctus signa futuri*, 957). Nevertheless, the cause of this grief remains unclear, at least to Thyestes himself.\(^1\) The fact that symptoms of illness are called *signa* in Celsus and other medical texts further supports the idea that Thyestes is struggling to interpret his own symptoms. In particular, these *signa* are associated with the *mens...praesaga* (the mind, perceiving beforehand, 958), which informs us that Thyestes perceives symptoms of illness before he is able to discern any reason for their sudden onset; thus, we return to the theme of undetectable or possibly unknowable causes of illness. As Tarrant observes, the wording in lines 957-958 echoes language used by Virgil\(^2\), and I would add that they are also reminiscent of language Celsus uses in explaining the important role symptoms play in the prediction of future illness: *Sunt enim quaedam proprietates hominum, sine quarum notitia non facile quicquam in futurum praesagiri potest.* (For there are certain qualities of persons, without the knowledge of which it is not easy to predict anything in the future, 2.2.4.4-5) Romano observes that Celsus is placing an emphasis on the predictive

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\(^{1}\) Tarrant asserts that while Thyestes is “morally alert” enough to feel uneasy much earlier in the play (cf. *causam timoris ipse quam ignore exigis*, 434-435), he does not have enough awareness of his own situation to understand the reason for his uneasiness and eventual feelings of illness. (Tarrant 1985: 223) Similarly, Schiesaro observes that Thyestes experiences initial signs of trepidation and illness even before entering the house of Atreus, but he “fails to understand the underlying causes of his feelings” (Schiesaro 2003: 110; see also Schiesaro 2009: 227).

\(^{2}\) Tarrant notes that this line is almost a verbatim quotation from a line of Virgil’s *Aeneid* in which Mezentius comes to the realization that his son Lausus has been killed: *Agnovit longe gemitum praesaga mali mens* (The mind, perceiving the evil beforehand, recognized the groans from far away, 10.843). As Tarrant points out, “the echo [of the lines with Virgil’s] exposes the dullness of Thyestes’ perceptions: unlike Mezentius, he is unable to interpret the signals of disaster that surround him.” (Tarrant 1985: 225)
function of the symptom, and asserts that the phrase in futurum praesagiri hearkens back to
the prophetic origins of the medical art.109 Parallels between prophecy and medicine are also
evident elsewhere in the play, such as when the messenger describes Atreus’ treatment of the
bodies of Thyestes’ sons (755-763). Here, as we have seen, language of sacrifice and extispicy is
conflated with language of vivisection and dissection, eventually culminating in predictions
prophesying Thyestes’ eventual consumption of his son (778-779) and the revelation of great
suffering (789).

The Latin words signa, futura, and praesaga in 957-960 suggest foreknowledge, but these
lines take on an element of irony when one notes that Thyestes remains deeply unaware of the
future trajectory of his illness and his future experience. Atreus is actually the one who has a
power to predict, as both the causes and symptoms of Thyestes’ illness are very apparent to
him at this point. Thyestes, on the other hand, continues to suspect his that burgeoning
feelings of illness are sine causa (without a cause, 964)—a phrase which reprises his earlier
thoughts (i.e. nulla surgens dolor ex causa, 944). In this way, at this moment in the play Atreus
takes on a role akin to that of doctor who is interpreting symptoms which his patient does not
fully understand or recognize. As readers of the play, we know that the doctor’s diagnosis is
correct—primarily because the doctor himself has taken actions to provoke the “illness”. This
rift in understanding between Atreus and Thyestes bears out some of the complexities and
experiential barriers typical of the doctor-patient relationship. Generally, one would expect a
patient to have a more immediate firsthand knowledge of their own symptoms and sensations

109 Romano also points out that the idea and phrasing in this line closely follow the Hippocratic treatise On
Regimen in Acute Diseases. (Romano 1991: 50, 51 n. 5; see also 56-57)
than their doctor, but the doctor, as a specialist, is expected to offer insights about causes, diagnoses, treatments, and thus help the patient. In view of this, the idea that a patient-doctor relationship exists between these two brothers becomes profoundly ironic, since Atreus has more knowledge of Thyestes’ symptoms than Thyestes himself, and since Atreus seeks to bring terrible harm upon his Thyestes.

By having Thyestes experience both mental and physical distress even before coming to his tragically painful realization, Seneca’s play complicates the relationship between the sensation and causation of illness. Even when he begins to weep, Thyestes maintains that there is no underlying cause (*nec causa subest*, 967). As Tarrant notes, the verb *subesse* accentuates the latent nature of the causes behind Thyestes’ growing fears and symptoms of illness.\(^\text{110}\) The verb *subesse* appears numerous times in Celsus, where it can also connote underlying conditions of illness. In one instance, Celsus uses this verb to imply that illness is “lurking”: *At si longa tristitia cum longo timore et vigilia est, atrae bilis morbus subest*. (But if there is a prolonged sadness with prolonged fear and wakefulness, an illness of black bile is lurking. 2.7.19.3) Although Thyestes experiences only one of the symptoms mentioned in this example (*timor*), the idea that illness is “lurking” is certainly relevant to Thyestes’ state of ignorance about his own condition. This use of *subesse*, which can also be translated “to sink beneath the surface”\(^\text{111}\) and, according to Lewis and Short, “to lie in concealment”\(^\text{112}\), also calls attention to

\(^{110}\) Tarrant 1985: 226.

\(^{111}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *subesse*.

\(^{112}\) Lewis and Short 1891: s.v. *subesse*. This verb occurs only two other times in Senecan tragedy (*Agamemnon* 246; *Hercules Furens* 1142).
the subterfuge of Atreus’ plot and to the fact that his underlying motives remain concealed from Thyestes when Thyestes is starting to reveal symptoms of illness.

When Atreus later reveals the nature of the feast, he uses the verb *superesse*: *Quidquid enatis tuis / superest habes, quodcumque non superest habes* (Whatever of your children still exists, you have—and whatever no longer exists, you also have, 1030-1031). This verb, which can be translated “to remain in existence”\(^ {113} \), and, according to Lewis and Short, “to be apparent”, or “to be prominent”\(^ {114} \), contrasts morphologically and semantically with *subesse*. The use of this word is very fitting in this context, given that the cause of Thyestes’ illness is no longer an underlying one, but rather clear and out in the open. This use of *subesse* takes on special significance because this is not the sense in which *subesse* is typically used in Senecan tragedy—in most instances, it is best translated “to remain in existence”.\(^ {115} \) This sense of “remaining” is also apparent in Celsus’ numerous uses of *subesse*, although Celsus typically uses it in reference to aspects of the body or forms of illness that continue to remain in existence, or otherwise in reference to topics that remain to be discussed.\(^ {116} \) I would argue that this aspect of *subesse* is also on display in these lines from *Thyestes*, adding an ironic and sinister element since Thyestes’ sons have been removed from existence. Atreus is mean-spiritedly saying that some part of Thyestes’ sons remains in existence, and that another part does not, and that Atreus “has” both parts. The phrase *quodcumque non superest* suggests the flesh that Thyestes now has concealed in his stomach, while *quidquid...superest* evokes the heads, hands, and legs

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113 Glare 2012: *superesse*.
114 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *superesse*.
115 e.g. *Hercules Furens* 891; *Troades* 286; *Medea* 165, 166; *Oedipus* 108.
116 e.g. 2.6.1.1; 4.29.1.1. Note that Celsus does not use *superesse* in relation to apparent causes of illness.
which are revealed to Thyestes in the ensuing lines.\textsuperscript{117} Each of these aspects of their being, and the fact that Thyestes now “has” both of them (as conveyed by the cruel repetition of \textit{habes}) signify their death. The concealment of their flesh within their father’s bodies is now revealed; paradoxically, their absence (death) is now made present to their father, who now finally realizes the cause of his ill feelings.

The idea that an illness could lack a cause problematizes the influential pattern of guilt and causality which has been described by Burkert. Drawing from a plethora of examples found in various genres of Greek and Latin literature, as well as biblical writings and lore from various other cultures, Burkert has argued that human responses to illness and disaster typically follow a universal pattern: when an illness or disaster occurs, people tend to seek explanation by consulting a mediator (such as a priest, prophet, shaman, magician, etc.); the mediator then reveals the “hidden cause” of an illness and the corresponding cure, which is typically achieved by assessing and expiating guilt associated with wrongs committed.\textsuperscript{118} This pattern reminds about the evolution of medicine from prophecy, as evoked by Celsus’ phrase \textit{in futurum praesagiri}.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, Burkert generally associates his pattern with “religious therapy”\textsuperscript{120}, but he also notes that the pattern’s interest in identifying hidden causes responsible for suffering sometimes “looks medical rather than religious”\textsuperscript{121} in certain cases. Indeed, drawing distinctions between figures such as “priests” and “doctors” in the Greek and Roman world is

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Abscis\ae\ cerno capita et avulsas manus / et rupta fractis cruribus vestigia.} (1038-1039)
\textsuperscript{118} This pattern is discussed throughout Burkert’s chapter entitled “Guilt and Causality” in \textit{Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions} (1996: 102-128). The pattern is most succinctly summarized as “disaster, the seer, the hidden cause, and the corresponding cure.” (Burkert 1996: 112)
\textsuperscript{119} See this earlier chapter’s discussion of this phrase and Romano 1991: 50, 51 n. 5; see also 56-57.
\textsuperscript{120} Burkert 1996: 102,
\textsuperscript{121} Burkert 1996: 112.
fraught with many problems, as Nutton has thoroughly and persuasively argued.\textsuperscript{122} Moreover, many of the examples that Burkert uses to explain how this pattern works involve responses to plagues, and he in fact states that “disease may be the most common occasion to trigger the mechanism” of this pattern.\textsuperscript{123}

If we consider Thyestes’ situation in relation to this model, we see that his experience follows a somewhat different trajectory. Thyestes begins questioning his future experience of grief and illness before these things have even arrived (cf. 957-960), which inverts the initial steps of Burkert’s pattern. Then, when Thyestes speaks with a “mediator”—his brother, Atreus—this mediator is eventually able to reveal a hidden cause for Thyestes’ perceptions of illness, but this revelation offers no respite or cure for Thyestes’ suffering, and instead brings even greater woe upon Thyestes. One of the major groups identified by Burkert as “mediators” is priests/diviners, and we may put Atreus in this category when we recall his associations with extispicium and prophecy (755-763; 778-779). One of the reasons that Burkert’s pattern breaks down in this situation is that Atreus is a mediator who actually causes the suffering that he later “mediates”.\textsuperscript{124} In addition, it is significant that when Thyestes wonders about the symptoms of his illness, he speaks as though they have no cause, instead of a “hidden cause” as in Burkert’s model. Burkert’s model does not allow for the acceptance of no cause, since it suggest that the search for hidden causes is a universal human response to situations of illness and calamity.

\textsuperscript{122} Nutton 2013: 105, 112-115.  
\textsuperscript{123} Burkert 1996: 108.  
\textsuperscript{124} As Burkert himself notes, “it is important that not even the mediator be able to manipulate or predict the result” of the methods used to establish their interpretations of the present suffering. (Burkert 1996: 118)
Atreus’ involvement with the causation of Thyestes’ illness thus throws the chain of action described by Burkert into disarray.

Shortly after Thyestes talks about how his illness lacks a cause, Atreus offers Thyestes a cup with an infusion of wine (*poculum infuso cape / gentile Baccho, 982-983*). The fact that Atreus says this wine is said infused in a *poculum gentile* (a “family cup”, or as Tarrant translates it, a “cup of our bloodline”\textsuperscript{125}) suggests that the cup may contain blood from Thyestes’ butchered sons, in addition to wine (or perhaps even *instead of wine*).\textsuperscript{126} Despite Atreus’ mention of the *poculum gentile*, Thyestes remains in the dark about the contents of the cup and Atreus’ treachery in general, and he proceeds to drink from the cup. The concealment of the cup’s contents builds upon the other elements of concealment which are present in the scene and the play more broadly. Thyestes’ consumption of this infusion is thus presented as one of the causes of his dulled perceptions (cf. *hebetata*, 920).

When Thyestes attempts to drink from this cup, other signs that something is awry become apparent: Thyestes’ hands do not obey his intentions (*nolunt manus parere*, 985-986), the

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\textsuperscript{125} Tarrant 1985: 227.

\textsuperscript{126} Based upon the wording in these lines, it is unclear whether the cup is filled with blood, wine, or with a mixture of blood and wine. On the one hand, *gentile* could allude to the family heritage of Thyestes and Atreus, which would be fitting considering how this situation resembles the way in which Tantalus, one of their ancestors, served up the flesh of his own son. Understood this way, the reference to the *poculum gentile* depicts Atreus’ actions as a reenactment of Thyestes’ infamous deed. (cf. Tarrant 1985: 227) On the other hand, *gentile* could allude to the fact that “family” (i.e. Thyestes’ children) is contained within the cup (i.e. in the form of blood)—a possible reference which is clearly beyond the grasp of Thyestes. This is how it is understood by Kohn, who, in his discussion of the dramaturgy of the scene, states that the cup “in fact contains wine mixed with the blood of [Thyestes’] sons.” (Kohn 2013: 130) By mixing in wine, Atreus expects Thyestes not to realize that blood is present in the cup, as Atreus’ earlier comments indicate: *restat etiam nunc cruor / tot hostiarum; veteris hunc Bacchi color / abscondet* (there still remains the blood of so many victims; the color of the aged wine will conceal it, 914-916) and *mixtum suorum sanguinem genitor bibat* (may the father drink the blended blood of his sons, 917). After the cannibalistic nature of the feast is revealed, Atreus expresses a wish that Thyestes had drunk not a mixture of wine and blood, but pure blood—and, even more cruelly, not using the intermediary of a cup, but directly from the wound to his mouth: \textit{...ex vulnere ipso sanguine calidum in tua / defundere ora debui, ut viventium / biberes cruorem} (I ought to have poured the hot blood into your mouth straight from the very wound, so that you could drink the stream of blood while they lived, 1054-1056).
“wine” escapes from his lips (*Bacchus a labris fugit*, 987), and even the dining table jumps up at the ground’s trembling (*et ipsa trepido mensa subsiluit solo*, 989.) The latter sign is the first of several natural and supernatural phenomena that occur in this scene, prefiguring the revelation of the cause responsible for Thyestes’ growing distress:

> Quid hoc? Magis magisque concussi labant convexa caeli; spissior densis coit caligo tenebris noxque se in noctem abdidit: fugit omne sidus. Quidquid est, fratri precor natisque parcat, omnis in vile hoc caput abeat procella.

What is this? More and more the arc of the stricken sky is sinking; a rather thick fog is gathering among dense shadows and night has concealed itself in night: every star is in flight. Whatever it is, I pray that it may spare my brother and my sons, and the entire storm may turn itself upon this worthless head. (992-997)

Signs of disorder are now evident not only in Thyestes’ body, but are also figured in the external world and even the wider universe. Moreover, I would argue that these are not only signs of a general or generic 'disorder' but that, especially when read with Celsus' *De Medicina*, Thyestes' language specifically suggests symptoms of illness, particularly through the use of *concussus*, *caligo*, and *tenebrae*. *Caligo* (994) gives particular emphasis to the idea that *tenebrae* recalls earlier uses of language by the messenger (*tenebrisque...novis*, 786) and Atreus (*discutiam...tenebras*, 896-897). These *tenebrae* cloud Thyestes’ ability to perceive the nature of his illness. In Celsus, *offusae tenebrae oculis* (shadows obscuring the eyes) are considered a sign of madness (2.7.25.2).

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127 Thyestes also makes mention of cosmic manifestations of illness after he realizes the causes of his illness: ...*hoc egit diem aversum in ortus* (this drove the day back toward where it rises, 1035-1036).
128 Cf. *De Medicina* 6.6.36.8; 6.7.9b.9; 7.26.3c.5; cf. *concutere* 3.6.13.8; 3.21.12.6; 3.27.1c.8; 7.12.1b.1; 7.12.1b.6; 7.16.3.2; 8.12.3.2.
129 Cf. *De Medicina* 1.3.3.5; 1.3.25.2; 2.7.2.2; 2.7.30.4; 2.8.18.1; 2.12.2a.5; 4.2.2.3; 6.6.32.1; 6.6.34a5; 6.6.34b.2; 6.6.37a5.
130 Thyestes’ reference to *tenebrae* recalls earlier uses of language by the messenger (*tenebrisque...novis*, 786) and Atreus (*discutiam...tenebras*, 896-897). These *tenebrae* cloud Thyestes’ ability to perceive the nature of his illness. In Celsus, *offusae tenebrae oculis* (shadows obscuring the eyes) are considered a sign of madness (2.7.25.2).
the cause is concealed from Thyestes, as this word can be used in reference not only to fog\footnote{Tarrant observes that the use of the words \textit{caligo} and \textit{tenebris} in this passage contribute to evoking the image of “mists that figure in disastrous storms.” (Tarrant 1985: 228) This effect is reminiscent of the storm-language used previously in lines 959-960. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the use of the word \textit{caligo} in Seneca’s \textit{Agamemnon} (473), where it contributes to the lack of visibility present in the scene. Tarrant’s commentary on \textit{Agamemnon} draws an explicit connection between the usage of \textit{caligo} in \textit{Agamemnon} 473 and in \textit{Thyestes} 994. (Tarrant 1976: 264)}, but also to mental blindness or dullness of perception.\footnote{For example, see Cicero’s \textit{De Finibus Bonorum et Molorum} 5.15.43; Pliny \textit{Epistulae} 5.8.8.} In Celsus, the noun \textit{caligo} and the verb \textit{caligare} are used in reference to a literal dimming of a person’s vision.\footnote{In discussing Celsus’ “innovazioni semantiche”, Mazzini cites Celsus’ use of \textit{caligo} as a metaphor for blindness. (Mazzini 1991: 182) It is not always possible to tell whether Celsus is referring to “full” or “partial” forms of blindness, nor is it always possible to tell whether these conditions are permanent or temporary.} While Seneca uses \textit{caligo} to refers to a natural phenomenon in this passage, the word also carries with it connotations of blindness appropriate to Thyestes’ impaired ability to understand his own perceptions in this scene. The adjective \textit{caligans} is also applied to Thyestes in one of Martial’s epigrams: \textit{Qui legis Oedipoden caligantemque Thyesten}… (You who read of Oedipus and of blind Thyestes…., 10.4.1). Here, \textit{caligans} is used in a prominent place—the opening line of an epigram that addresses its own readers. It is interesting that this adjective is applied to Thyestes immediately after the mention of Oedipus—a tragic figure perhaps more obviously associated with blindness (although one could argue that \textit{caligantemque} colors Martial’s reference to Oedipus, as well). It is interesting, then, that this word is most directly applied to the figure who experienced a metaphorical form of blindness (Thyestes), and not the one who experienced a literal form of blindness (Oedipus). Moreover, it striking that Martial uses \textit{caligans} to describe Thyestes himself, whereas Seneca has Thyestes use the noun \textit{caligo} to describe the disordered state of nature that he is observing. This furthers the sense that nature
itself is represented in a state of illness (not unlike the condition of the Theban environment in 
*Oedipus*) with symptoms akin to those of Thyestes himself.

In addition, the sustained motif of concealment is also conveyed by the verb *abdidit* (994). As we have seen, the adjective *abdita* is also used by Celsus in reference to “hidden” causes of illness.\(^{134}\) The use of such a word is both fitting and ironic in this context—fitting because the cause of Thyestes’ illness still remains beyond his understanding at this point, and ironic in light of the many signs that have been revealed. Thyestes’ state of ignorance is also reflected in the redoubling of night, which is the subject of *abdidit* and also is also employed in a prepositional clause in the same line (*noxque se in noctem abdidit*, 994). We can also see Thyestes’ lack of comprehension in the repeated questions he asks about the signs of distress: *quid hoc* (what is this? 985, 992), and by his use of the indefinite pronoun—“whatever it is” (*quidquid est*, 995)—when referring to the bodily and cosmic confusion he is perceiving.

Next, Thyestes expresses a desire to see his children, believing the sight of them will dispel his present feelings of grief:

Quis hic tumultus *viscera exagitat* mea?
Quid *tremuit intus*? *Sentio impatiens onus*
meumque *gemitu non meo pectus gemit*.
Adeste, nati, genitor infelix vocat, 
adeste. *Visis fugiet hic vobis dolor*…

What is this disturbance that stirs up my innards?
What has shaken inside me? I sense an imperceptible burden
and my chest groans with a groan not my own.
Come here, sons, your unhappy father calls you,
come here. This grief will flee once you have been seen… (999-1003)

\(^{134}\) Cf. 1.Pr.13.2; 1.Pr.14.1; 3.3.6.1.
At this point, Thyestes’ language becomes more focused on the internal signs of his illness. The nature of this illness is still unknown to him, but it is about to become apparent, indeed when, ironically, the children are finally seen. The source of Thyestes’ illness is still manifested internally (intus, 1000), with an emphasis on the disturbance of the innards (viscera, 999); at the same time, this internal disturbance is being stirred up and starting to emerge from concealment, as suggested by exagit (999). This verb can be translated “to stir up”, “to harass”, “to drive away”\(^{135}\), and also, according to Lewis and Short, “to drive out of position”.\(^{136}\)

Although Celsus does not use the verb exagitare, he does use the related verb agitare in reference to various bodily processes, including the throbbing of veins.\(^{137}\) In one instance, Celsus also uses the noun agitatio in reference to a mental disturbance (agitatio animi), noting that such a disturbance is particularly harmful after eating (inutilis...post cibum).\(^{138}\) In light of this remark, it becomes even more apparent that Thyestes’ postprandial disturbance is portrayed as a medicalized response to Atreus’ ruse. It is also significant that Seneca uses the verb exagitare, with the prefix ex- attached. This contributes to the passage’s motif of externality, while the use of intus in the following line highlights the motif of internality. This internal/external dichotomy is tied to the dichotomy of concealment and revelation: Thyestes’ trembling (tremuit intus, 1000) is concealed internally, but simultaneously represented externally—and thus revealed—by the jumping up of the dining table as the ground itself is trembling (et ipsa trepido mensa subsiluit solo, 989).

\(^{135}\) Glare 2012: exagitare

\(^{136}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. exagitare.

\(^{137}\) 2.4.4.1.

\(^{138}\) 1.5.2.1-5.
At this point of the play, Thyestes is still dealing with a dissociation of body and self; this is apparent in the questions Thyestes asks about the internal state of his own body (999-1000), as well as the groaning he produces involuntarily (*gemitu non meo pectus gemit*, 1001). This phrase recalls Thyestes’ earlier lament about his uncontrolled groaning: *venit in medias voces gemitus* (951). The new groaning in 1001 is significantly different from the previous reference, however, in that Thyestes now imagines, paradoxically, that the groaning that comes forth from his chest is not his own (*gemitu non meo*). These lines are indicative of Thyestes’ self-alienation, as well as Thyestes’ continued alienation from his own sensory experience. These struggles are evoked by the phrase *sentio impatiens onus* (1000) when one notes that *impatiens* can be translated as “imperceptible” or “free from sensation”—senses it often has in Seneca’s Stoically-colored prose works.\(^{139}\) My translation draws attention to these aspects of *impatiens*, which are oxymoronic in light of the word’s juxtaposition with *sentio*, and keenly reflect Thyestes’ situation at this moment when he experiences symptoms of illness, but still cannot perceive any reason for them. Indeed, these impressions of imperceptibility are in keeping with the larger motifs of concealment that occur throughout this section of the play. But this interpretation takes a different understanding than Fitch’s translation, which renders *impatiens...onus* as “a restless weight.”\(^{140}\) Perhaps a more obvious way to understand the phrase, this translation emphasizes the restlessness of the burden, but not its imperceptibility—interpretations that I do not consider mutually exclusive. Fitch’s

\(^{139}\) e.g. *Hoc obicitur Stilboni ab Epicuro et iis quibus summum bonum visum est animus impatiens*. (This is the objection to Stilbo made by Epicurus and by those who believe that the highest good seems to be the soul which is insensible to feeling. (Seneca’ *Epistula* 9.1)

\(^{140}\) Fitch 2004a: 313.
interpretation of *impatiens* suggests that Thyestes senses that there is something inside him that wants to move and that he needs to get it out, and this is indeed consistent with Thyestes’ experience in this scene.

The notion of a “restless burden” also foreshadows the horrid suffering Thyestes is about to endure. Moreover, even this understanding of *impatiens onus* contains an element of paradox, as Tarrant points out that “an *onus* would normally be inert”.[141] The noun *onus* and the verb *onerare* are used to this effect by Celsus, often in reference to forms of illness in which pressure builds up on the internal organs, such as the heart.[142] In one passage, Celsus uses the verb *onerare* when explaining that the body can become “overburdened” by an unaccustomed quantity of food, thus impeding digestion.[143] While Thyestes does not exactly suffer from overeating, he is burdened by the *onus* inside of him—which, as he will soon realize, is something he should not have digested. The word *impatiens*, on the other hand, does not appear in Celsus’ work, offering no basis for comparison with Senecan usage. Forms of the verb *sentire* occur so frequently throughout *De Medicina* that it not possible to comment on them here.

The moment of revelation of the cause of Thyestes’ illness now comes, as Atreus shows him his sons’ decapitated heads and exclaims: *Venere. Natos ecquid agnoscis tuos?* (They have come. Do you perchance recognize your sons? 1005)[144] On the one hand, this question is

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[141] Commenting on this line, Tarrant similarly states that “Seneca links unrelated ideas...to produce a jarring combination.” (Tarrant 1985: 229)

[142] e.g. 2.7.35.1; 2.10.7.2; 2.17.10.7.

[143] ...si corpus insuetum subita multitudine oneraverit, concoctionem impediat. (3.22.4.5-6)

[144] In these lines spoken by Atreus, it is left somewhat unclear exactly how the children would be revealed in a staged performance. As Fitch notes, this leaves open various dramaturgical possibilities: “a vessel containing the heads could be opened...at this moment by Atreus or attendants or Thyestes. Or the heads could be carried
sardonic in tone, with injurious and mocking intentions toward the unknowing Thyestes\textsuperscript{145}; on the other hand, the question reflects how it may be genuinely difficult for Thyestes to recognize his sons by their mutilated body parts at this point. Thyestes’ response, \textit{agnosco fratrem} (I recognize my brother, 1006), does not actually respond to Atreus’ question about recognizing his children, but fittingly indicates that Thyestes finally recognizes the true nature and intent of his brother. This recognition is driven home by Thyestes’ repetition of the verb used by his brother (\textit{agnoscis...agnosco}), showing that the two brothers are finally (and tragically) on the same page, having reached a shared state of recognition. It is also noteworthy that these two instances are the only times in the play where the verb \textit{agnoscere} appears\textsuperscript{146}—a fact appropriate to Thyestes’ lack of recognition throughout most of the play. The verb \textit{agnoscere} is thus given special weight in these lines, serving as the primary indicator that the revelation occurs at this point. While the verb \textit{agnoscere}, along with its participles and related forms, does not appear in \textit{De Medicina}, Celsus does use forms of the unprefixed verb \textit{noscere}, for example when discussing recognition of causes, prognoses, and treatments of certain conditions, as well as information the medical practitioner should know.\textsuperscript{147} In one instance,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{145} As Fitch notes, “Atreus does not say ‘Look, father, at the severed heads of your sons.’ On the contrary, he speaks until the very last moment as if they were alive…” (Fitch 2000: 4)
\item \textsuperscript{146} No other related forms (nouns, adjectives, or adverbs) of the word are used, either.
\item \textsuperscript{147} 2.19.1-2.6; 5.26.20a.1; 7.7.4c.6; 8.9.2.5, 7.20.4.1; 8.20.8.4.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Celsus uses the passive periphrastic noscenda sunt (they must be known) in reference to various properties of food which he has just listed.\(^{148}\)

Thyestes communicates his understanding not only by saying agnosco (1006), but also by using the verb cerno (I perceive, 1038) and by stating hoc est quod avidus capere non potuit pater (this is what the voracious father could not take in, 1040). In this statement, capere serves not only as a metaphor for mental comprehension, but also as a reference to the fact that Thyestes literally had physical difficulty digesting the children’s flesh.\(^{149}\) This sense of capere becomes more apparent when we note that Celsus frequently uses this verb in reference to the consumption of food, especially with the repeated phrase cibum capere.\(^{150}\) As for cernere, this verb appears three times in De Medicina; in two of these contexts it is negated, expressing an inability to see at night (noctu nihil cernunt, 6.6.38.2) due to a weakness of the eyes, or conveying that certain blood vessels in the scrotum cannot be observed well (non aeque quidem cernuntur, 7.18.10.3) relative to other blood vessels in the scrotum that are closer to the surface and thus more apparent.

Shortly after the revelation is made, Thyestes reverts to the language of concealment, expressing a desire to be hidden away, along with his brother:

\[...si quid infra Tartara est\]
\[avosque nostros, hoc tuam immani sinu\]
\[demitte vallem, nosque defossos tege\]
\[Acheronte toto.\]

...if there is anything below Tartarus
and our ancestors, send your hollow down

\(^{148}\) Quae omnia ideo noscenda sunt, quoniam aliud alii vel corpora vel valetudini convenit. (2.19.2.5-6)
\(^{149}\) On the polysemy of this line, see Fitch 2004a: 317.n. 46.
\(^{150}\) e.g. 1.1.2.6; 1.3.31.1; 1.3.34.4; 3.15.4.9; 4.26.2.3.; 7.4.4b.1.
to the vast interior, and hide us, buried,
under all of Acheron. (1013-1016)

At this point, the theme of concealment shifts away from Thyestes’ perceptions and
misperceptions concerning his illness, to language of darkness and concealment pertaining to
the realm of the underworld and its various features (Tantalum, 1011; Tartara, 1013;
Acheronte, 1016; Phlegethon, 1018). Thyestes is so horrified by the nature of this revelation
that he wishes, if possible, to be sent below the depths of Tartarus (infra Tartara, 1013),
traditionally the deepest point of the underworld in Greek and Roman mythology. This would,
in effect, remove Thyestes from being seen or perceived by others. This is accentuated by the
use of sinus, which can refer to a “refuge”\(^{151}\), or, according to Lewis and Short, a “hiding-place”
or “place of concealment”.\(^{152}\) Thyestes is so horrified by what has transpired that he wishes to
be buried deeper than his ancestors in Tartarus.

After Thyestes’ initial reactions of shock and revulsion, Atreus adds insult to injury in giving
his own description of his treatment of the children’s bodies. This speech recounts the actions
described by the messenger earlier in the play (cf. 755-763), yet differs in that it is less
interested in emphasizing the “clinical exactness” of the operations\(^{153}\), and more focused on
communicating to Thyestes the horrible violence that was performed:

\[
...ex vulnere ipso sanguinem calidum in tua
defundere ora debui, ut viventium
biberes cruorem—verba sunt irae data
dum propero. Ferro vulnera impresso dedi,
cecidi ad aras, caede votiva focos
placavi, et artus, corpora exanima amputans.
\]

\(^{151}\) Glare 2012: s.v. sinus.
\(^{152}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. sinus.
\(^{153}\) Cf. Tarrant 1985: 199 and note 61 of this chapter.
in parva *carpsi frusta* et haec *ferventibus* demersi aenis; illa lentis ignibus stillare iussi; *membra nervosque abscidi viventibus*, gracilique traiectas veru *mugire fibras vidi* et aggessi manu mea ipse flammases—omnia haec melius pater fecisse potuit, cecidit in cassum dolor: scidit ore natos impio, *sed nesciens*, *sed nescientes*.

...I ought to have poured the hot blood into your mouth straight from the very wound, so that you could drink the stream of blood while they lived—my anger was deceived as I rushed. I dealt wounds with a sword pressed in, I gave slaughter at the altars, I appeased the hearth with vowed murder, and, cutting up the half-dead bodies, I tore the limbs into small pieces and sunk some into boiling cauldrons; others I arranged to drip over gentle fires; I sliced the limbs and sinews as they still lived, and having pierced the entrails with a slender skewer I saw them groan, and I loaded up fires by my own hand—all of these things the father could have done better, my labor was for naught: He tore his sons with a defiled mouth—but with him not knowing, and them not knowing. (1054-1068)

Atreus’ account of this scene largely agrees with the details provided by the messenger, and it even uses several pieces of vocabulary found in the messenger’s description. Despite these similarities in language, however, Atreus’ account does not highlight the exposure and examination of the internal body as prominently as the messenger’s speech. In fact, we see that Atreus is inconsistent in relating his treatment of the bodies, only sometimes characterizing it as a careful procedure. He concedes that he rushes (*propero*, 1057) and states that he tore the bodies into pieces (*carpsi frusta*, 1060). The verb *carpere* can have

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connotations of violent tearing, as I take it here, but to be fair, it can also connote more controlled plucking movements. Tarrant prefers the latter interpretation, stating that *carpere* suggests pulling the flesh into pieces with bare hands. The intention is not to stress Atreus’ cruelty, but his care: he thoughtfully does for Thyestes what a guest would normally do for himself.”

This reading of *carpsi frusta* is appealing in the context of preparing for a feast, and we can also see Atreus acting in a careful manner as he prepares the spits (1062-1065).

On the other hand, Tarrant’s interpretation renders *carpere* paradoxical in light of the rushing, careless action suggested by *propero*. The passage’s unrelenting paratactic syntax—with no period in the text from 1057-1068—also reinforces this sense of non-stop, frenzied activity. But paradox seems be just the point here, as it contributes to the heightened ambiguity inherent in the passage’s representation of how Atreus conducts his handiwork. For, as in the messenger speech, the language here also suggests that Atreus is something like a priest performing extispicy (cf. 757-758). This is suggested by the phrase *cecidi ad aras, caede votiva focus placavi* (I gave slaughter at the altars, I supplicated the hearth with vowed murder, 1058-1059). Atreus’ use of the word *votiva* is particularly striking: on the one hand, it emphasizes Atreus’ determined (or “vowed”, as I have translated it above) devotion to achieving vengeance, and it also carries connotations of dedication and consecration relevant to religious ritual. Operating in this priestly role, Atreus conjures up notions of carefulness and dutifulness, not the careless whimsy of bloodlust. As Schiesaro notes, Atreus operates here with “empirical enquiry”, as “the *furor* that inspired his actions is thus far is now also explicitly

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156 Glare 2012: s.v. *votivus*; cf. *votum*. 186
presented as a viable source of rational understanding.”

Along these lines, Atreus is also characterized as something like a doctor performing a vivisection or dissection (although less so than in the messenger speech). The conflation of these religious and medical roles in the characterization of Atreus resonates with the overlaps between doctors and prophets (and/or priests) in Burkert’s guilt pattern. According to Burkert, it is natural to consult mediators such as these in times of calamity. Atreus underscores the relative ignorance of those who consult the mediators by using the pleonastic phrase *sed nesciens, sed nescientes*, and, by contrast, the perceived ability of the mediator to “know”, and thus diagnose and predict.

While Atreus can take on aspects of the priest and doctor, the picture is further complicated because Atreus also describes his actions in terms of injuring and killing: *vulnera…dedi* (I dealt wounds, 1057), *cecidi* (I gave slaughter, 1058) and *caede* (murder, 1058). Such language distances his actions from priestly examination of internal organs, and moves those actions more toward the realm of sadistic vengeance and a preoccupation with violating the children’s bodies. This language of wounding and killing also stands in tension with the implicit role of the doctor as healer of wounds and as one who does not kill. When one compares vocabulary usage in this speech with the messenger’s earlier speech, it becomes apparent that Atreus’ actions take on a greater degree of cruelty when narrated by Atreus himself. For instance, the messenger speaks of the children’s living chests (*vivis…pectoribus*, 755), with emphasis placed upon a body part which is said to be living (and not the children themselves). This contrasts with language used in Celsus, who refers to *vivorum corpora* (the bodies of the living, 1.Pr.74.5)

158 While Hippocratic texts such as *The Oath* give explicitly prohibition doctors from harming their patients, this prohibition is not mandated or addressed by Celsus.
when discussing vivisection, thus emphasizing that the people themselves are alive, rather than just parts of the body. Atreus also states that he wishes Thyestes had drunk the blood of the children while they were still living (*viventium biberes cruorem*, 1054-1055), and he notes that he sliced up the entrails of the children while they were still alive (*membra nervosque abscidi viventibus*, 1062-1063). In addition to heightening the sense of cruelty, Atreus’ emphasis on the vivacity of the children also enhances the sense that a vivisection was being performed.

The brutality of Atreus’ actions is also highlighted by his use of *amputare*, especially when compared with how the messenger uses the same word. Atreus observes that he was cutting up the half-dead bodies of the children (*corpora exanima amputans*, 1059), whereas the messenger uses *amputat* (761-763) in reference to Atreus’ cutting up of various pieces of anatomy (*umeros, lacertorum, ossa*) without emphasizing their connection to the children themselves. And while both passages refer to the *fibras* (entrails) of the children, the messenger’s mention is somewhat less violent in nature: while the messenger has Atreus handling (*tractat*) the entrails, Atreus proclaims that he “pierced the entrails and saw them groan” (*gracilique traiectas veru / mugire fibras vidi*, 1063-1064). The verb *mugire* suggests the sound that a living animal (especially a cow159) would make; it is thus strikingly, creepily paradoxical to have *fibras* as its subject, giving them a sense of liveliness, but not quite personifying them. These comparisons of vocabulary demonstrate that Atreus’ actions take on a more vividly violent quality when described by Atreus himself.

It is also striking that Atreus states he saw the entrails groan (*mugire fibras vidi*, 1064); here we find another element of paradox, and one that suggests the experience of synesthesia. This

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159 Glare 2012: s.v. *mugire*.
mixing up of the senses not only adds to the vivid impact of Atreus’ description of his violent acts, but may also remind us of the condition of Thyestes, who experiences his own form of sensory confusion earlier in the play. Although Thyestes does not experience a confusion of two specific senses, as Atreus describes here, he does have sensations that come about unexpectedly (e.g. *imber vultu nolente cadit*, 950) and out of sequence (*luctus signa futuri praesaga*, 958-959), thus problematizing the relationship of cause and effect. Atreus’ observation of the entrails groaning, as expressed by *mugire*, also recalls the groans (*gemitus*, 951) which had come about the middle of Thyestes’ speech. While I am not suggesting that Thyestes’ experience is hallucinatory in nature, I am arguing that the play repeatedly problematizes processes of sensory perception. The experience of the two brothers is connected by these unusual forms sensory perception, which is ironic since these unusual perceptions stem from Atreus’ unbrotherly acts of vengeance. While Celsus does not directly address synesthesia as a medical condition, he does discuss visual perceptions of things that are not present (e.g. *imagines*), associating them with two different forms of madness.\footnote{Celsus’ comments on *imagines* are discussed more in depth in Chapter 4.}

While Atreus emphasizes the vivacity of the children’s bodies more than the messenger does, the state of their bodies is still ambiguous in his description. We previously observed paradox in the messenger’s description of Atreus’ butchering of the children (755-763), where the organs of Atreus’ children are portrayed in an animated light while the children themselves are deprived of life. Atreus, on the other hand, implies that the children were, in some sense, alive as he cut up their bodies through his mention of *viventium* (while they lived, 1055) and *viventibus* (while they were still living, 1063). At the same time, the bodies of the children are
described as *exanima* (1059), which gives emphasis to the ambiguous state of the children. This word can be translated simply as “lifeless”, but it can also have the sense of “half-dead” as I have translated it to highlight the liminal state of the children’s bodies. The notion of being “half-dead”, is, in itself, a paradox, since life and death are, at least from a medical perspective, typically thought of as diametrically opposed, absolute states. In *Phaedra*, the sense of “half-dead”, rather than completely “lifeless”, is apparent when the nurse states that Phaedra’s body “suddenly falls to the ground, half-dead” (*terrae repente corpus exanimum accidit, Phaedra 585*). Although the nurse may be foreshadowing Phaedra’s death and hyperbolizing her present condition, she is not literally stating that Phaedra is actually dead. Instead, she is indicating that Phaedra is showing signs of serious illness when she is approached by Hippolytus. The use of this adjective also calls attention to the fact that Phaedra is contemplating suicide (which she ultimately carries out), and thus, at least psychologically, in a liminal zone between life and death. The dichotomy of life and death is also problematized in another passage from *Phaedra* in which the messenger describes Hippolytus as *seminimem* (1102)—a word which, similar to *exanimitis*, can also be translated as “half-alive” or “nearly dead”. With the use of *exanimitis* in *Thyestes*, the prefix *ex-* may lead one to assume that the children are fully dead, in the sense that their *anima* is gone. At the same time, *ex*, as a preposition, can be used to indicate “a transitional stage between one quality and

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161 Glare 2012: s.v. *exanima*; cf. *exanimitis*. Seneca’s tragedies employ both the second declension form *exanimitis* and the third declension form *exanimitis* with no apparent differentiation in sense. (see De Meo 1990: 178)
162 This passage from *Phaedra* is in fact listed under the glosses “half dead, unconscious, swooning” in the entry for *exanimitis* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. (Glare 2012: s.v. *exanimitis*).
163 I return to this passage during my discussion of *Phaedra* later in this chapter.
164 Glare 2012: s.v. *seminimem*.
165 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *seminimem*. 
another”—a sense which underscores the liminal condition of the children in this passage.

In Celsus, the adjective *exanimis* is used only one time, clearly with the sense of “lifeless” or “inanimate”. This is evident since Celsus first discusses how to remove something that is living (*animal*) from the ear, and then something that is inanimate (*aliquid exanime*, 6.7.9a.1-10). In another passage, however, Celsus uses the verb *exanimare* in reference to a person who is not dead, but merely incapacitated due to an illness arising *ex vulva* (4.27.1.1-4). Indeed, *exanimare* can be used to convey that a person is simply “prostrate” or “put out of her senses”. Thus, while the woman in this example is incapacitated, she is still very much alive. Similarly, we can understand Atreus’ use of the adjective *exanima* as implying that even through the minds or *animae* of the children are gone, their bodies are still alive in some sense.

Atreus downplays the children’s level of mental consciousness by referring to them as *nescientes* (not knowing, 1068). Although *nescire* appears only twice in the entire De Medicina, in both instances living human beings are the subject of the verb. The children’s marginal state of life, along with the simultaneous representation of Atreus as a sacrificial priest and an avenger bent of violation of the bodies—rather than a healer—problematicizes whether the scene presents us with an image of corpses being dissected, or vivisection of living bodies. Ultimately, the ambiguities and paradoxes of the scene place it somewhere in between these two forms of operation, or perhaps to function as both forms of operation at the same time, adding yet another layer of paradox.

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166 Glare 2012: s.v. *ex*.
167 This condition, which is in many ways comparable to the Hippocratic concept of “hysteria”, is discussed further in Chapter 4. This is the only instance in which Celsus uses that the verb *exanimare*.
168 Glare 2012: s.v. *exanimare*.
169 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *exanimare*.
170 1.Pr.25.5; 1.Pr.66.2.
One can find similar ambiguity between states of life and death in the extispicy scene in *Oedipus* (353-383), when Manto, the daughter of Tiresias, observes that one of the two cattle that are being sacrificed actually rises up and attacks the priests with its horns. Having had its internal organs thoroughly examined, this cow is described as an “empty body” (*inane...corpus*, 379), yet in the same sentence it is paradoxically able to rise up and attack. Commenting on this scene from a dramaturgical perspective, Kohn observes that the behavior of the cattle and the representation of extispicy have produced much scholarly controversy in regard to its staging. However the scene may have been performed, this passage suggests that conducting *extispicium* on animals is a process that blurs the lines between life and death, not unlike Atreus’ “dissections” of Thyestes’ children. Indeed, one of the cattle rises up and attacks in the process of being killed, and Tiresias states that the organs of these animals are removed “torn from living bodies” (*fibra vivis rapta pectoribus*, 391); this echoes language used by the messenger in describing the dissected organs of Thyestes’ children (*erepta vivis exta pectoribus, Thyestes* 755). In this scene of *extispicium* in *Oedipus*, the dissected body parts of the animals remain strongly animated: their disturbed intestines, for instance, tremble with force (*non levi motu, ut solent, / agitata trepidant exta*, 353-354), and blood continues to pump.

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171 ...*et inane surgit corpus ac sacros petit / cornu ministros* (and the empty body rises and attacks the holy priests with its horns, 379-380).
172 Kohn provides a thorough discussion of various staging possibilities that could have been used. These include having actors carry the heads of a bull and a heifer on stage, and then move around to emulate the cows’ movements (whether or not these might be the decapitated heads of real animals is not clear from Kohn’s comments); having Manto relate what is happening out of sight (if it is assumed that the sacrifices are happening offstage); having dancers represent the cows and portray their actions through pantomime; and—seemingly the most unlikely of all scenarios—actually performing a sacrifice of real calves, which might be sedated by drugs. Kohn also acknowledges the possibility that the play was meant to be recited, in which case there would not have been a need for any staging innovation. (see Kohn 2013: 37-38; on the dramaturgical problems posed by this scene, see also Boyle 2011: 186-187; Fitch 2000: 9-11; Sutton 1986: 23) Although pantomime has been proposed as a possible technique for staging, Zanobi’s recent book entitled *Seneca’s Tragedies and the Aesthetics of Pantomime* somewhat surprisingly does not discuss this scene. (Zanobi 2014)
through their veins (*novusque prosilit venis cruor*, 355). As Kohn has remarked, these physical
details show astute accuracy, “both in terminology and in picking out the features that were
looked for” during the performance of *extispicium*.\(^{173}\) Similar realism and attention to physical
detail are also seen in Atreus’ human “dissections” as described by the messenger, and then
later by Atreus himself.

Horrified by Atreus’ descriptions, Thyestes responds by expressing his wish that night would
conceal the crimes that have occurred:

> ...aeterna nox permaneat et *tenebris tegat*
> immensa longis scelera.

> ...may eternal night remain and hide
> the immeasurable crimes in long-lasting darkness. (1094-1095)

As in line 1015 (*...nosque defossos tege*), this longing for concealment is expressed with the
verb *tegere*, and the mention of *tenebris* recalls Thyestes’ earlier apprehensions about being
enveloped in fog and shadows prior to realizing the cause of his illness (*caligo tenebris noxque*
*se in noctem abdidit*, 994).\(^{174}\) Thyestes’ reactions in this scene ultimately portray the revelation
and realization of the cause of his suffering not as an illuminating source of knowledge to be
embraced, but rather as a source of further darkness and despair. Revelation of the causes of
illness here lead neither to diagnosis nor to prognosis, nor to an attempt at healing, but to
further defeat and despair.

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\(^{173}\) Kohn 2013: 40.

Phaedra

We see something comparable in Seneca's *Phaedra*. In Thyestes' situation, the causes of illness are initially mysterious to the one suffering (Thyestes), but signs of this illness are evident to an outside observer (his brother Atreus, who is of course also a participant, and a cause of Thyestes' suffering). Conversely, in *Phaedra*, the character, Phaedra, suffers from an illness whose causes she herself understands, but tries to hide from others, especially her step-son Hippolytus, who is the object of her passion and the cause of her illness. Themes of concealment and revelation are thus intrinsic to the play, as they are to one of its precursors, Euripides' *Hippolytos*. Discussing this play, Kosak states that Phaedra feels that the cause of her illness “must remain hidden, for its revelation would mean shame and the loss of honor for her, a circumstance that she contends would render her life unlivable.”  

In Seneca’s play, we find the “patient” Phaedra faced with similar circumstances, bent on concealing her illness from discovery by others, but eventually revealing it to Hippolytus. In Euripides' extant play, on the other hand, Phaedra does not reveal her illness, but the nurse does. In the plays of both Euripides and Seneca, the cause of Phaedra’s illness is a “love-sickness” for Hippolytus brought on by the goddess Venus. A condition well-represented in Greek and Latin literature, love-sickness for his mother-in-law. Antiochus attempted to conceal the nature of his illness, but Erisistratus was able to diagnose his condition by observing that certain symptoms would flare up (e.g. fever, quickened pulse) when Antiochus' mother-in-law was present. This anecdote is related by several Greek and Roman sources, including Lucian (*De Syria Dea* 17 and 18), Pliny (*Naturalis Historia* 29.3), Plutarch (*Demetrius* 38), and Galen (*De
sickness can be described as a form of erotic desire which not only causes suffering and various symptoms of illness, but also as a type of illness itself.\textsuperscript{179} In Chapter 4, I further discuss various pieces of Latin vocabulary associated with love-sickness and their connections with madness.

While not initially acknowledging her love-sickness in Seneca’s play, \textit{Phaedra} early on describes her experience as a condition of latent, internal distress that is on the brink of erupting externally:

\textit{Sed maior alius incubat maestae dolor.}
\textit{Non me quies nocturna, non altus sopor solvere curis: alitur et crescit malum et ardet intus qualis Aetnae vapor exundat antro.}

But another, greater pain weighs on me in my gloom:
no nightly rest, no deep sleep releases me from my cares: my illness is nourished and grows and burns inside, just as a fume billows out of the cavern of Mount Etna. (99-103)

The wording used by Phaedra portrays her love-sickness as an intense internal affliction: it burns internally (\textit{ardet intus}) and a secret pain lies within (\textit{sed maior alius incubat maestae dolor}, 99). The verb \textit{incubare} can be translated not only “to weigh upon”—as I render it above to emphasize the sense that there is a physical burden pressing upon Phaedra— but also “to lie upon”, “to lie within”\textsuperscript{180}, and “to brood”.\textsuperscript{181} All of these senses are at work in this context.\textsuperscript{182}

\textit{Praegnotione ad Epigenem 6.14}). Although the parallels cannot be explored in depth here, one can note that this story and Seneca’s \textit{Phaedra} hold in common themes of incestuous passion, attempted concealment, and unwitting revelation brought about by the appearance of symptoms.\textsuperscript{179} One influential study of lovesickness is \textit{In Pandora’s Jar: Lovesickness in Early Greek Poetry} (Cyrino 1995); see also Toohey 1992; Toohey 2004.\textsuperscript{180} Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. \textit{incubare}.\textsuperscript{181} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{incubare}.\textsuperscript{182} Shortly thereafter, \textit{incubare} is used in a similarly open-ended way in a comment made by the nurse: \textit{si tam protervus incubat menti furor…}(268). One could render the line “…if such shameless madness lays in your mind” or
The use of this verb conveys that unspeakable mental distress, in addition to obvious physical suffering, is deeply burdening Phaedra (i.e. one form of illness “lies upon” another, as if an additional burden), and it also suggests that her illness has a hidden, underlying cause. We can also see that Phaedra’s woes are multiplied in the coupling of *dolor* with the substantive adjective *maestae*. The use of this adjective is particularly striking when one notes that it occurs only once in Celsus, when he is discussing a form of madness in which a person may become sad (*maestus*) without a cause (*sine causa*). While I am not suggesting that Phaedra should be diagnosed with this form of madness, Celsus’ reference to becoming sad without a cause is interesting, as it serves to remind us that there is no obvious cause for Phaedra’s own sadness at this point.

Indeed, Phaedra struggles to keep her suffering beyond detection, and in this respect *incubare* gives emphasis to the underlying, or concealed, aspect of her suffering. This use of *incubare* recalls how *subesse* is used to emphasize that the cause of Thyestes’ illness is still unknown to him (*Thyestes* 976). Segal has also commented upon the internalized nature of Phaedra’s suffering in these lines, stating that “Phaedra suffers the inner flames of an impure and secret passion.” While Phaedra experiences a highly internalized form of illness, her suffering is not completely confined internally. As she relates, her distress is beginning to burst...
out and become exposed through physical signs of illness. The image of heat billowing out from the cavern of Mount Aetna (*qualis Aetnaeo vapor exundat antro*, 102-103) is employed in a simile which is appropriate to the breaching of internal and external boundaries. This simile refers not only to the surfacing of Phaedra’s symptoms, it also alludes to the confession that will soon emerge from Phaedra. The idea of emergence is emphasized by *exundat*, whose prefix *ex-* highlights the externalized nature of the approaching revelation, similar to effects the prefix has in *Thyestes*.\(^{185}\)

The image of Phaedra about to burst at the seams is reinforced by the use of *incubare*, a verb which is often used in the sense of “to brood” or “to hatch”. Indeed, this is just the sense the word has the lone time it is used by Celsus, who states: …*ideoque perniciosissimae sunt cum incubant…* (therefore [snakes] are the most dangerous when they are brooding, 5.27.10.11-12). Phaedra is on the verge of a similarly dangerous outburst. Pursuing this line of thought, we arrive at an image of pain brooding over Phaedra in her gloom like a snake brooding over its eggs. This image of brooding not only contributes to the general tone of danger and the potential for destruction, it also allows Phaedra herself to be seen as comparable to a dangerous serpent. This characterization foreshadows the violent action Phaedra threatens to perform upon herself, and the vicious lies she tells about Hippolytus, which ultimately bring about his death.

Later in the play, Phaedra does indeed reveal the nature of her suffering, first to the nurse, and then, with catastrophic consequences, to Hippolytus. Before she makes these revelations,

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\(^{185}\) Cf. *expulso* (*Thyestes* 905). The verb *exundat* is used seven times in Senecan tragedy, but it does not appear in Celsus.
the nurse is left to puzzle over the various symptoms Phaedra is exhibiting. As she struggles to interpret these symptoms and diagnose a cause for Phaedra’s illness, the nurse explains her observations to the chorus, using language that describes Phaedra’s state at once in terms of both concealment and revelation:

Spes nulla tantum posse leniri malum, 
finisque flammis nullus insanis erit.  
Torretur aestu tacito et inclusus quoque,  
quamvis tegatur, proditur vultu furor;  
erumpit oculis ignis et lassae genae  
lucem recusant; nil idem dubiae placet,  
artusque varie iactat incertus dolor...

There can be no hope of alleviating such a terrible illness,  
there will be no end to the mad flames.  
She is scorched by a silent heat, and even though her madness is concealed,  
shut up inside, it emerges in her face;  
fire bursts forth in her eyes, and her wearied cheeks  
refuse the light; no one thing is pleasing to her while uncertain,  
and an uncertain pain tosses her limbs about in various ways... (360-366)

It is interesting that the nurse refers to Phaedra as *dubia*, a word that may remind us of Phaedra’s own doubts, even though the nurse does yet not realize that Phaedra is in a state of doubt about whether she should reveal her passion to Hippolytus. This word also emphasizes the concealed nature of Phaedra’s illness, especially when one notes that Celsus contrasts *causae* that are *in dubio* with *evidentes causae*. Celsus draws a strong connection between causes of illness that are “hidden”, “doubtful” and “uncertain” in stating that the *medicus* cannot formulate plans for treatment based upon *rebus latentibus (istae enim dubiae et incertae sunt)*, but instead based upon *evidentibus causis*.\(^\text{186}\) This choice of words is particularly striking, because immediately after describing Phaedra as *dubia*, the nurse goes on to describe

\(^{186}\) 1.Pr.52.1-3.
Phaedra’s pain as *incertus*. The similarity of the language used by Celsus and the nurse underscores the inability to diagnose Phaedra because the causes of her illness remain “hidden”.

Although the nurse remains very much at a loss to comprehend Phaedra’s condition, she is able to observe multiple signs of obvious distress: *flammis...insanis* (mad flames, 361), *proditur vultu furor* (madness emerges in her face 363), *erumpit oculis ignis* (fire bursts forth in her eyes, 364), and *artusque varie iactat incertus dolor* (an uncertain pain tosses her limbs about in various ways, 366). These are perceptible aspects of Phaedra’s illness. While the references to *ignis* and *flammae* are not meant literally, these words can provide some possible clues about Phaedra’s condition. Indeed, fire and flames are some of the most common and traditional metaphors for erotic desire in Latin literature, and such vocabulary is sometimes associated with madness, as we will see in our discussion of *Hercules Furens* in Chapter 4. The externalized aspect of Phaedra’s condition is also highlighted by the nurse’s use of *proditur* and *erumpit*. Migliorini labels the verb *erumpere* a “termin[e] tecnic[o]”\(^{187}\), noting the use of the word in Celsus (2.7.31.6), where it refers to an abscess (*abscessus*) breaking out (*erumpit*) around the ears—thus describing an external manifestation of illness. Indeed, the Latin word *abscessus* suggests contravening boundaries, both in its ability to refer to “a departure” or “absence”, as well as the medical condition known in English as an “abscess” (a localized collection of pus, often accompanied by swelling and inflammation).\(^{188}\) With this condition, we see that the

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\(^{188}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *abscessus*; cf. *abscedere*.
condition of the internal body becomes more apparent through signs revealed externally (swelling, inflammation, pus).

The verb *erumpere* is not used again in *Phaedra*\(^\text{189}\), but it does appear in a noteworthy passage from *Epistula 56*\(^\text{190}\), where Seneca is discussing the prospect of treating various kinds of illness:

> Omnia enim vitia *in aperto* leniora sunt; morbi quoque tunc ad sanitatem *inclinant* cum ex *abdito erumpunt* ac vim sui *proferunt*.

All ills are milder when out in the open; diseases also turn toward health when they burst forth from a state of concealment and manifest their own power. (Epistula 56.10)

Here, Seneca is comparing forms of illness that have a morally-tinged element (*vitia*) and forms of illness that are more tied to the physical body (*morbi*).\(^\text{191}\) Both kinds of illness are thought to be more treatable when they are openly revealed. Seneca uses the phrase *ex abdito erumpunt* in reference to the external revelation of diseases (*morbi*), which is thought to make those diseases “turn toward health” (*inclinat*). I understand the words *ex abdito* as a substantive adjective phrase (i.e. “from concealment”) which contrasts with the sense of revelation strongly conveyed by words such as *erumpunt* and *proferunt*. Seneca’s use of the word *abdito* in reference to “concealed” forms of illness, recalls Celsus’ references to *abditae causae*.\(^\text{192}\) The term *abdere* is also appears in Senecan tragedy, as we saw earlier with *Thyestes* (cf. *noxque se

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\(^{189}\) *Erumpere* occurs only two other times in Senecan tragedy (*Hercules Furens* 290 and *Hercules Oetaeus* 1731), neither of which are closely connected with the revelation of illness.

\(^{190}\) Migliorini also comments on this passage, observing that Seneca’s comments follow Hippocratic distinctions between “malattie ‘nascoste’ e ‘palesi’, ‘interne’ ed ‘esterne’”—diseases which are “hidden” and “evident”, or “internal” and “external”. (Migliorini 1997: 80)

\(^{191}\) The semantic range of *vitia* and *morbi* is discussed more in depth in Chapter 2.

\(^{192}\) Mudry has also noted this resonance in usage. (Mudry 1982: 88)
in noctem abdidit, 994); forms of abdere also appear four times in Phaedra, although these uses are not connected with the concealment of illness.\(^{193}\)

Seneca’s use of the verb *inclinare* is particularly noteworthy here, since this word can take on the sense of “to abate” or “to diminish” when used in reference to a person suffering from illness.\(^{194}\) Seneca goes on to state that when morbi reveal their own power (*vim sui proferunt*), a state of health is closer at hand. Seneca is implying that health results from having a greater possibility to understand—and thus treat—illness. Indeed, the phrase *omnia vitia in aperto leniora sint* suggests that by simply being out in the open, ills in general and diseases in particular become “milder”; but the implication may well be that they are also easier to understand and treat. This may be compared to the empiricist view (cf. Proemim 30.6-31.3) that an obvious cause (*evidens causa*) offers more hope for knowledge (*scientia*) and treatment (*medicina*) than a cause which is in doubt (*in dubio*).

These comments from Epistula 56 suggest that illness naturally starts to lean toward health when the illness emerges unconcealed, with externally visible signs. In Phaedra’s case, however, despite the various signs that emerge from her body and become evident, the nurse remains confounded, unable to treat the illness or fully understand its causes. The bursting forth of fire in Phaedra’s eyes (*erumpit oculis ignis*), for example, does not produce the understanding which is expected to come about when illness bursts forth from concealment (*ex abdito erumpunt*) in Epistula 56. To be sure, only certain *symptoms* are “bursting forth”, not

\(^{193}\) Phaedra 147, 778, 918, 933.

\(^{194}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *inclinare*. The Oxford Latin Dictionary does not explicitly acknowledge the verb’s connections with recovery from illness, but it does note its use in reference to “body parts”. (Glare 2012: s.v. *inclinare*). Celsus uses this word with a suggestion of recovery when he mentions *morbis...inclinatis* (abating diseases, 3.2.2.3).
the illness itself, as in Epistula 56. This in turn raises the question of what exactly is meant by *morbi...ex abdito erumpunt*. The most obvious interpretation is that when diseases “burst forth from concealment”, there has been an appearance of symptoms. But whether it is a question of symptoms appearing or more vaguely an illness emerging, both in Epistula 56 and in this passage from the Phaedra we find the verb *erumpere*; and reading the two passages together highlights the key difference. In Phaedra’s desperate, doomed situation, emergence or revelation of the diseased condition not only does not lead to diagnosis or a cure, but ushers in catastrophe and death.

Following his remarks about the “bursting forth” of diseases in Epistula 56, Seneca elaborates upon the harmful effects that come about when *vitia* (ills) are not openly exposed:

Et avaritiam itaque et ambitionem et cetera mala mentis humanae tunc perniciosissima scias esse cum simulata sanitate subsidunt.

And so with greed, excessive desire to please, and the other ills of the human mind, you ought to know that they are most destructive when they lie low under feigned health. (Epistula 56.10)

Seneca uses the verb *subsidere* to convey that the “evils of the human mind” (*mala mentis humanae*) are concealed. In certain contexts, the verb *subsidere* can be translated “to lie in wait for” and “to ambush”\(^{195}\), which relates to Seneca’s idea that illness is especially destructive when it is concealed. This language recalls how *subesse* (to lie in concealment) is applied to the underlying cause of Thyestes’ illness (*nec causa subest*, 967), while perhaps also evoking the covert ambush plotted by Atreus.

It is also striking that Seneca describes concealed ills as *perniciosissima*—the same superlative adjective used by Celsus in reference to snakes as they brood over—and thus

\(^{195}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *subsidere*. 

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conceal—their eggs (5.27.10.11-12). In this way, Seneca and Celsus both link concealment with potential for destruction, and this idea certainly sheds light on how Phaedra is portrayed.

Despite the various symptoms that Phaedra exhibits in lines 360-366, the exact nature of her condition is not revealed at this point, and the nurse remains incapable of providing diagnosis or relief. It is telling, then, that the emergence of Phaedra’s symptoms is accompanied by language of concealment. When describing Phaedra’s symptoms, the nurse notes aspects of Phaedra’s condition that remain imperceptible, including her *aestus tacitus* (silent heat, 362) and *inclusus...furor* (madness shut up inside, 362-363). The former phrase is a curious pair of words that pertain to different senses (*aestus* evokes touch, while *tacitus* evokes hearing), not unlike the synesthesia expressed by *mugire...vidi* in *Thyestes* (1064). The strangeness and paradox inherent in this expression further contributes to the sense that the nurse is bewildered and unable to derive much insight from Phaedra’s symptoms. Even though certain symptoms are apparent, from the nurse’s perspective things are not much different than if they were imperceptible. Coffey and Mayer drive at a similar point in their comment on the nurse’s use of this word, observing that “even though Phaedra has revealed her passion it is still closed within her.” 196 By this, I assume they mean that Phaedra’s hidden passion is betrayed by the symptoms she is revealing, since she has not yet directly confessed her passion to either the nurse or Hippolytus. Coffey and Mayer also assert that *tacitus* is a word commonly used by Latin poets to refer to wounds, “since they operate invisibly within us.” 197 This remark is somewhat puzzling, since wounds can in fact offer insight into the interior of the human body,

197 Coffey and Mayer 1990: 124.
as we saw with Atreus’ butchering of Thyestes’ children and the flaying of Marsyas, who is described as “nothing if not a wound” (*quidquam nisi vulnus erat*, 6.388). In addition, Coffey and Mayer seem to be blurring senses (perhaps a bit too much like Seneca) in associating the word *tacitus* with “invisibility”. Perhaps it could be more precisely said that this word carries connotations of imperceptibility.

Also paradoxical is the nurse’s reference to Phaedra’s *inclusus…furor* (madness shut up inside), which is said to be concealed (*tegatur*, 363), but nonetheless emerges in her face (*proditur vultu*, 363). The passive voice of the verb *tegatur* also highlights Phaedra’s limited agency and lack of control over her symptoms. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of language of concealment and revelation in this passage recalls Phaedra’s own description of her condition, particularly when she speaks of her illness as an internal burning (*ardet intus*, 102) on the verge of eruption (*qualis Aetnaeo vapor / exundat antro*, 103). In short, Phaedra’s illness teeters between hidden and manifest states in the early stages of the play.

Later in this speech, the nurse uses language that expresses the liminal, vacillating quality of Phaedra’s illness even more directly:

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...attolli iubet
iterumque poni corpus et solvi comas
rursusque fangi: semper impatiens sui
mutatur habitus. Nulla iam Cereris subit
cura aut salutis; vadit incerto pede...
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198 Casamento has also noted the juxtaposition of *tegatur* and *proditur*. (Casamento 2011: 173)
199 Segal also comments on the passive voice of *tegatur* and other verbs in this passage, discussing how such language emphasizes Phaedra’s “guilt and anxiety”. (Segal 1986: 33)
200 Focusing more on the imagery than the language used in this scene, Segal similarly observes that “the enclosed fire is here nearer to bursting forth...as the doors of the palace open to reveal the lovesick queen in her hopeless passion. The stage action of showing the queen languishing in her palace interior enacts the process of revealing the mystery of passion hidden in her soul.”
...she orders her body
to be raised and put down again and her hair to be unbound
and fixed up once more: incapable of enduring itself,
her condition is constantly changing. She does not have
any care for food or health; she proceeds with an uncertain foot... (370-374)

The nurse is not able to offer any reasoned diagnosis or render effective treatment, and this is
not only because Phaedra’s symptoms are partially concealed, but also because her disposition
is erratic and unpredictable. Her condition is always changing (semper...mutatur habitus, 373-
374) and incapable of enduring itself (impatiens sui, 373); this is also manifested in her
constantly changing preferences about how she wants her body and hair to be arranged (370-
372). The word habitus has strong medical connotations, and it appears many times in De
Medicina, where it is used in reference to the present condition of a person’s health (or to the
condition of a person’s symptoms or parts of the body)\footnote{e.g. ...cuive in eodem febris corporisque habitu... (or for a person in the same condition of fever and body, 2.6.7.4-5)}, in reference to a person’s regimen
(diet, exercise, etc.) as it concerns matters of health\footnote{e.g. ...At si malus corporis habitus est, primum abstinendum est... (But if there is a bad habit of the body, the person must first abstain [from wine]... , 3.22.7.1-2)}, or in reference to the constitution of an
individual person.\footnote{e.g. ...quae sequi quisque pro habitu corporis sui debet. (each person ought to follow his own bodily constitution, 1.9.3.2-3)}

At times, Celsus’ usage of habitus seems to relate to a combination of
these three closely interrelated and often inseparable factors. All of these senses are active in
the case of Phaedra, whose symptoms are constantly shifting, whose health and diet are
unstable and unsustainable, and whose very nature and sense of self are in question. Indeed,
Phaedra is wrestling with her own personal integrity and character—matters of morality or
ethics which are also encompassed under the semantics of *habitus*. In Celsus we do not find any condition like Phaedra’s in which a person’s condition undergoes frequent change, and this is not surprising considering Celsus’ goals of pinning down illnesses and placing them into well-defined categories. An ever-changing, undefinable condition such as that of Phaedra would seem to pose a problem for such aims. In one instance, however, Celsus does note that it can be helpful to change a person’s *habitus* when one is suffering due to a harmful humour: 

*habitum corporis mutari expedit* (it is helpful for the habits of the body to be changed, 2.17.3.1) It seems very unlikely that such an approach would helpful for Phaedra, though, since she is already experiencing an overabundance of change, with the nurse expressing an implicit desire for her condition to stabilize.

It is also noteworthy that the nurse describes Phaedra as *impatiens*, a word which also appears in a passage from Thyestes (cf. *sentio impatiens onus*, 1000) which was discussed earlier in this chapter. In that discussion, I associated *impatiens* with the imperceptible causes of illness coming over Thyestes, along with the insufferable nature of Thyestes’ situation. The latter sense is more applicable to Phaedra’s situation in this passage, since she, unlike Thyestes, clearly perceives both the symptoms and causes of her illness. The nurse, on the other hand, is the one who is unable to perceive these things clearly, as the inconstancy and concealment inherent to Phaedra’s condition override the aspects of her illness that are revealed.

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204 Glare 2012: s.v. *habitus*. One can note the closely parallel semantics of the Greek word ἕξις (state or habit of the body, acquired habit, state or habit of the mind), which also has connotations similarly relevant to the spheres of both medicine and morality. (Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v. ἕξις).

205 The word *impatiens* appears two other times in this play, in both cases suggesting a sense of restlessness. In the first instance, Phaedra refers to the bull with which her mother Pasiphaë mated as *torvus impatiens iugi* (bull, intolerable of the yoke, 117). In the other instance, the nurse calls Phaedra *impatiens morae* (intolerable of delay, 583) as she prepares to confess her feelings of desire to Hippolytus. In Seneca’s *Oedipus*, the phrase *impatiens morae* is also employed by Oedipus during his description of the Sphinx’s aggressive mode of attack (99).
For the nurse, the picture remains very much one of uncertainty, and this is underscored by her observation that Phaedra proceeds with *incerto pede* (an uncertain foot, 374)—a phrase which recalls the *incertus dolor* (uncertain pain, 366) mentioned earlier. Coffey and Mayer assert that *incerto pede* “repeats...unnecessarily” the phrase *soluto...gradu* (with a numbed gait, 367). While both phrases do draw attention to Phaedra’s gait, the phrase *soluto...gradu* does not emphasize Phaedra’s uncertainty as explicitly.206 The nurse also conveys Phaedra’s uncertainty in mentioning that “silent heat” (*aestu tacitu*, 362) scorches her, since *aestus* can have not only the sense of “heat”, as in my translation, but also “passion”, “anxiety”, “disquiet”, “worry”, “embarrassment”, “perplexity”, etc.207 All of these senses are highly relevant to Phaedra’s experience.

The nurse’s language of perplexity relates not only to her own uncertain frame of mind in this scene, but also to Phaedra’s indecisiveness about how to deal with her passions. Indeed, both the nurse and Phaedra are in states of uncertainty at this point, and the nurse laments not only the hopelessness of Phaedra’s situation, but also her own lack of recourse in lines 360-361. These lines connect the situation of the ailing Phaedra and the helpless nurse, aligning the experiencing of the “patient” and caregiver.208 Despite observing some externally manifested signs of illness, the nurse’s attempts to diagnose Phaedra are thwarted by the partial nature of

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206 Coffey and Mayer 1990: 125.
207 Glare 2012: s.v. *aestus*. Cassamento also discusses the sense of uncertainty evoked by this phrase and other language in this passage. (Casamento 2011: 173) *Aestus* is also used in Seneca’s *Medea* (939), where it highlights Medea’s vacillating emotions and uncertainty. (see also Boyle 2014: 362)
208 Kosak notes a similar connection between the experiences of Phaedra and her nurse in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. Commenting on the experience of the nurse in Euripides’ play, Kosak goes even further in calling her a “healer who claims to suffer in tending to her patient” and “an incompetent healer.” (Kosak 2004: 51)
what is revealed, by the simultaneous existence of obvious and hidden signs of illness\textsuperscript{209}, and by the unstable nature of Phaedra’s condition.

After the nurse describes other symptoms and facets of Phaedra’s condition, she concludes by noticing that the palace gates are opening, which reveals Phaedra in her state of illness:

Sed en, \textit{patescunt} regiae fastigia:
reclinis ipsa sedis auratae toro
solitos amictus mente non sana abnuit.

But behold, the upper gates of the palace are opening:
lying on the cushion of her gilded seat,
she refuses her usual garb in her unsound state of mind. (384-386)

This presentation of Phaedra in her state of suffering bears a strong resemblance to the scene from \textit{Thyestes} in which Atreus orders the doors of his palace to be opened, revealing Thyestes just before Thyestes’ own symptoms of illness begin to emerge. The similarity of the two situations is particularly evident in the opening of the doors (\textit{patescunt}, \textit{Phaedra} 384; cf. \textit{patefiat}, \textit{Thyestes} 902), which reveals Phaedra and Thyestes respectively reclining on ornate seats (\textit{reclinis ipsa sedis auratae toro}, \textit{Phaedra} 385; cf. \textit{resupinus ipse purpurae atque auro}, \textit{Thyestes} 909). The related verbs \textit{patescere} and \textit{patefieri} are used in reference to the revelations of Phaedra and Thyestes, respectively; these verbs share the stem \textit{pate}-, which, as we have seen, is often used in contexts of revelation in both Seneca and Celsus. In addition, in both of these scenes the lofty, resplendent nature of the character’s seat stands in ironic contrast to the downtrodden state of the character’s health, and to the character’s forthcoming

\textsuperscript{209} Segal also comments on this concurrence, although from a perspective focused more on imagery than language: “In the \textit{Phaedra} images of fire, enclosure, and heaviness and the contrasting imagery of interior and exterior space depict the stifling emotional world in which the characters seem trapped.” (Segal 1986: 29; see also 46)
downfall. In *Thyestes*, of course, as the doors are being opened Atreus predicts some of the symptoms he expects to observe in Thyestes, and shortly thereafter these symptoms start to become apparent. When the doors are opened revealing Phaedra, on the other hand, her mentally disturbed state is immediately apparent after having been described by the nurse.

Phaedra’s *impatiens habitus* (373-374), for instance, is again evident in the fickle requests she makes in this passage to have her outer clothing and jewelry removed, and her hair unbound (387-403). Despite the fact that Phaedra’s physical body becomes more exposed in these ways, the cause of her suffering (her love-sickness for Hippolytus) remains undetected by Hippolytus until significantly later in the play, unfolding more slowly than the revelation of Thyestes’ illness.

The nurse goes on to have a long conversation with Hippolytus, in which he declares his hatred for women. Phaedra then approaches, intending to reveal her feelings to Hippolytus, but before she begins to speak, the nurse again describes signs of illness becoming apparent in Phaedra:

Sed Phaedra praeceps graditur, impatiens morae.
Quo se dabit fortuna? Quo verget furor?
Terrae repente corpus exanimum accidit
et ora morti similis obduxit color.
Attolle vultus, dimove vocis moras:
tuus en, alumna, temet Hippolytus tenet.

But Phaedra, unable to endure delay, approaches directly.
To where will her fortune proceed? Where will her madness turn?
Suddenly her body has fallen to the ground, half-dead
and a death-like hue has covered her face.
Raise up your face, remove the hesitation of your voice:
behold, child, your own Hippolytus is holding you. (583-588)
The sight of Hippolytus immediately provokes intense, visceral reactions in Phaedra. The language used to describe these reactions evokes death, both in how her half-dead body (corpus exanimum, 585) falls to the ground, and in the death-like color that comes over Phaedra’s face (ora morti similis obduxit color, 586). This phrase suggests a loss of color or becoming pale, which, as noted in Chapter 2, Celsus considers a very foreboding sign with respect to health; in some instances it is even considered a sign that death is imminent. Furthermore, the word exanimum suggests that Phaedra is headed toward death; as discussed earlier in this chapter, this word is similarly used to portray a liminal state in the bodies of the children (corpora exanima, Thyestes 1059) whom Atreus dissects/vivisects. These evocations of death foreshadow not only the gravity of what Phaedra is about to reveal, but also the act of suicide that she commits after Hippolytus responds to her revelation with show of revulsion. Even before she commits suicide, Phaedra is portrayed as in a near-death state.

It is also interesting that the nurse says to Phaedra that “your Hippolytus is holding you“ (tuus...Hippolytus tenet, 588). Imagining how the scene might be performed, Coffey and Mayer find this use of tuus puzzling, suggesting that it is either meant to be heard only by Phaedra as she is being held in Hippolytus’ arms, or that it would otherwise cause Hippolytus to wonder why he is being labeled tuus, a term of endearment “too warm”, according to Coffey and Mayer, “for a stepson’s embrace.” The nurse’s reference to “holding” is also striking in light of the fact that being “held” is a common metaphor for the experience of illness in various genres

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210 E.g. 5.26.8.2; cf. 2.2.2.2-3.  
211 Coffey and Mayer 1990: 144.
of ancient and modern literature. This concept can be seen in Celsus, who in one instance refers to being “held by serious diseases” (gravibus morbis tenetur, 2.17.2.4). This metaphor takes on particular significance in Phaedra’s present experience: as Hippolytus approaches and holds her, she is being trapped and bound as if she were mired in illness. Under this interpretation, Hippolytus becomes identified with the illness that constrains her: she is, now both literally and figuratively, trapped in the grip of her illness. Phaedra is also trapped by her own passions, which she still cannot bring herself to reveal. In response to being held by Hippolytus, she can only offer:

Quis me dolori reddit atque aestus graves
reponit animo? Quam bene excideram mihi!

Who restores me to pain and renews these harsh waves
in my mind? How well I did to escape from myself! (589-590)

Immediately upon contact with Hippolytus, pain returns to Phaedra (dolor reddit). This runs counter to the nurse’s expectations: instead of bringing comfort, Hippolytus’ embrace only heightens her feelings of illness. Phaedra’s use of the word aestus reminds us that she is wavering between a state of life and death, since this word can be used in reference to waves of “heat” as well as a vacillating and irresolute state of mind (cf. aestu tacitu, 362). Phaedra even hints at her thoughts of suicide by using the verb excidere, a word which can also be translated in various ways, including “to lose control of one’s sense”, “to escape the memory of”, “to fall away”, and “to perish”. Thus, Phaedra is simultaneously relating that she was

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212 Burkert puts it thus: “the experience of distress is the impression of being bound, fettered, caught in a trap.” (Burkert 1996: 118-119; see also 120-121, 125)
213 Glare 2012: s.v. excidere.
experiencing less pain when her mind was not focused on Hippolytus, and that she would be better off dead now that she has been reminded of Hippolytus.

As she struggles to bring herself to reveal her desire to Hippolytus, Hippolytus attempts to understand the nature of Phaedra’s anguish. Phaedra makes reference to a *malum* (638)—a substantive adjective which, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be translated variously as “illness” “trouble”, “misfortune”, “pain”, “evil”, “fault” etc. Phaedra’s use of such an open-ended word reflects her hesitancy to reveal the exact cause of her suffering, recalling how Tiresias’ use of *malum* helps him keep Oedipus in the dark about the nature of his own condition and identity (*Oedipus* 387). In the following exchange, Hippolytus recognizes that Phaedra is being vague and evasive, prompting Phaedra to reveal some of the internalized aspects of her illness:

> Hippolytus:  
> *Ambigua voce verba perplexa iacis: effare aperte.*
>
> Phaedra:  
> *Pectus insanum vapor amorque torret. Intimis saevit ferus*  
> *visceribus ignis mersus et venis latens ut agilis alas flamma percurrit trabes.*
>
> Hippolytus:  
> You toss out unclear words in confused speech: speak openly.

214 Glare 2012: s.v. *malum*. Earlier in the play, the nurse also rather generically refers to Phaedra’s illness as a *malum* (360).

215 This example is discussed in Chapter 2.

216 Immediately after this line, Zwierlein places in brackets *penitus medullas atque per venas meat*. This line, however, appears in only manuscript A (see Fitch 2002: 500 n. 642), and, according to Coffey and Mayer, “seems to be cobbled out of *Med.* 836.” (Coffey and Mayer 1990: 148) I find this line to be unreliable and unnecessarily repetitious—in both diction and imagery—with the following lines (643-644), and thus choose to leave it out, like Fitch and many other editors.
Phaedra:
The heat of passion\(^{217}\) sears my crazed chest.
A wild fire rages deep inside
buried in my inner flesh, hidden in my vessels
as a nimble flame runs through tall timber. (639-644)\(^{218}\)

Hippolytus refers to Phaedra’s obfuscatory speech as *ambigua voce verba perplexa* (unclear words in confused speech, 639); the interlocking word order in this statement further draws attention to Hippolytus’ frustration with Phaedra’s obscure manner of speaking.\(^{219}\) In telling Phaedra to speak in a more straightforward manner, Hippolytus speaks directly, using a phrase with an unambiguous imperative: *effare aperte* (640). This use of the adverb *aperte* recalls Atreus’ language when he describes the palace after its doors have been opened up, revealing Thyestes (*aperta...tecta*, 908) just before he explains some of the symptoms starting to come over him. In these instances, *aperte* and *aperta* occur immediately before Phaedra and Thyestes disclose symptoms of their respective conditions, bringing their illnesses more into the light for other characters. Similarly, when Theseus later asks the nurse to explain why Phaedra has resigned herself to death, he also says *effare aperte* (speak openly, 859). At that point of the play, Theseus is seeking clarification because the nurse speaks about Phaedra’s condition in a cryptic manner. As Theseus observes: *Perplexa magnum verba nescioquid tegunt* (Unclear words cover up some great mystery, 858). Here, Theseus echoes Hippolytus’ description of Phaedra’s explanations as *verba perplexa* (639); the repetition of this phrase, along with *effare*

\(^{217}\) Following Coffey and Mayer, my translation takes the phrase *vapor / amorque* (“the heat of passion”, 639-640) as hendiadys (more literally, “fume and love”; see Coffey and Mayer 1990: 148).
\(^{218}\) Following Fitch’s text, I omit line 642 (*penitus medullas atque per venas meat*), which appears only in manuscript A. (see Fitch 2002: 500, 501 n. 30)
\(^{219}\) De Meo also notes the interlocking word order, which he views as a representation of Phaedra’s tortured state of mind and body (De Meo 1990: 186). Casamento also comments on the phrase *ambigua voce verba perplexa*, stating that it “ottiene l’effetto di spingere la donna a svelare i propri sentimenti.” (Casamento 2011: 197)
aperte, align the experiences of not only the father and the son seeking to discover the hidden cause of Phaedra’s suffering, but also Phaedra and the nurse as they attempt to conceal this cause. Theseus’ use of the verb tegere (858) displays his skepticism about the nurse’s initial explanations. This statement, coupled with his question quis gravet mentem dolori? (what pain is leaving on your mind? 859), makes it clear that Theseus senses there is an underlying illness afoot.

Phaedra partially obliges Hippolytus’ request to speak more openly by making reference to her heat of passion (vapor amorque, 640-641). This is the first time in the play that she uses the word amor. At the same time, Phaedra continues to speak cryptically about this passion, not immediately acknowledging the object of her desire, and emphasizing the internally concealed aspects of her condition, such as the fire that is buried deep inside her body (intimis...visceribus ignis mersus, 641-643) and hidden in her internal vessels (venis latens, 643). In addition, Phaedra’s reference to vapor (640) recalls her earlier reference to vapor billowing out of the cavern of Mount Aetna (102-103). Earlier in this chapter I argued that this reference foreshadowed that a confession was about to emerge from Phaedra, and it is thus fitting that Phaedra uses the word again immediately before revealing her amor to Hippolytus. Phaedra’s use of vapor in this context is also noteworthy because it can suggest environmental pollution, as seen in Oedipus (47). In that play, the pollution of the Theban environment is portrayed as a manifestation of the pollution within Oedipus’ family, which is strongly connected with Oedipus’ improper relationship with his mother. In light of this usage, we can see that

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220 De Meo also notes the repetition of this word. (De Meo 1990: 188)
221 This sense of vapor is discussed in Chapter 2.
Phaedra’s use of vapor also evokes the familial pollution stemming from her inappropriate feelings toward her stepson. Phaedra is just about to reveal these feelings, which will make the sense of familial pollution more apparent and set into motion the events that cause Theseus to send his own son Hippolytus into exile, which leads to Hippolytus’ death. The immediate juxtaposition of vapor and amor reinforces the sense that Phaedra’s passion is a polluting force.

The language Phaedra uses in 640-643 makes her experience more transparent to Hippolytus, as if she is preparing him for her shocking confession. Yet even while providing a more intimate glimpse into her inner self, she continues to use vocabulary connected with both concealment and revelation. The concurrence of such diction speaks to the precarious state of Phaedra’s thought and action at this point in the play. The obscure aspects of Phaedra’s speech lead Hippolytus to think that the “passion” she is describing must be directed toward Theseus: Amore nempe Thesei casto furis? (Are you then mad with a blameless love for Theseus? 645). Phaedra goes on to make her revelation by comparing Hippolytus’ likeness to that of his father (646-650), praising Hippolytus’ beauty (657), and finally by stating simply tibi mutor uni (I am moved by only you, 669). In revealing these feelings, Phaedra tries to assert her purity, maintaining that she is respersa nulla labe et intacta, innocens (stained by no blemish and chaste, guiltless, 668). This assertion of purity becomes ironic when one notes that the verb mutare, which Phaedra uses in the following line, can also be translated “to change”222; this sense of the word unwittingly undermines Phaedra’s claims to uncompromised chastity.

Throughout the play, change is frequently evident in Phaedra’s physical health and vacillating mental state, which are greatly affected because of Hippolytus. Phaedra’s use of mutare

222 Glare 2012: s.v. mutare.
reminds us of these changes in health, especially when one notes that Celsus frequently uses this verb to convey changes in bodily conditions (especially color), symptoms, and health in general.  

_Mutare_ can also be translated “to forsake” and “to abandon”—senses that Phaedra may not intend or hope for, but ones that are evident in Hippolytus’ reaction. Indeed, Hippolytus responds to Phaedra’s revelation with horror and disgust:

Magne regnator deum,
tam lentus _audis_ sceler?  Tam lentus _vides_?
Et quando saeva fulmen emittes manu,
si nunc _serenum_ est?  Omnis impulsus ruat
aether et _atris_ nubibus _condat_ diem,
ac versa retro _sidera_ obliquos agant
retorta cursus.  _Tuque_, _siderum_ caput,
radiate Titan, tu _nefas_ _stirpis tuae_
speculare?  Lucem _merge_ et in _tenebras_ fuge.

Great ruler of the gods,
do you listen to crimes so calmly?  Do you look up them so calmly?
And when will you send forth the thunderbolt from your stern hand,
if now it is clear?  Let the whole upper sky fall, having been struck down,
and let it hide the day in black clouds,
and let the stars, having turned backward,
steer their paths astray.  And you, celestial captain,
shining Titan, do you observe the offense of your descendant?
Bury the light and flee into the shadows. (671-679)

In using various verbs that highlight the sensory experience (_audis_, 672), _vides_ (672), and _speculare_ (679), Hippolytus emphasizes that the true cause of Phaedra’s illness is now fully observable. That the cause of Phaedra’s condition is now out in the open is also reinforced by

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223 e.g. …_si color aut rubore aut pallore novo mutatus est_… (2.7.3.6); _Accedit crebra coloris in facie totoque in corpora mutatio_… (4.3.1.5-2.1); …_aut aliter naturali colore mutato_… (5.28.15b.4).
serenum (674), which can be translated “clear”, as rendered above and by Fitch\(^\textit{224}\), as well as “cheerful” and “free from trouble”\(^\textit{225}\)—connotations which are highly ironic in this context. As is the case in the above passage, Celsus uses this adjective in connection with atmospheric conditions, stating that *saluberrimi sunt sereni dies* (clear days are the most healthful).\(^\textit{226}\) In his ensuing discussion, Celsus associates “clear days” (*sereni dies*) with an absence of wind, fog, and clouds, thus suggesting that an unconcealed sky fosters health. Hippolytus seems to associate these clear signs with health, as well, since he questions why the skies remain clear and calm even after Phaedra’s illness has been revealed. He thinks it would be more appropriate for the atmosphere to be shrouded in darkness, and he implores the ruler of the gods to push matters back into a state of concealment: *omnis impulsus / ruat aether et atris nubibus condat diem* (let the whole upper sky fall, having been struck down, and let it hide the day in black clouds, 674-675) and *lucem merge et in tenebras fuge* (conceal the light and flee into the shadows, 679). The vocabulary in these phrases recalls the vocabulary in the messenger’s description of the darkness that pervades Troy in *Agamemnon*, a passage discussed earlier in this chapter: *ruat* (cf. *obruit*, 472); *atris* (cf. *atra*, 459); *nubibus* (cf. *nubes*, 462); *condat* (cf. *conditur*, 470); *diem* (cf. *dies*, 461); *lucem* (cf. *lux*, 461); *tenebras* (cf. *tenebras*, 472).\(^\textit{227}\) In both passages, these words contribute to the overall sense of concealment; Hippolytus, through his hortatory verbal phrases in 674-675 and his imperatives in 679, wishes


\(^{225}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *serenus*.

\(^{226}\) 2.3.1.1.-2. This is the only instance in which *serenus* is used by Celsus.

\(^{227}\) The vocabulary used here recalls vocabulary used in scenes from *Thyestes* that involve motifs of concealment, for example when Thyestes begins to experience feelings of illness (*caligo tenebris noxque se in noctem abdidit*, 994) and when Thyestes wishes for death after the cause of his illness is revealed (*aeterna nox permaneat et tenebris tegat / immense longis scelera*, 1094-1095).
to be wrapped up in darkness, while the messenger’s language describes the darkness that
enveloped Troy in the aftermath of its destruction. In addition, these passages both make
mention of Titan (Phaedra 678; cf. Agamemnon 460)—in each case referring to a
personification of the sun, whose setting is expected to bring about darkness. The form of
darkness sought by Hippolytus is the darkness of death, as he explicitly states a few lines later
in the speech. This desire for death ironically unites Hippolytus and Phaedra at the very
moment when Hippolytus is feeling horrified and disgusted by her. This emphasis on
concealment in Hippolytus’ language suggests that he is more horrified and disgusted by the
fact that Phaedra reveals her passions than the fact that she experiences such passions. In
other words, he is not so disturbed by the nature of Phaedra’s illness and her symptoms, but
rather by the fact that she allows these things to erupt.

Shortly after expressing his desire for death, Hippolytus compares the offensiveness of
Phaedra’s revelation to the conception of the Minotaur by Phaedra’s mother, Pasiphaë.
Hippolytus concludes that, by comparison, Phaedra’s revelation is even more disgraceful than
her mother’s deeds:

O scelere vincens omne femineum genus,
o maius ausa matre monstrifera malum
genetrice peior! Illa se tantum stupro
contaminavit, et tamen tacitum diu
crimen biformi partus exhibuit nota,
scelusque matris arguit vultu truci
ambiguus infans—ille te venter tulit!

Oh, you who surpass the entire female race in wickedness,
oh, having dared a greater evil than your monster-bearing mother,

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228 In me tona, me fige, me velox cremet / transactus ignis: sum nocens, merui mori... (Bring thunder upon me, bind
me up, let the swift fire, passing through, consume me. I am guilty, I am deserving of death..., 682-683)
worse than the parent! She polluted only herself
with disgrace, and nevertheless her offspring,
with its double shaped mark, revealed her long-concealed offense,
the perplexing child displayed his mother’s wickedness in its ferocious face—
that was the womb that bore you! (687-693)

Hippolytus suggests that Phaedra spread her disgrace to others, unlike Pasiphaë, who polluted
only herself (690-691). This remark is somewhat surprising, since Pasiphaë’s “offense” (crimen)
establishes a precedent for illicit passions, which are also expressed in her daughter; in this
sense, the contamination of the mother has spread to the daughter. Indeed, by declaring ille te
venter tulit (that was the womb that bore you, 693), Hippolytus implies that Phaedra’s disgrace
can be traced to her maternal roots. Hippolytus identifies several other connections between
the experiences of these two figures. He notes that Pasiphaë’s offense also lurked in a hidden
state for a long time (tacitum diu / crimen, 690-691). Hippolytus’ use of the adjective tacitus
recalls the nurse’s reference to Phaedra’s concealed “silent heat” (aestu tacito, 362). Although
Hippolytus does not characterize Pasiphaë’s experience as an illness, he does describe the
exposure of her offense as a process of revelation with signs; this process is not unlike the
diagnosis of an illness based upon the observation of symptoms. The Minotaur reveals his
mother’s crime in his hybrid appearance (biformi...nota, 691); this phrase recalls Celsus’ use of
the word nota in reference to symptoms of illness.\footnote{In Fitch’s translation of this passage nota
is rendered as “evidence”, which nicely brings out the word’s connotations of scientific
observation.}

\footnote{Fitch 2002: 505.}
Moreover, it is noteworthy that *nota* appears alongside the verb *exhibere* (691) in this passage; this verb occurs in Celsus seven times\(^{230}\), including in contexts where symptoms are displayed. In one example, Celsus refers to signs of impending illness:

*Sed cum ab iis coeperim, quae *notas* quasdam *futurae adversae valetudinis exhibent*, curationum quoque principium ab animadversione eiusdem temporis faciam.

But as I began with those things which display certain signs of adverse future health, concerning treatment I will also begin by considering the same [future] period of time. (3.2.5.1-4)

Here, Celsus employs vocabulary similar to the language Seneca uses to convey the idea that Pasiphaë’s offense is apparent in the figure of her child: in both contexts, there are signs (cf. *notae* and *nota*) that reveal (cf. *exhibent* and *exhibuit*) underlying conditions that are not immediately apparent.\(^{231}\) Both passages also draw attention to the passage of time (cf. *tacitum diu crimen* and *futurae adversae valetudinis*). Without the signs that are manifested in its external appearance, the bestial pedigree of Pasiphaë’s child (and thus Pasiphaë’s offense) would remain unknown, similar to how an illness eludes detection if it does not exhibit observable symptoms. In the passage from *Phaedra*, the verb *arguit* (displayed, 692) reinforces the idea that these signs reveal the nature of the child.\(^{232}\) Furthermore, the reference to Pasiphaë’s child as *ambiguus infans* (the perplexing child, 693) underscores the fact that the Minotaur’s physical appearance provides signs that reveal what would be an otherwise

\(^{230}\) 2.1.13.3; 2.1.15.4; 3.2.5.2; 3.4.3.4; 5.26.16.4; 7.26.lc.3; 8.10.li.4

\(^{231}\) Similarly, the nurse later describes Phaedra’s *crinis tractus et lacerae comae* (pulled hair and torn locks, 731) as *facinoris tanti notae* (signs of such a crime, 732).

\(^{232}\) The verb *arguere* can also be translated “to accuse”, “to bring a charge against”, and “to blame”. (Glare 2012: s.v. *arguere*) These senses of the word relate to how Pasiphaë’s virtue is indicted by the monstrous nature of her child. This is even more explicit later in this scene, when the nurse suggests that they try to transfer the crime back onto Hippolytus: *regерamus ipsi crimen atque ulter impiam / Venerem arguamus* (let us transfer the crime back to him, and accuse him of excessively unchaste lust. 720-721). This verb does not appear in Celsus.
mysterious and uncertain nature. This use of the adjective *ambiguus* also recalls the remark Hippolytus makes about Phaedra’s *ambigua verba* (unclear words, 639) before the underlying cause of Phaedra’s illness has been fully revealed. While the adjective *ambiguus* does not appear in Celsus, we have seen that other adjectives and phrases are used by Celsus to describe causes of illness which are unclear or unknown, such as *abdita, incognita, obscura, latens,* and *in dubio*.

**Chapter Conclusions**

This chapter has shown that the Latin vocabulary of concealment and revelation plays an important role in describing illness in Celsus’ *De Medicina* on the one hand, and Seneca’s *Thyestes* and *Phaedra* on the other. No previous study that I am aware of has performed an in-depth analysis of such terminology in either of these authors, despite their shared interests in the concealment and revelation of illness. Furthermore, while there has been a good deal of scholarship on concepts and terminology of the concealment and revelation of illness in Greek tragedy and Greek medical writing, these matters have been explored far less thoroughly in relation to Latin literature. In the realm of Greek literature, there has been some debate concerning the idea that illness is ever concealed. Concerning Greek thought about latent forms of illness, Padel asserts that the idea “that you could have a virus, or madness, and no one know, is not a concept available in ancient Greece.”233 Although she acknowledges the relationship between internal and external states of the body, Padel considers latency to be a modern construct not consistent with ancient Greek concepts of illness. Holmes has taken

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233 Padel 1995: 35; see also 43.
issue with this argument, pointing out examples from Greek tragedy, Hippocratic treatises, and works from other genres of Greek literature in which the concealment of illness is portrayed.\textsuperscript{234}

Holmes’ observations about concealed forms of illness in Greek literature are consistent with what we have seen in several works of Latin literature. Celsus’ \textit{De Medicina} and Seneca’s tragedies \textit{Thyestes} and \textit{Phaedra} offer numerous examples in which the concealment of illness is described. In such contexts, these authors sometimes use similar words and word-roots, including the verbs \textit{abdere} and \textit{subesse}. One word that Celsus uses with more frequency is \textit{incognita}, while \textit{ambiguus} is sometimes used by Seneca but never by Celsus. Regarding the revelation of illness, these authors employ even more similar terms, including the verbs \textit{videre}, \textit{latere}, \textit{patere}, \textit{apparere}, and \textit{exhibere}. One term that occurs with more frequency in Celsus is \textit{manifestus}. In addition to these terms, Celsus and Seneca are both interested in \textit{signa/notae/indicia} (signs or symptoms), as well as \textit{causae} (causes) of illness.

Both Celsus and Seneca employ language of concealment when causes of illness are unknown, unknowable, or both. Moreover, language of concealment may be used either in reference to the one suffering from an illness, in reference to those who observe another person experiencing symptoms of an illness, or in reference to both. Language of concealment is also used when symptoms of illness are known, but remain (fully or partially) concealed. In both authors, language of revelation tends to accompany the emergence of symptoms; the use of such language sometimes, but not always, signals an understanding of the causes of illness.

\textsuperscript{234} Holmes, for instance, observes that “we are largely unaware of what goes on inside the cavity [inside the body], allowing trouble to develop without our knowledge. (Holmes 2010: 15) Responding to Padel directly, Holmes goes on to state that “It is untrue that the concept of a hidden disease was not available to the ancient Greeks.” (2010: 15 n. 53)
Thyestes, for instance, is able to perceive a multitude of signs and symptoms as his illness develops, but he is not immediately able to comprehend the cause behind them. Atreus, on the other hand, is able to comprehend the cause of Thyestes’ illness even before symptoms of his illness begin to emerge. Although described in language of concealment and revelation, the experience of both characters complicates the relationship between these phenomena, as well as the relationship between cause and effect and the usual guilt pattern associated with illness as described by Burkert. This is in contrast with Phaedra, where Phaedra’s nurse readily notices various signs of illness emerging from Phaedra, but is at a loss to interpret what is causing them. For both Thyestes and Phaedra’s nurse, an understanding of causation comes later, and does not result from the symptoms they observe, but rather from information confessed by others.

These delays in the revelation of illness lead to paradoxical situations which are often conveyed on the level of language. Even when symptoms are revealed in Phaedra, Seneca’s use of language emphasizes concealment, while Thyestes experiences symptoms seemingly *sine causa*. Meanwhile, Atreus carves up the living organs of Thyestes’ children even though the children themselves are described as dead, blurring the lines between dissection and vivisection and complicating the life-death dichotomy. This is in contrast with Celsus’ comments on dissection and vivisection, which he presents as forms of medical inquiry that are quite distinct from each other, both ethically, and in terms of what they are able to reveal about the body. In Atreus’ act of dissection/vivisection, he is simultaneously cast as a doctor, a Roman priest, and a sadistic murderer all at once, while his brother remains a helpless patient, not even aware that he is ill until it is too late. In such ways, *Thyestes* repeatedly raises perplexing, Stoically-
informed questions about the relationship between body and self. In Phaedra's case, there is tension around whether concealment or revelation of this particular illness is desirable or not; her suffering decidedly does not ameliorate as the illness emerges or “erupts”. In the end, the revelation of the illness leads to no healing at all, but instead to catastrophe and death—not only of the “patient” Phaedra but also of Hippolytus. All this is in contrast with Celsus, who generally suggests that the revelation of symptoms and causae of illness aids in the process of diagnosis and treatment.235

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235 The scope of this chapter has only allowed for extended consideration of two of Seneca’s plays, but further studies might examine language of concealment and revelation and its connection with illness in other Senecan tragedies, particularly Oedipus (esp. 1-5, 37-51, 212-216, 353-383, 591-592, 868-870), Hercules Furens (esp. 939-954), and Medea (esp. 50-157).
Chapter IV

Language of Madness

This chapter comes as the last in the body of this study because it brings together some earlier-discussed themes, such as terminology for illness, concealment and revelation, and symptoms, and also because it is a different category and leads into new directions beyond “physical” forms of illness. Here, I raise new issues dealing with emotion, morality, and psychosomatic manifestations of illness, while maintaining a focus upon language of “madness” in Celsus’ *De Medicina* and philosophical texts and tragedies by Seneca. Unlike the previous chapters of this study, the present chapter looks at Senecan prose, analyzing some key passages where language of madness plays an important role. This chapter will provide insight into how, and to what extent, these texts use language and imagery of madness, and how these differing genres interact with each other with respect to such language and imagery.¹

Several important studies have analyzed the terminology used to express “madness” in Greek tragedy and Greek medical texts.² After commenting on some of these studies, I return to the question of terminology, noting that the very definitions of what constitutes “madness” or “insanity” (or whatever similar terms there may be in other languages) vary across cultures and time periods, as do the boundaries between what is considered “healthy” and what is

¹ Bosman has noted that previous studies of madness in Greek and Latin literature have tended to take a narrow perspective, focusing on madness in either the sphere of moral philosophy or the sphere of medicine, without comparing the two. He persuasively argues that bringing together “the work done in both [of these] fields would benefit our understanding of ancient madness.” (Bosman 2009: 2-3)
² These include Padel 1995; Perdicoyianni-Paléologou 2009a and 2009b; Pigeaud 1989a.
considered “insane”.

3 Scholars such as Stok have discussed the terminology of madness in works of medical prose in Latin, but attention has been lacking with respect to other genres of Latin literature. This trend continues even with the very recent collection of essays Mental Disorders in the Classical World, whose introduction admits that the collection is interested “to a lesser extent [in how] the Romans saw mental disorders” (i.e. in comparison with how the Greeks saw these disorders). While this book contains much thoughtful discussion, it focuses primarily upon authors traditionally considered “medical writers”, leaving room for further analysis of representations of mental disorders in other authors, both Latin and Greek. Like many other past studies of “mental disorders”, none of the essays in this book explore madness across genres of Latin literature. This chapter blazes a new path.

Previous studies of mental disorders in Latin literature, including Mental Disorders in the Classical World, have also tended not to offer close readings of specific passages or to focus on the Latin terminology—a gap in the scholarship which Harris notes in his introductory comments. This chapter begins to address that gap by performing close readings of Seneca and Celsus and comparing their usage of terminology. In addition to charting these various texts' usage patterns and looking for consistency and its absence, I will also be suggesting how the differing usages reflect specific characteristics, preoccupations, and strategies of the individual authors and genres at stake. In doing so, I demonstrate ways in which the

3 Foucault’s Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason is a landmark study in the cultural construction of madness and sanity. (Foucault 1988)
5 Harris 2013: 21.
6 Harris 2013: 22-23.
representation of mythic characters in poetic tragedies (in particular *Hercules Furens* and *Medea*) is influenced and shaped by linguistic and conceptual habits pertaining to madness which are evident in Celsus’ encyclopedic presentation of *medicina* and in the Stoically-colored philosophizing of Seneca prose. My discussion of Senecan tragedy in particular will draw attention to examples where language of madness reflects the characteristically Senecan themes of paradox and self-awareness. I will also explore, for example, to what extent, both Hercules and Medea (and others like them in Senecan tragedy) are described as if they are suffering from specific conditions such as epilepsy or depression, or a generic but still medicalized *insania* as conceptualized in Senecan prose works and Celsus’ *De Medicina*. My analysis will show that in some cases the commonalities among these three bodies of texts are indicative of general features of Latin textuality pertaining to the conceptualization and expression of madness. Throughout this chapter my analysis continues to focus on terminology, and there is a wide array of vocabulary in these works to be taken into account, including *insania/insanire, exsanire, phrenesis, dementia/demens, amentia/amens, vesanus, furor, ira, rabies/rabere/rabidus, hilaritas/haris, delirium*, and *hysteria*.

Before beginning to discuss the relevant terminology in Celsus, it is necessary to comment on the English word “madness” and its use. Although the term “madness” is used throughout the present chapter, we must acknowledge that it is, for many reasons, a problematic term to use in an analysis of Latin literature. In the parlance of modern English, “madness” is, of

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7 For a discussion of some of the problems associated with the applying terms such as “madness” and “mental illness” to the context of classical literature, see Simon 1978: 31-34 and Bosman 2009: 1-3.
course, a notoriously imprecise and general term which is used in reference to a variety of psychological conditions and behaviors. The same can be said of the English word “insanity”, which is sometimes used in a way similar to “madness.” Neither the terms “madness” nor “insanity” are currently used in the establishments of medicine or psychology; the world of psychology, for example, speaks instead of “mental illness” or “mental disorder”, and there is no consensus about which term is preferable. Differences between registers of usage are also evident in the Latin vocabulary of madness, as Stok has pointed out that there is a “tensione esistente fra il significato ‘scientifico’ dei termini e l’uso prevalente nel linguaggio comune”. This tension makes it both impossible and undesirable to translate these Latin terms the same way in every context.

Despite its “non-technical” connotations, “madness” remains a prominent word in literary studies of psychological disorders and mental illness, as is evident from the titles given to

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8 In addition, the use of the adjective “mad” in American English is marked by further complexity: it has also come to have the sense of “angry”, as in: “I was sooo mad!” (a use which is interesting in light of connections Seneca makes between insania and ira). This use only seems to apply to the adjective—the noun ‘madness’ does not commonly have the sense of “anger” in American English. By contrast, the stereotypical British exclamation “Are you mad?” or the phrase “stark raving mad” convey the sense of “insane, crazed”. George Rosen also discusses some of the semantic nuances of the English word “madness” and corresponding terms in Greek and Latin. (Rosen 1968: 90; see also *OED Online*: s.v. madness (n.); mad (adj.).

9 While “insanity” is no longer issued as a medical diagnosis, it continues to be used as legal term in the United States, originating from its use in common law. (see Tighe 2005: 252) “Madness” is not currently used as either a medical term or a legal term in the United States.

10 Simon 2013: 28.
11 Stok 1980: 11
12 Simon echoes this sentiment, observing that “despite several decades of scholarly activity aimed at delineating the precise boundaries and meanings of the various mental terms, it is difficult to render these terms consistently, let alone in a manner that consistently corresponds to English usage, poetic, popular or scientific.” (Simon 1978: 59)
recent works of influential scholarship. Some prefer to use the term “insanity” as a general category for such disorders, but this word is also tricky because of its superficial similarity to the Latin word *insania*. Despite their etymological connection, the Latin *insania* does not neatly correspond to the English “insanity”. It has a wide variety of possible translations: according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, “madness”, “rage”, “delusion”, “folly”, “imprudence bordering on madness”, etc.; Lewis and Short include other translations such as “senselessness”, “excess”, “extravagance in any thing”, “enthusiasm”, “rapture”, and “inspiration”. This list underscores the highly broad and complex nature of the Latin word. *Insania* is, of course, related to the adjective *insanus*, which, according to Ernout and Meillet, is almost always applied to mental or psychological states, as is reflected in the first entry under *insanus* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*: “of unsound mind”, “demented”, “frenzied”, “mad.” The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* also indicates that when *insanus* is applied to non-human subjects, its sense is not as obviously tied to mental health, with possible translations such as “exceeding reasonable limits”.

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15 Glare 2012: s.v. *insania*.

16 Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *insania*.

17 Ernout and Meillet 1951: *insanus*.

“extravagant”, “absurd”, “wild”, etc. In addition insanus can have the sense of “raging” or “furious” when applied to “natural forces”, thus attributing a mental or psychological component to things that are not living beings. As for the unnegated adjective sanus (“[mentally or physically] sound”, “healthy”, “wholesome”\(^\text{19}\)), the Oxford Latin Dictionary, Lewis and Short, and Ernout and Meillet all note that it can be applied to both the body and the mind.\(^\text{20}\) Etymologically speaking, then, insania rather generally suggests being “not sound” or “not healthy”, and in this sense the word can have euphemistic undertones (much like an English speaker might say that a mentally ill or mentally distressed person is “not well”). The broad nature of the word sanus is on display at the very beginning of Book 1 of De Medicina, which opens by commenting on the nature of a sanus homo (1.1.1.1); here, Celsus’ usage seems to encompass all aspects of human health, both mental and physical.\(^\text{21}\) As we look more closely at the usage of insania and insanus in Seneca and Celsus, it will become very apparent that both of these words can have mental and physical connotations— and sometimes both at the same time, since these authors do not always draw a firm boundary between mental and physical health.

The Greek word μανία and its Latin derivative, mania, may approach the sense of “madness”, as it is often rendered in English, but the Greek and Latin words do not, as we will see, have exactly the same senses and connotations as the English “madness”. There is also the

\(^{19}\) Glare 2012: s.v. sanus.
\(^{20}\) Lewis and Short: s.v. sanus; Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. sanus. Ernout and Meillet connect the etymology of sanus to salus, which they in turn connect to the Greek ὅλος. (Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. sanus; salus).
\(^{21}\) The opening sentence of Book 1 is discussed more in depth later in this chapter.
English word “mania”, which psychologists use to refer to a condition characterized by extremes of mood and “abnormally and persistently increased goal-oriented activity or energy”, and various other symptoms. Harris has encountered similar translation issues in his discussions of ancient Greek conceptualizations of “anger”. He observes that scholars have often used the English word “anger” to translate a variety of Greek terms, such as μῆνις, ὀργή, χόλος, and θύμος, despite the fact that none precisely correspond to the semantics of the English word. A similarly diverse array of Latin words has been translated as “madness”, but, as this chapter will show, they all fail to capture the nuances of the individual Latin terms.

While these semantic complexities are certainly important to note, we cannot allow our discussion to be derailed by them. Thus, as a piece of working vocabulary, I employ the imperfect but generic word “madness”. One reason this word is appealing is that it does not rope off physical components in the same way that as phrases like “mental illness” or “mental disorder”. Indeed, Greek and Roman descriptions of madness often entail physical dimensions of suffering and/or bodily manifestations of illness, which make phrases like “mental illness” or “mental disorder” problematic. These phrases focus on the experience of the mind, while “the mind”—itself a vague and flimsy concept—is not always perceived as the locus of

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22 American Psychiatric Association 2013: 124; see also 125-129.
23 See Harris 2001: 25. Commenting on the “language of emotions” more generally, Kaster notes that “no two emotional terms in either [Latin or English] map perfectly onto each other: their amor is not always and exactly our “love,” their odium is still less our “hate”. (Kaster 2005: 6; see also 7-12)
24 Discussing the representation of a condition known as phrenitis in Greek and Latin literature, Sakai observes: “in order to avoid cultural biases, one must stress as much as possible the relationship between mind and body.” (Sakai 1991: 194; see also 196, 198)
“madness” in Greek and Roman thought. Commenting on the “somatic and behavioral manifestations” of certain conditions depicted in classical literature, Harris observes that there is not a “strict mind-body opposition such as has been familiar since Descartes”. It is thus somewhat curious that the collected volume edited by Harris is given the title Mental Disorders in the Classical World. Since the mental experience is often closely connected with the physical experience in Greek and Latin literature, I avoid using terms like “mental disorder” and “mental illness” whenever possible.

As with any other form of illness recognized in antiquity, it would be very problematic to try to equate forms of the madness that are described by Celsus and Seneca with diseases or disorders recognized by modern medicine. Drabkin has noted that ancient categories of mental illness “would correspond to various modern manic-depressive and schizophrenic forms, and also, apparently to some severe neuroses, whereas certain milder neuroses might not be recognized as mental diseases at all by ancient medical writers.” To this I would add that the reverse is also true: certain behaviors or symptoms categorized as mad or associated with

25 Commenting on Celsus specifically, Roccatagliata observes, “per Celso, come per alcune scuole mediche antiche le malattie mentali non sono affezioni di un organo determinate, ma disturbi ‘di tutto il corpo’ (totius corporis)...Il sintomo psichico è manifestazione e espressione di una malattia globale (somatica) ovvero di una accentuazione dell’influenza che le passioni umane hanno sul corpo.” (Roccatagliata 1973: 48; see also 49)
26 Harris 2013: 11; see also 14, 17.
27 Auvray is another scholar who has noted that Greek and Latin writings on medicine frequently conceptualize madness as two-fold in nature, with both physiological and psychological components: “…la conception médicale de la folie se présente sous deux formes complémentaires: justaposition des malaises du corps et de l’âme d’une part, conséquences physiologiques de troubles psychiques d’autre part.” (Auvray 1989: 71) Auvray suggests that this two-fold model of madness is a “conception médicale”, but in this chapter we encounter examples from so-called “non-medical writings” (i.e. Senecan prose works and tragedies) where madness is shown to have both psychological and physiological components.
forms of “madness” in Latin texts (furor, insania, dementia, etc.) may not be considered abnormal or “mad” in context of the modern world. Indeed, Drabkin’s formulation almost gives the impression that “modern” terms and categories are the objective truth against which “ancient” terms can be measured for their proximity or distance from that objective truth, and not possibly the other way around. It may be more judicious to simply state that ancient observations about illness often do not fit with modern observations and modern medical knowledge. Thus, my English translations of Greek and Latin terms pertaining to madness are not intended to correspond to terminology currently used in the field of psychology or other scientific fields. My translation of the Latin mania as “mania” in English, for instance, will not have the same semantics as the modern psychological term. Another caveat is that mental health is, to some extent, culturally constructed and thus culturally relative; to echo Harris, what might be considered a form of insania or a disorder in antiquity might be considered merely a “character flaw or moral failure” today29, and vice versa. By keeping these methodological complexities in mind throughout this chapter, we aim to arrive at a more sensitive and nuanced understanding of madness in Celsus and Seneca.

Language of Madness in Celsus

Celsus’ comments on madness in section 3.18 of De Medicina have received a good deal of scholarly attention (though little in the way of English language scholarship).30 In my discussion of this section, I will focus on the terminology that Celsus uses to describe different forms of

29 Harris 2013: 14.
30 e.g. Auvray (1989); Pigeaud (1981, 1994); Roccatagliata (1973); Stok (1980, 1994).
madness and their symptoms, and I will point out some nuances of usage which have not received enough attention. In doing so, I will lay the groundwork for the following sections of this chapter, where I discuss Seneca’s usage of terminology.

Celsus’ remarks on madness in De Medicina follow a lengthy discussion of different types of fever. As he brings this section to a close, Celsus connects the thread of his comments on fevers with this new topic of discussion by observing that fever is also associated with certain forms of insania (3.18.1-6). At the same time, Celsus shows that he is moving into a new area by stating that he will be turning the discussion toward corporis adfectus…qui certis partibus adsignari non possunt (conditions of the body which are not able to be assigned to specific parts, 3.18.1.3-4). Celsus then elaborates upon these conditions that do not affect a specific part of the physical body, grouping them under the vast label insanias (3.18.1.5). Spencer comments that Celsus uses the term insanias “in its widest sense [sic] unsoundness (of mind)”31, but certain forms of insanias described by Celsus have physical as well as mental symptoms.

Thumiger, on the other hand, is one scholar who has noted that Celsus applies insanias to a disparate array of psychological and physical experiences.32 Celsus comments on three distinct forms of insanias, which scholars frequently refer to as phrenesis, bilis atra or melancholia, and mania33, despite the fact that only the first label is actually used by Celsus. This tripartite

32 Thumiger 2013: 65. Allbutt also observes that Celsus, like Hippocrates, Asclepiades, Soranus, and Aretaeus “realised the bodily causes of insanity…” (Allbutt 1921: 256)
33 In French scholarship, the term typically used to translate insanias, as used by Celsus, is folie, and Celsus’ three categories of folie are typically rendered as “phrénitis”, “mélancholie”, and “manie” (cf. Pigeaud 1994: 257, 264). These French words appear frequently in scholarship on concepts of madness in Celsus.
framework, arranged by duration (from the shortest to longest-lasting form of *insania*, with each form broken down into further sub-types), allows Celsus to make distinctions between symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment for each form. Celsus’ comments on *insania* have little to say about causation, which may be related to Celsus’ belief that *insania* cannot be assigned to a specific body part (3.18.1.3-4). Despite the fact that they cannot be assigned to a specific part of the body, Celsus does not speak of “hidden causes” (*abditae causae /obscurae causae*) of *insania* or forms of *insania* that lack a cause (*sine causa*).

The first form of *insania* described by Celsus is explicitly called *phrenesis* (3.18.3.1), a term whose origin Celsus credits to the Greeks (*φρένιτις Graeci appellant*, 3.18.1.6). Here, Marx’s text presents this term in Greek letters, using a spelling of the word which appears in only *De Medicina* (the nominative form of the Greek word is typically written as *φρένιτις*). According to Harris, Celsus’ spelling is a “misspelling” attributable either to Celsus or to a copyist of his text. Orthography aside, the term hearkens back to a belief connecting psychic activity with the region of the *φρήν*, an organ variously identified with the heart, the diaphragm, and the midriff region. Although it is often linked to specific parts of the body in the Greek and Roman imagination, *phrenesis* is not a word that translates well into English, and this is especially true of Celsus’ usage. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* supplies “madness”, “frenzy,  

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34 The use of the Greek word *φρένιτις* can be traced back as far as the Hippocratic treatise *Aphorisms* (3.30).
35 See Andre 1971: 35.
36 Harris 2013: 22.
37 Drabkin 1955: 226, n. 9. In many Greek texts, the *φρήν* is regarded as the seat of the mental faculties, and perception.
and “delirium”\textsuperscript{38}, but none of these translations is very helpful. Given that \textit{phrenesis} is a specific category, “madness” is much too general. “Delirium” is problematic because it looks the same as the Latin word \textit{delirium}, and because it is a word that Celsus associates with other forms of madness. “Frenzy”, an English word derived from ϕρένησις, may be the most acceptable\textsuperscript{39}, but even that translation does not capture certain aspects of \textit{phrenesis} as it is described by Celsus. Thus, I choose to refer to this form of \textit{insania} simply as \textit{phrenesis}.

One important aspect of \textit{phrenesis} that would not necessarily be understood from the translation “frenzy” is that it is a condition which is said to be marked by the presence of \textit{febris} (fever).\textsuperscript{40} This is a defining aspect of the condition, and Celsus directly connects \textit{phrenesis} with “feverishness” earlier in \textit{De Medicina}:

\begin{quote}
At si a prima hieme austri ad ultimum ver continuarint, laterum dolores et \textit{insania febricantium}, quam \textit{phrenesis} appellant, celerrime rapiunt.
\end{quote}

But if the south wind lasts from the beginning of winter to the end of spring, pains in the sides and the insanity of those in fever, which they call \textit{phrenesis}, kill very swiftly. (2.1.15.1-4)

Here Celsus appears to equate \textit{phrenesis} with \textit{insania febricantium}, and during his comments on \textit{phrenesis} in Book 3 he identifies certain symptoms that \textit{cannot} occur except during the presence of a strong fever: \textit{neque incidere potest nisi in febre vehementi} (3.18.2.4). These

\textsuperscript{38} Glare 2012: s.v. \textit{phrenesis}.

\textsuperscript{39} Lawlor is one scholar who uses “frenzy” as a translation of \textit{phrenesis/phrenetis}. (Lawlor 2012: 26) There are few English translations to compare, as scholarship on \textit{phrenesis}—not just in English, but in any language—is rather scarce. Both Stok and Pigeaud—two of the major scholars of \textit{phrenesis}—comment on the paucity of scholarship. (Stok 1996: 2318; Pigeaud 1981: 125)

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Febris} occurs several times in this section (e.g. 3.18.1.6; 3.18.2.4; 3.18.2.8).
symptoms include becoming at a loss with respect to one’s wits (desipere, 3.18.2.2) and speaking nonsense (loqui aliena, 3.18.2.2). Celsus mentions these symptoms, and especially the symptom of fever, as a way of distinguishing phrenesis from other forms of insania discussed in 3.18. Phrenesis is also distinguished from other forms of insania by its acuta (3.18.1.6) or short-lasting nature.  

As Celsus moves on to explaining how phrenesis develops, he closely links it with another condition, dementia:

Phrenesis vero tum demum est, cum continua dementia esse incipit, cum aeger, quamvis adhuc sapiat, tamen quasdam vanas imagines accipit: perfecta est, ubi mens illis imaginibus addicta est.

It becomes, finally, phrenesis, when a continuous dementia begins: when the person who is ill, although in good senses up until then, nevertheless entertains certain empty visions: it (i.e. phrenesis) is established when the mind is given over to those visions. (3.18.3.1-4)

Here, Celsus identifies phrenesis as a continual, or long-lasting, form of dementia. The qualifier continua suggests that dementia is typically a very short-term condition, since phrenesis itself is said to be acute. Celsus also states that phrenesis entails a lack of “being in one’s good senses”

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41 Spencer translates that the afflicted become “delirious” (Spencer 1935: 289), but this risks confusion with the Latin term delirium.

42 This idiom also occurs in Ovid’s Tristia, where it has a similar sense. Addressing his wife, the exiled and distressed narrator, whom we might identify with Ovid himself, cries out: Quin etiam, sic me dicunt aliena locutum / ut foret amenti nomen in ore tuum. (Indeed, they say that even when I spoke nonsense, your name was on my senseless lips. 3.3.19)

43 Pigeaud and Stok note that the short-lived nature of phrenesis sets it apart from other forms of insania. (Pigeaud 1981: 73; Stok 1980: 21; Stok 1996: 2334) The distinction that many Greek and Latin writings on medicine make between illnesses that are acuta and longa is also noted in Chapter 2.

44 Translations of dementia in the Oxford Latin Dictionary include “derangement of the mind”, “madness”, “insanity”, and “folly” (Glare 2012: s.v. dementia). Since these translations overlap with the translations I use for other terms discussed in this chapter, I choose to translate the term simply by using the English word “dementia”, well aware that this translation possesses many connotations inappropriate to Celsus’ usage (for example, in English “dementia” commonly refers to a mental condition that affects only people of advanced age).
(sapere), which recalls his earlier comment that phrenesis involves “being at a loss with respect to one’s wits”, which is expressed by a negated form of the same verb (desipere, 3.18.2.2). In this respect, Celsus is consistent in his use of terminology.\(^{45}\) Less consistent, however, is the translation Spencer offers for this sentence.\(^{46}\) Even though he renders insania as “insanity” earlier in this section (3.18.1.5), Spencer translates phrenesis as “insanity” here (3.18.3.1), thus flattening out Celsus’ distinction between insania and a form of insania.\(^{47}\)

Celsus also considers the advent of vanae imagines (empty visions) to be a sign that phrenesis has really set in. This comment is noteworthy especially because Celsus associates imagines or “visions”\(^{48}\) with other forms of insania. In his comments on phrenesis, the imagines are said to be vanae (empty)—a modifier which is not used with the other references to imagines in De Medicina. Exactly what is meant by “empty”, however, is less clear, as Celsus does not elaborate beyond pointing out that they are a sign of continua dementia. The adjective vanus possesses a wide semantic range\(^{49}\), but it Celsus may be suggesting, in a somewhat indirect way, that these visions are “empty” in the sense that they are not based

\(^{45}\) Celsus also uses the verb desipere in a similar sense when describing a specific sort of phrenetics who cannot control their own words (verba desipiunt, 3.18.3.7; verba desipiunt, 3.18.4.1-2).

\(^{46}\) “But insanity is really there when a continuous dementia begins, when the patient, although up till then in his senses, yet entertains vain imaginings; the insanity becomes established when the mind becomes at the mercy of such imaginings.” (Spencer 1935: 289, 291)

\(^{47}\) Migliorini asserts that the terms insania and phrenesis are used “senza sostanziali differenze” by Latin writers such as Seneca and Pliny the Elder, but this is clearly not the case with Celsus, since he considers phrenesis to be a specific form of insania. (see Migliorini 1997: 56-57)

\(^{48}\) In this context, Spencer translates the word as “imaginings” (Spencer 1935: 289, 291), which diminishes the visual element present in Celsus’ use by the word imago. Mazzini notes that Celsus uses the word imago as a metonym for “allucinazioni” (hallucinations), and he suggests that Celsus is the first Latin medical writer to use imago in this way, citing this as an example of Celsus’ “innovazioni semantiche”. (Mazzini 1991: 182)

\(^{49}\) To list some of the many possibilities, vanus can be translated as “empty”, “hollow”, “illusory”, “false”, “unreliable”, and “vain” (Glare 2012: s.v. vanus).
upon or derived from any objective truth or externally verifiable reality. Celsus uses this adjective in a similar sense when he later describes the treatment of an individual with *phrenesis* who experienced *vani metus* (empty fears).

This individual is said to have feared starvation, despite the fact that he was very rich and thus had no reason for such concerns; in this way, his fears were not based in reality. It is also significant that Celsus points out that these visions overtake the mind (*mens illis imaginibus addicta est*, 3.18.3.4), thus explicitly acknowledging a mental or psychological component of *phrenesis*. This aspect seems to given little weight by Pigeaud, who states that *phrenesis* “est une maladie essentiellement somatique”.

There certainly are physical components of *phrenesis* (especially fever), but to call it an illness which is essentially physiological in nature overlooks important psychological components.

While Celsus considers *phrenesis* to be a subcategory of *insania*, he also identifies further subsets of *phrenesis*:

\[
\text{Eius autem plura genera sunt: siquidem ex phreneticis alii tristes sunt, alii hilares; alii faciliter continentur et intra verba desipiunt; alii consurgunt et violenter guaedam manu faciunt; atque ex his ipsis alii nihil nisi impetu peccant, alii etiam artes adhibent summamque speciem sanitatis in captandis malorum operum ocassionibus praebent, sed exitu deprenduntur.}
\]

But there are several kinds (of phrenesis): indeed some among those who suffer from phrenesis are sorrowful, while others are excited; some are easily controlled and are only at a loss with respect to their words; others become riled

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50 3.18.10.3-5.
51 Pigeaud 1981: 71
52 Spencer’s translation again lends itself to confusion between the more specific category of *phrenesis* and the more general category of *insania* by rendering the phrase *eius autem plura genera sunt* as “there are several sorts of insanity”.
up and engage in physical violence, and among these, some do wrong only by impulse, but others employ cleverness and project the greatest appearance of sanity while seizing the occasion for bad deeds, but in the outcome they are caught. (3.18.3.5-11)

At the beginning of this passage, Celsus refers to *plura genera* (several kinds) of *phrenesis*, without specifying an exact number. The indefinite *plura genera* leaves open the possibility that there are even other forms of *phrenesis* beyond those which are identified in his following sentences. Celsus proceeds to identify four types of *phrenesis*53

1). phrenetics who are sorrowful (*tristes*)
2). phrenetics who are excited (*hilares*)
3). phrenetics who are easily controlled and only at a loss (*desipiunt*) with respect to their words
4). phrenetics who become riled up (*consurgunt*) and act violently (*violenter...manu faciunt*)

The fourth category of phrenetics is further divided into two sub-types: those who do wrong by impulse (*impetu*54 *peccant*), and those who employ cleverness while projecting the greatest appearance of sanity (*artes adhibent summamque speciem sanitatis*). The latter subcategory suggests a degree of self-awareness not evident in Celsus’ description of the other kinds of phrenetics, and also not evident in the other forms of *insania* Celsus describes. This array of

53 Roccatagliata identifies “essenzialmente tre” types of *phrenesis* in Celsus, based upon their “aspetto semeiotico”: “un tipo con prevalenti disturbi a carico dell’umore, un tipo con disturbi ideoverbali e un altro con alterazioni della psicomotilità”. Under this framework, the first and second types that I recognize above (phrenetics who are *tristes* and phrenetics who are *hilares*) are subsumed into a single category (i.e. “un tipo con prevalenti disturbi a carico dell’umore”). (Roccatagliata 1973: 50)

54 The word *impetus* can refer to “an attack of a disease” (Glare 2012: s.v. *impetus*). Celsus uses it in this way, as well in reference to an attack of severe fever (e.g. 2.15.1.5-2.2). Since fever, according to Celsus, is an important symptom of *phrenesis*, the phrase *impetu peccant* may imply that certain kinds of phrenetics may be “compelled” to do wrong (through no planning or intention of their own, but because of their fever), as opposed to the next type of phrenetics, who are crafty and try to conceal their misdeeds.
behaviors and mental states illustrates the breadth of the term *phrenesis*. To what extent the different categories of *phrenesis* are discrete and distinct from one another is not made totally clear. Our discussions of the other forms of *insania* described by Celsus will point out instances where Celsus uses similar language or mentions symptoms similar to those described in his comments on *phrenesis*.

The remainder of Celsus’ rather extensive comments on *phrenesis* (secs. 3.18.4-3.18.16) deals primarily with how to treat the different kinds of phrenetics—a subject which I will not delve into here, keeping my focus on terminology. But one noteworthy term appears in this section, when Celsus is commenting on the ineffectiveness of treating a phrenetic with a rising fever:

> Remedias vero adhibere, ubi maxime *furor* urget, supervacuum est: simul enim *febris* quoque increscit.

> Truly, to apply a remedy becomes futile when the raging is driven to its height: for the fever is simultaneously intensifying. (3.18.6.1-3)

This use of the word *furor* (translated here as “raging”\(^{56}\)) is interesting, both because of the parallelism between the peaking *furor* and the intensifying fever (*febris...increscit*), and also because the word *furor* does not appear anywhere else in Celsus’ discussion of *phrenesis* or in his comments on the other forms of *insania* discussed in Book 3.\(^{57}\) Stok suggests that this

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\(^{55}\) Bosman has commented that *phrenesis* was described as “a disease of the body as well as the mind” by other ancient medical authorities such as Herophilus, Asclepiades, and Caelius Aurelianus. (Bosman 2009: 134)

\(^{56}\) Spencer’s translates this use of *furor* as “delirium”, which again has potential for confusion with the Latin word *delirium*.

\(^{57}\) According to Auvray, Caelius Aurelianus equates the terms *furor* and *insania* (Auvray 1989: 71), but this is not the case with Celsus.
particular use of furor is intended to refer to a highly severe stage of phrenesis.\textsuperscript{58} This is a persuasive conclusion, given that the furor is said to be driven to its height (\textit{maxime...urget}), as if reaching a climactic moment, and by the fact that fever is said to be intensifying (\textit{febris...increscit}). The term furor appears only two other times in \textit{De Medicina}, both in contexts where Celsus is relating \textit{insaniae signa} (signs of madness, 2.7.26.1), but without mentioning any specific form of \textit{insania}.\textsuperscript{59} In these instances, furor is not strongly differentiated in sense from \textit{insania}, since Celsus alternately mentions signs of \textit{insania} and signs of furor in this context. I will return to \textit{furor} during my discussion of Seneca’s prose works and tragedies, where the term plays a significant role.

The second form of \textit{insania} described by Celsus (3.18.17-18) is not explicitly given a name, but Celsus’ remarks strongly suggest a connection with the Greek term \textit{μελαγχολία} (which some authors, but not Celsus, transliterate into Latin as \textit{melancholia}\textsuperscript{61}). Because of this tacit connection, scholarship on Celsus’ forms of \textit{insania} often refers to this form as melancholia (or \textit{malinconia} in Italian, \textit{mélancolie} in French, and \textit{Melancholie} in German), despite the fact that Celsus does not actually give the condition a name. Keeping this in mind, I refer to it as “Celsus’ second form of \textit{insania}” (\textit{vel sim}). Nonetheless, an apparent connection with \textit{melancholia} is evident in Celsus’ remark that “it consists of sorrowfulness, which black bile seems to bring

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Stok 1996: 2335.
\item \textsuperscript{59} In the first instance, Celsus states that \textit{furor} can arise when there is a constant fever and inflammation which subsides without the formation of pus; Celsus also states that this condition can bring about the danger of death. (2.7.26.1-3) In the second instance, Celsus states that a suffusion of blood in a woman’s breasts indicates the onset of \textit{furor} (2.7.27.1-2).
\item \textsuperscript{60} For instance, Roccatagliata states: “Un secondo tipo di insanía (follia) è malinconia.” (Roccatagliata 1973: 53)
\item \textsuperscript{61} On the transliteration and translation of \textit{μελαγχολία} into Latin, see Jackson 1986: 4.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
about” (*Consistit in tristitia, quam videtur bilis atra contrahere.* 3.18.17.3-4). In Greek writings on medicine, an excess of black bile is typically identified as the cause of melancholia; indeed, it is likely that the name of this condition is constructed from the Greek words μέλαινα (black, dark) and χολή (bile). As Migliorini notes, Celsus’ phrase *bilis atra* appears to be a calque of μελαγχολία understood this way, and in Book 2, Celsus makes an even more explicit connection between *bilis atra* and the Greek term μελαγχολία. Capitani has observed that the phrase *bilis atra* also appears in works by earlier Latin authors such as Plautus, Varro, and Cicero.

Later in Book 2, Celsus implies that *bilis atra* is its own distinct disease, identifiable by specific symptoms:

> At si longa tristitia cum longo timore et vigilia est, atrae bilis morbus subest.

And if there is a prolonged sorrowfulness with prolonged fear and wakefulness, the disease of black bile is lurking. (2.7.19.3.-20.1)

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62 Some scholars, however, have called into question this etymology. Langholf, for instance, asserts that “the derivation [of μελαγχολία from μέλαινα + χολή] is extremely unlikely”, and posits instead that μελαγχολία must derive instead from the adjective μελάγχολος, which contains the adjectival ending –χολος, “signifying functions of the soul such as wrath or anger”. (Langholf 1990: 47-48) For a thorough list of scholarship on the etymology of this word, see Thumiger 2013: 63 n. 13.

63 See Migliorini 1988: 48 n. 104. Migliorini also notes that there are other Latin calques based upon μελαγχολία, such as *bilis atra* and *fel nigrum*; the latter is in fact an expression used in Seneca’s *Oedipus* (*felle nigro*, 358). Seneca’s reference to “black bile” in this play represents a difference with Greek tragedy, which never uses the comparable word μελαγχολία. (see Padel 1995: 21)

64 2.1.6.4-5.

65 Capitani 1975: 504 n. 201. Cf. Plautus’ *Amphitryon* 727, *Captivi* 596; Varro’s *Saturarum Menippearum* 146; Cicero’ *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.11.
This statement, which Pigeaud considers a reiteration of “la définition canonique de la mélancholie”, parallels Celsus’ later comments on *bilis atra* in that it associates the condition with *tristitia* (sorrowfulness, cf.3.18.17.3-4), a word that has sometimes been translated as or equated with “depression”. Later in this chapter, I discuss some of the reasons why it is problematic to translate this term (or any other Greek or Latin term) as “depression”. Setting aside matters of translation for the moment, we can note that these comments on *tristitia* recall Celsus’ earlier reference to a type of phrenetics who have *tristes cogitationes* (sorrowful thoughts, 3.18.10.9-10); this group is contrasted with phrenetics who *hilares* (cheerful, 3.18.3.6). Both *phrenesis* and *bilis atra* are thus associated with “sorrow”. *Bilis atra* / *μελαγχολία* is attested to exist in both “depressive” and “manic” forms in Greek and Latin literature, but Celsus, in identifying *tristitia* as a defining feature of the condition, appears to be the first writer in either Greek or Latin to identify a “depressive” form of the condition, and he is also unique in not identifying a manic form of it. Before Celsus, this condition is thought to assume a manic form, and even after Celsus’ time that perception remains prevalent in Greek and Latin writings on the subject. At the same time, *bilis atra* is not the only piece of terminology equated with the Greek term *μελανχολία* in Latin texts. Cicero, for instance,

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66 Pigeaud 1994: 274. As Pigeaud points out, Celsus’ remarks at 2.7.19.3.-20.1 appear to be a translation of a sentence from the Hippocratic text *Aphorisms*: Ἡν φόβος ἡ δυσθυμίη πουλὺν χρόνον διατελέὶ μελαγχολικὸν τὸ τοιοῦτον. (5.23)

67 The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* offers translations such as “unhappiness”, “despondency”, and “moroseness”, but not “depression”. It does, however, offer “depression” as a possible translation of the closely related *tristitas*. (Glare 2012: s.v. *tristitia*; *tristitas*) Lewis and Short provide translations such as “sadness”, “melancholy”, and “dejection”. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *tristitia*)

68 Toohey 2004: 207; see also Toohey 1992: 282.
identifies the Greek term μελαγχολία with the Latin word furor, stating: *quem nos furorem, μελαγχολίαν illi [Graeci] vocant* (What we call frenzy, the Greeks call melancholy, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.11.18-19). By identifying μελαγχολία with furor—a violent, raving, uncontrollable force—Cicero emphasizes the manic aspect of the condition.69 This example serves to remind us that in this, and many other cases, there is and can be no one-to-one mapping of Latin on to Greek terms (and, by extension, of terms in English or any other modern language on to either Greek or Latin terms).

Another similarity between Celsus’ second form of insania and his description of phrenesis is that both conditions are associated with fever. Celsus states that the latter form of insania begins without a fever, but incites a slight feverishness (*...sine febre incipit, leves deinde febriculas excitat*, 3.18.17.2-3). At the same time, the slightness of the fevers (conveyed by the adjective leves and the diminutive noun febriculae) distinguishes atra bilis from phrenesis. In addition, Celsus’ second form of insania is said to last for a longer duration than phrenesis (*quod spatium longius recipit*, 3.18.17.1-2) because those afflicted are able to endure the slight fever for a longer period of time than phrenetics can endure the fever associated with their condition.

As with his second form, Celsus does not give a specific name to the third form of insania that he describes (3.18.19-23). Lawlor refers to this third form of insania as “melancholy”70,

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70 Lawlor 2012: 26. Note that Lawlor refers to Celsus’ second form of insania as “mania (raving)”, even though neither the Latin word mania nor the Greek μανία occur in Celsus’ description.
but this is obviously problematic, given the connections between *atra bilis* (the second form of *insania* identified by Celsus) and *μελαγχολία*. Perhaps the most distinct aspect of the third form of *insania* is its long-term nature, which is the first thing that Celsus points out about it:

Tertium genus *insaniae* est ex his longissimum, adeo ut vitam ipsam non impediat; quod robusti corporis esse consuevit.

The third form of *insania* is the most prolonged of them all, yet in such a way as not to threaten life itself, for it is typically associated with a strong body.

Celsus’ comments about the first two forms of *insania* focus on the sickened state of both the mind and the body, but Celsus’ remarks here immediately draw attention to the bodily strength (*robusti corporis*) possessed by people who have this form of *insania*. This third form of *insania* is also distinct from the other forms of *insania* in that it does not have the symptom of fever (*febris*). Celsus does not state it explicitly, but the absence of fever may have a correlation to the prolonged nature of this form of *insania*, since fever is often associated with acute illnesses.

As with *phrenesis*, Celsus’ third form of *insania* is differentiated into further subcategories:

Huius autem ipsius species duae sunt: nam quidam *imaginibus*, non mente falluntur, quales insanientem Aiace vel Orestem percepisse poetae ferunt: quidam animo desipiunt. Si imaginibus fallunt, ante omnia videndum est, tristes an hilaris sint.

There are two types of this [form of *insania*]: for certain ones are led astray by visions, not by the mind—the sort [of visions] the poets say Ajax, driven mad, or Orestes perceived; others lose their ability to reason. If visions lead them astray, it must be observed above all whether they are sorrowful or cheerful. (3.18.19.3–20.2) Since I will be discussing madness in mythological figures in tragedies composed by a poet, Celsus’ application of his taxonomy of *insania* to Ajax and Orestes as they are described by poets is of great interest. To paraphrase Celsus: “The poets say that Ajax and Orestes saw
visions; using the terminology of medical learning, I say that they experienced a *species* of the third *genus* of *insania.*” My own discussion asks a related question: how exactly, and with which words, does one poet, Seneca, describe this and other kinds of illness? What overlaps and divergences do we find from Celsus’ descriptions? In this respect, Celsus’ comments about Ajax and Orestes offer an ancient precedent for the study of madness across genres of literature.

Celsus’ third form of *insania* is divided into the categories of those who are “led astray by visions, not by the mind” (*imaginibus, non mente falluntur*), and those who “lose their ability to reason” (*animo desipiunt*). From a modern perspective, this is a rather shaky dichotomy, as one might conclude that the perception of “visions” would necessarily imply a loss of reason. Harris takes the phrase *imaginibus, non mente falluntur* to suggest that “hallucinations are [the] principal or only symptom” of this specific condition, but that is not explicitly stated by Celsus. Harris does not address the dichotomy drawn between those who are “led astray by visions, not by the mind” and those who are “at a loss of reason,” and Celsus’ comments in the rest of the passage do not help to clarify his dichotomy, either. This dichotomy may not be very transparent from a modern perspective, but it is, as Pigeaud has noted, nevertheless an important part of the framework Celsus uses to outline his third form of *insania.*

As noted earlier in this chapter, Celsus also cites the perception of *imaginines* as a symptom of *phrenesis* (3.18.3.3; 3.18.3.4). But in the case of *phrenesis*, Celsus states that the mind itself is given over to visions (*mens illis imaginibus addicta est*), and, although it is not explicitly stated in the text,

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71 Pigeaud 1987: 122.
this appears to mark a key difference between *phrenesis* and the third form of *insania*.\(^72\) In addition, in Book 2 Celsus also mentions that *imagines* can be experienced in certain forms of *atra bilis*\(^73\), which is identified with the second form of *insania* in Book 3. In this way, *imagines* are associated with each of the three forms of *insania* discussed by Celsus—an interesting aspect which, to my knowledge, has not been noted in previous scholarship.

The *imagines* associated with *phrenesis* are described as *vanae* (empty, 3.18.3.3), but no such modifier is used in reference to the *imagines* associated with Celsus’ third form of *insania*. While Celsus’ descriptions do not provide much direct clarification about the difference between *vanae imagines* and *imagines*, but it might be significant that Celsus considers the *mens* a factor in cases of *phrenesis* where *vanae imagines* are experienced, but not in cases like those of Ajax or Orestes, where the *mens* is explicitly not a factor. But ultimately Celsus leaves the distinction between visions that are “empty” and visions that are not “empty” unexplained. Celsus does relate, however, that the *imagines* associated with the third form of *insania* were experienced by Ajax and Orestes (*quales insanientem Aiacem vel Orestem percepisse poetae ferunt*).\(^74\) The inclusion of figures from poetry and mythology is noteworthy, as this is the only

\(^72\) In an effort to maintain consistency of translation, I have rendered *imagines* as “visions” in both contexts, in contrast to Spencer, who translates *imagines* as “imaginings” in the context of *phrenesis* (3.18.3.3, 3.18.3.4), but then translates the word as “phantoms” in the context of the third form of *insania* (3.18.19.4, 3.18.20.1; see Spencer 1935: 289, 291; 301) One advantage of Spencer’s differing translations is that—intentionally or not—they draw attention to the differing nature of the *imagines* in each context.

\(^73\) 2.7.20.1-21.1.

\(^74\) These references to mythological characters were surely well-understood by Celsus’ readers. In Greek and Roman mythology, Ajax becomes enraged because Odysseus, and not he himself, is awarded the weapons of the slain Achilles. In a deluded state, Ajax slaughters a flock of sleep which he imagines to be the leaders of the Greek army (cf. Sophocles’ *Ajax*). Celsus describes Ajax as *insanientem*, using a term which brings to mind the general term *insania* (rather than a specific form of *insania*, which is what Celsus is discussing in this context). Orestes is...
instance in which Celsus makes reference to named individuals (whether mythological or historical) in his categories of *insania*. In works of Greek tragedy, the “visions” experienced by these characters tend to have a divine component of causation, but this is not reflected in Celsus’ comments about them. This “removal of divine force” is, according to Bosman, an important aspect in discussions of madness by other Greek and Latin writers of medical prose, such as Aretaeus of Cappadocia and Caelius Aurelianus. Celsus thus suggests that Ajax and Orestes are examples of individuals who experience visions but do not “lose their ability to reason” (*animo desipiunt*)—a sentiment not totally in keeping with the representation of these figures in Greek tragedy. It is also noteworthy that Celsus’ comments do not delve into the causation of the *imaginæ*.

Within the subcategory composed of individuals who are led astray by visions under the third form of *insania*, Celsus further distinguishes between those who are *tristes* and those who are *hilares* (3.18.20.1-20). This dichotomy is familiar from two of the subcategories of phrenetics distinguished by Celsus (3.18.3.6). The repetitiveness of these criteria has led Stok to conclude that the third form of *insania* described by Celsus is rather imprecisely defined.

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76 Bosman 2009: 124; see also 126.
77 Stok 1980: 28. Auvray also points to similarities in the symptoms that Celsus attributes to different forms of *insania*, noting the problematic nature of “*le caractère imprécis et général de ses symptômes.*” (Auvray 1989: 70)
This is also suggested by the vagueness in Celsus’ discussion of the *imagines* associated with this form of *insania*.

The verb *desipere* is another word that appears in both the above passage (3.18.19.3-20.2) and in Celsus’ comments on *phrenesis.* Celsus contrasts those who are led astray by visions but not by the mind (*quidam imaginibus, non mente falluntur*) with those who are at a loss of their reason (*animo desipiunt*). Stok describes the latter condition as “perdita completa delle facoltà intellettuali” and this emphasis on the mental aspect of the condition is also evident in Celsus’ use of the word *animus.* The use of this word parallels the use of *non mente,* which makes the qualification that the *imagines* perceived by figures like Ajax and Orestes are not caused by the mind. This qualification further emphasizes the mental aspect inherent to the other set of sub-types categorized under the third form of *insania.* Here, *mens* and *animus* both refer to the mind, without any apparent difference in sense. Celsus also uses the word *consilium* to refer to mental faculties when discussing how this form of *insania* should be treated when the mind (*consilium*) is a factor. From these examples we can see that Celsus uses a variety of words in reference to the mind and mental function.

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78 Cf. 3.18.2.2; 3.18.3.7; 3.18.4.1-2. The sense expressed by *desipere* in these contexts is similar to its sense in 3.18.19.3-20.2, where it also expresses a lack of reason.


80 The word *animus* has an extremely broad semantic range, with senses that include “the mind as opposed to the body”, “the soul”, “consciousness”, “life”, “sense” and “character”. (Glare 2012: s.v. *animus*) Lewis and Short offer “reason” as another possible translation. (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *animus*) A discussion of the word’s many senses and connotations is beyond the scope of this study.

81 As is the case with *animus,* the word *consilium* has a very broad semantic range, ranging from “advice” and “intention” to “judgment” and “mental ability”. (Glare 2012: s.v. *consilium*).

82 *Si vero consilium insanientem fallit, tormentis quibusdam optime curatur.* (If it is in fact the mind that leads astray the maddened person, s/he is best treated by certain tortures. 3.18.21.1-2)
Following extensive comments about the treatment of the third form of *insania*, Celsus surprisingly introduces yet another, separate category of *insania*:

Raro sed aliquando tamen *ex metu* delirium nascitur. Quod genus insanientium specie... similique victus genere curandum est, praeterquam quod in hoc insaniae genere solo recte vinum datur.

Rarely but once in a while delirium is born from fear. This type of insane people has similar subcategories, and it is to be treated with a similar type of diet, except that in only this kind of *insania* is wine appropriately given. (3.18.24.1-4)

Scholars often state that Celsus discusses *three forms of insania*, routinely glossing over delirium (“a derangement of the mental faculties”, “delirium”, “frenzy”) or simply not counting it as a category of *insania*. This is despite the fact that Celsus explicitly refers to those who experience delirium as a type of insane people (*genus insanientum*), and despite the fact that Celsus’ comments on delirium immediately follow his discussion of his third form of *insania*. Scholars’ omission of this term from discussions of *insania* may be related to the fact that although the word *delirium* occurs seven other times in *De Medicina*, it does not occur in proximity with the term *insania* in any other context. In some of the other contexts where delirium occurs, there are mentions of symptoms associated with other forms of *insania* (particularly fever), but in no other context does Celsus describe *delirium* as a form of *insania*.

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83 There is lacuna in the text here. Spencer, following the suggestion in Marx’s edition of the text (1915), understands *species similes habet*. My translation follows suit.
84 Glare 2012: s.v. *delirium*. 
In two instances, Celsus describes conditions in which trauma to the head or brain causes delirium. In one of these instances, he relates that trauma can impair cognitive functioning in various ways, but he stops short of calling this a form of insania:

Sin cerebrum membranave eius vulnus accepit, sanguis per nares, quibusdam etiam per aures exit; fereque bilis vomitus inequirit. Quorundam sensus optunduntur, appellatique ignorant; quorundam trux vultus est; quorundam oculi quasi resoluti huc atque illuc moventur; fereque tertio vel quinto die delirium accedit...

When the brain or its membrane has received a wound, blood comes out through the nostrils, and in some also through the ears; bilious vomiting generally ensues. Some people’s senses become dulled, and they are unaware when addressed; some have a wild countenance; in some the eyes move about back and forth as if they have been unleashed; generally delirium comes about on the third or fifth day… (5.26.14.1-7)

This passage uses language which, as we will see later in this chapter, also appears in Senecan descriptions of people who are consumed by anger (ira), such as an agitated vultus and darting oculi. The lack of self-awareness that Celsus associates with delirium also parallels the uncontrolled, oblivious state that Seneca associates with ira. Seneca, however, does not use the word delirium in this context or anywhere else in his works of prose and poetry; he instead refers to anger as brevis insania. The loss of cognitive function apparent in the above description of delirium also recalls certain aspects of Celsus’ third form of insania (cf. animo desipiunt), but the fact that this condition is caused by a head injury seems to set it apart from what the other forms of insania. This suggests that Celsus’ usage of terminology associated

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86 Cf. De Ira 1.1.3.4;1.1.4.1.
87 1.1.2.1-1.1.3.1.
with madness and mental impairment takes into account not only the symptoms that are displayed, but also the causes of those symptoms.

Overall, Celsus’ comments on delirium are not very specific, but he does differentiate delirium from other forms of insania in terms of its causation and its treatment. According to Celsus, the main thing that distinguishes delirium from other forms of insania is that it develops from fear (ex metu...nascitur). This statement seems to be contradicted by Celsus’ comments about how delirium can be caused by brain trauma, but it is noteworthy that “fear” is not mentioned as either a symptom or a cause of any of the other forms of insania described by Celsus. As treatment for delirium, Celsus recommends a diet that is similar to the treatment for other forms of insania (similique victus genere curandum est), except that wine is also to be given (vinum datur) in the treatment of delirium.

Celsus describes other conditions characterized by mental and/or psychological impairment without referring to those conditions as forms of insania. These conditions have received little attention in previous scholarship. One such condition is lethargus:

Alter quoque morbus est aliter phrenetico contrarius. In eo difficillior somnus, prompta ad omnem audaciam mens est: in hoc marcor et inexpugnabilis paene dormiendi necessitas. Lethargum Graeci nominarunt. Atque id quoque genus acutum est, et nisi succurritur, celeriter iugulat.

There is also another illness, contrasting with the phrenetic [illness] in a different way. In this sleep is rather difficult, and the mind is inclined to every recklessness; in this [illness] there is a wasting away and an almost insurmountable need for sleep. The Greeks call it lethargy. And it is also an acute type, and if it is not treated, it is quickly fatal. (3.20.1.1-6)
Celsus does not discuss *lethargus* during his main discussion of the three forms of *insania* (3.18), but he still contrasts it with *phrenesis*. Exactly what the difference is, however, is not made totally clear, and there are in fact certainly some similarities between the two conditions: both are acute (*acutum*), and both result in mental impairment. A few sentences after the above passage, Celsus states that fever is a symptom of *lethargus* (3.20.2.8)—another similarity with *phrenesis*. Other Latin authors, such as Caelius Aurelianus and Pliny, actually consider *lethargus* and *phrenesis* to be highly similar or even the same condition\(^88\), but Celsus explicitly states that they are different from one another. What *is* clear is that Celsus identifies aspects of *lethargus* that are not associated with *phrenesis* or other forms of *insania*, thus illustrating what is distinct about *lethagrus*. This includes various symptoms, such as sleeplessness (*difficilior somnus; inexpugnabilis paene dormiendi necessitas*), a disposition to recklessness (*prompta ad omnem audaciam mens est*), wasting away (*marcor*), and the potential for a quick death (*CELERITER IUGULAT*).

Another noteworthy condition discussed by Celsus, but often left out of discussions of madness in his work, is *comitialis morbus*. This condition is commonly identified with epilepsy and is often translated as such\(^89\); the Latin term in fact refers to the practice of suspending meetings of the *comitia* if a member experienced an attack of the illness, which was believed to

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89 In Spencer’s translation of Celsus, the term *comitialis morbus* is variously rendered as “epilepsy”, “epileptic fits” or just “fits”.

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be divine in nature. In Greek literature, this condition was often called ἡ ἱερὰ νόσος, or “the sacred disease”, due to the popular belief that those affected by it went under divine influence when attacked by seizures, the most obvious symptom of the illness. Latin writers, such as Caelius Aurelianus, Vegetius, and Aelius Lampridius refer to this condition as *epilepsia* (a borrowing of the Greek ἐπιληψία), using a term which does not appear in Celsus. Spencer observes that this word was avoided by some authors because it was considered to be “ill-omened”. Although Celsus never identifies *comitialis morbus* as a form of *insania*, in multiple instances it is discussed in close context with *insania*. Perhaps because he believes the condition to be well-known, Celsus provides minimal description of its symptoms:

> Inter notissimos morbos est etiam is, qui comitialis vel maior nominatur. Homo subito concidit, ex ore spumae moventur, deinde interposito tempore ad se redit, et per se ipse consurgit.

Among the better known diseases is the one which is called *comitialis*, or “the greater disease”. A man suddenly falls down, foam is produced from his mouth, and then, after an intervening time he returns to himself, and he stands up under his own power. (3.23.1.1-4)

Celsus describes an intense physical experience, but his description does not provide much insight into the mental or psychological components of the condition. Rather vaguely, he states that one returns to oneself (ad se redit)—a phrase which could have mental or physical implications (or both). In his discussion of *phrenesis*, Celsus uses a similar, but more specific phrase when describing how one’s mind is recovered once the condition is relieved: *mens*

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90 Epilepsy was believed to be divine in cause at least as far back at the Hippocratic treatise “Περὶ Ἱερῆς Νόσου” (*On the Sacred Disease*, probably late 5th century BCE), which challenges the idea of it having a divine cause.

91 Spencer 1935: 332 note b.

92 2.1.6.5-6; 2.1.21.1-5; 2.13.1.7; 2.13.2.6; 2.15.4.11.
Celsus’ more ambiguous phrase, *ad se redit* is also used to express recovery when Celsus is describing a disorder of the womb, which he contrasts with *morbus comitialis*:

> Ex vulva quoque feminis vehemens malum nascitur proximeque ab stomacho vel adficitur haec vel corpus adficit. Interdum etiam sic *exanimat*, ut tamque comitiali morbo prosternat. Distat tamen hic casus eo, quod neque *oculi vertuntur* nec spumae profluunt nec nervi distenduntur: *sopor* tantum est. Idque quibusdam feminis crebro revertens perpetuum est...Deinde ubi *ad se redit*, circumcidendum vinum est in totum annum, etiamsi casus idem non revertitur.

> From the womb there also arises in women a very intense illness; after the stomach, this [organ] is most affected, and affects the body most. At times it drives one so out of their senses that one is laid prostrate as if by *morbus comitialis*. This state differs from that one [*morbus comitialis*] because the eyes do not revolve, nor does foam come forth, nor do the sinews spasm; there is just a deep sleep. In some women this is a frequent thing, constantly recurring... Then when she returns to herself, she must abstain from wine for a whole year, even if the same state does not return to her. (4.27.1a.1-8; 4.27.1b.10-11)

Spencer identifies this condition with *hysteria* due to the similarity of the above description and a description of *hysteria* in the Hippocratic text *Aphorisms*\(^9^3\), but it should be noted that Celsus does not actually give it name. This condition, like *morbus comitialis*, appears to drive a person out of her senses (*exanimat*), but there is some ambiguity since the verb *exanimare* can also have the sense “to deprive [one] of life”.\(^9^4\) Celsus’ reference to *sopor* (sleep) reinforces the sense that this condition, as well as *morbus comitialis*, produce an inability to act or reason, perhaps akin to not being alive. This verb’s connotations of lifelessness, or at least near-lifelessness, recalls how Seneca uses the adjective *exanimis* to describe the “half-dead” condition of the bodies of Thyestes’ children when Atreus is “dissecting” them (*corpora*...)

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\(^9^3\)Spencer 1935: 446; cf. *Aphorisms* 5.35.

\(^9^4\)Glare 2012: s.v. *exanimare*.  

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exanima, Thyestes 1059). In Phaedra, the nurse also uses this adjective when she is describing the condition of Phaedra’s body (corpus exanimum, 585) shortly before she reveals her feelings of passion to Hippolytus. Here, Phaedra is not actually dead, although her ability to think and reason has no doubt been impaired.

Celsus also points out some important differences between the condition described above and morbus comitialis. In doing so, he describes other symptoms which are associated with morbus comitialis (but not the condition in the passage above), including revolving eyes (oculi vertuntur) and spasming sinews (nervi distenduntur). Celsus otherwise does not provide much information about the mental or psychological experience of people who are affected by morbus comitialis. Based upon the few symptoms Celsus does mention, and the language he uses in relating them, it appears that morbus comitialis does not have a close resemblance to any of Celsus’ forms of insania, or any of his other forms of madness. I will return to Celsus’ description of morbus comitialis when discussing Seneca’s play Hercules Furens later in this chapter.

Language of Madness in Senecan Prose

In this section, I discuss selected passages of Senecan prose which are concerned with various forms of madness in works. I begin with Seneca’s use of terminology in his Epistulae, drawing comparisons with the terminology employed by Celsus. Seneca’s Epistulae are collection of the 124 letters addressed to Seneca’s friend Lucilius, forming a series of

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95 See Chapter 3.
philosophical essays which are concerned, directly or indirectly, with how to become a wise person according to Stoic thought. Despite their title and epistolary form, many scholars believe they are not records of actual correspondence.  

Celsus, as we have seen, uses the term *insania* as a very general label under which various forms of madness are categorized. The term also has a rather broad semantic range in Seneca’s *Epistulae*, encompassing a variety of mental and physical conditions and experiences. One scholar who recognizes this is Fernandez, whose article “La terminología médica en Séneca”, discusses terminology “pertinente al ambito psicologico”, beginning with an analysis of the term *insania*. Fernandez notes that in Senecan prose *insania* is used in reference to a range of conditions, including “enfermedad, ira (*insania brevis*), embriaguez (*insania voluntaria*), desenfreno, locura (una de cuyas formas es la *insania hilaris*), deseo sexual exagerado, etc.”

This list begins to show the multitude of senses and connotations associated with the use of *insania* in Senecan prose, and Fernandez also offers some limited discussion about how the terms *insania* and *furor* are used in Senecan tragedy. Migliorini also discusses terminology pertinent to “le malattie mentali” in Senecan prose, and she provides citations of relevant passages and scholarship, but her discussion leaves room for a closer reading of the relevant passages of Senecan prose and further comparisons with Celsus.

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96 On the question of whether these letters represent a record of actual correspondence between Seneca and Lucilius, see Setaioli 2014: 193-194; Edwards 1999: 256.  
100 See Migliorini 1997: 56 n. 280; 57 n. 286.
In *Epistula 94*, a letter concerned with giving advice, Seneca comments on the futility of advising people who are in a state of madness. In describing this type of madness, Seneca uses the terms *insania* and *furor*:

> Inter *insaniam publicam* et hanc quae medicis traditur nihil interest nisi quod haec *morbo* laborat, illa *opinionibus falsis*; altera causas *furoris* traxit ex *valetudine*, altera *animi mala valetudo* est. Si quis *furioso* praecepta det quomodo loqui debeat, quomodo procedere, quomodo in publico se gerere, quomodo in privato, erit ipso quem monebit insanior: *si* bilis nigra curanda est et ipsa *furoris causa* removenda. Idem in hoc alio animi *furore* faciendum est: ipse discuti debet; alioqui abibunt in vanum momentium verba.

There is no difference between common madness (*insaniam publicam*) and that which is subject to medical treatment, except that the latter is afflicted by a disease, and the former by false opinions. The one derives the causes of folly from a sickness of the body, the other is a sickness of the mind. If one should offer advice to a frenzied person—how one ought to speak, how to walk, how to conduct oneself in public, how to conduct oneself in private—he would be more mad (*insanior*) than the one whom he would be advising; in such a case, the black bile itself must be treated and the very cause of the folly (*furoris*) must be removed. The same must be done in the other case involving the mind: the folly itself should be shaken off; otherwise, your words of advice will come to naught. (Epistula 94.17.1-10)

Here, Seneca differentiates between two forms of madness based upon causation: madness caused by one’s bodily condition (*valetudo*), and madness caused by the condition of one’s mind (*animi mala valetudo*).¹⁰¹ The latter form of madness is called *insania publica*, which suggests a condition which is widespread; according to Seneca, this type of madness can be caused by exposure to “common” opinions, which are in turn equated with *opinionibus falsis* (false opinions). Although he does not make it explicit here, Seneca’s ideas about this form of

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¹⁰¹ As Aygon observes, “l’une provident d’un dérangement d’organes, l’autre est un derangement de l’âme.” (Aygon 2004: 324 n. 77)
madness are influenced by the Stoic paradox which holds that “all men are mad except for the wise man”, with the implication that the wise man is rare and that madness is widespread. This doctrine is also delineated in Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations and Horace’s Satire 2.3. Cicero, for instance, observes that “the minds of all unwise people are in a state of illness: all unwise people are therefore mad.” (...omnium insipientium animi in morbo sunt: omnes insipientes igitur insaniant. Tusc. Disp. 3.9). The wise man, on the other hand, could never be insane, since in Stoic thought wisdom and insanity are mututally exclusive. In Horace’s Satire 2.3, commonly known as “The Follies of Mankind”, this doctrine is explored through a conversation between the characters Damasippus and Horace. Damasippus, who is influenced by the ideas of the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus and Stertinius, holds that everyone, save for the sage, is mad (...insanis et tu stultique prope omnes, / si quid Stertinius veri crepat... Sat. 2.3.32-33). In support of this view, he provides examples of mad people from various walks of life while arguing that greed, ambition, self-indulgence, and superstition are all forms of madness. In this discussion, he comments on the madness of Orestes (Sat. 2.3.132-141), Ajax (Sat. 2.3.193-204; 211), and Agamemon (Sat. 2.3.199-204), likening the madness of these figures to manifestations of madness in Roman society. While those comparisons cannot be pursued further here, we can note that these exempla recall the use of Orestes and Ajax as examples of madness in Celsus. But while Celsus associates those mythological figures with one particular

102 Cf. ...omnes stultos insanire (all fools are mad, Tusc. Disp. 4.24.54).
103 Similarly, Damasippus states: Quem mala stultitia et quicumque inscitia veri / caecum agit, insanum Chrysippi porticus et grex / autumat. (He whom foolishness and ignorance of truth drives into blindness, the porch of Chrysippus and his flock consider insane. Sat. 2.3.43-45). Conversely, Damasippus quite succinctly states: Quisnam igitur sanus? Qui non stultus (Who, then, is sane? He who is not foolish. Sat. 2.3.158)
form of insania, which is short-lasting and characterized by the perception of visions,

Damasippus’ discourse in Horace’s Satire suggests that the delusions of these figures are manifestations of insania because they constitute a form of ignorance. In contrast with Celsus, this Stoic doctrine is not interested in drawing up categories or distinctions between forms of insania, since it regards any kind of foolishness as insania. All this illustrates, then, how Seneca’s description of insania publica operates within a well-established Stoic tradition that associates ignorance and foolishness with madness.

The other form of madness which Seneca describes in Epistula 94, namely that which is associated with bodily causes, is not given a specific name, but it is identified as a form of madness that is “subject to medical treatment” (hanc quae medicis traditur). Seneca goes on to state that this form of madness can be remedied by treating the bilis nigra (black bile) which is present with it, in addition to remedying ipsa furoris causa (the very cause of the folly). Here, it is noteworthy that bilis nigra is not considered the cause of the condition, which is a departure from the comments that Celsus makes about black bile when describing his second form of insania: Consistit in tristitia, quam videtur bilis atra contrahere. (It consists of sorrowfulness, which black bile seems to bring about. 3.18.17.3-4)\(^{104}\) Migliorni suggests that Seneca’s description can be identified with the third form of insania described by Celsus\(^ {105}\), but Celsus does not mention black bile when discussing this form of insania. While Celsus associates black

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\(^{104}\) Note that the exact wording which Celsus uses to refer to black bile (bilis atra, and elsewhere atra bilis) differs slightly from the language used by Seneca (bilis nigra) in the above passage.

\(^{105}\) “Seneca intenderà presumibilmente riferirsi a quel tipo di insania che Celso, nella sua distinzione delle malattie mentali in tre categorie, considera più persistente (3.18.19)...” (Migliorini 1997: 57)
bile with a specific form of *insania*, Seneca more generally associates it with forms of *insania* that require medical treatment (*hanc quae medicis traditur*); all such forms of *insania* are in turn are thought by Seneca to be caused by the body (*altera causas furoris traxit ex valetudine*), not by the mind. In contrast, Celsus’ categories of *insania* do not distinguish between mental and physical causes. In fact, aside from his remarks on the role of black bile in causing his second form of *insania*, Celsus has little to say about the causes of his various forms of *insania*. Furthermore, in the one brief remark that he does make about causes, Celsus is less definitive than Seneca, stating that black bile *seems* to bring about (*videtur...contrahere*, 3.18.17.4) the second form of *insania*. Celsus’ lack of certainty is somewhat surprisingly, given that he is attempting to create well-defined categories.

Seneca’s *Epistula* 94 shows an interest in making distinctions between forms of madness based upon their causes, but it is less interested in clearing distinguishing between how it is using the terms *insania* and *furor*. In the beginning of the above passage, Seneca first uses the term *insania publica*, but then shifts to using the noun *furor* and the adjective *furiosus* in reference to both *insania publica* and the unnamed condition that requires medical treatment. 106 Although *insania* and *furor* are not clearly differentiated by Seneca in this passage, my translation renders *insania* as “madness” and *furor* as “folly” (and *furiosus* as “frenzied”) in order to reproduce Seneca’s lexical distinction. In translating *insania* as “madness”, I follow my earlier translations of Celsus’ uses of *insania*, but my translation of *furor*

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106 Migliorini has also noted Seneca’s apparently indiscriminate usage of the terms *insania* and *furor* in this passage and elsewhere (e.g. De Ira: ...et irasci se negant non minus quam insanire furiosi (they [the angry] deny that they are angry no less than the frenzied deny they are mad, 2.36.4; see Migliorini 1997: 57 n. 285).
as “folly” is a departure from how I translate Celsus’ uses of furor (“raging”; cf. 3.18.6.1-3). All this reminds us of the difficulties one encounters when attempting to translate Latin terminology in the semantic sphere of madness, especially when looking across different authors and context.

Seneca also describes forms of insania in De Ira. This work, which is addressed to Seneca’s brother, Novatus, discusses the importance of controlling one’s anger (ira) and the consequences of failing to do so. Near the beginning of this work, Seneca observes that some consider ira to be a form of insania:

Quidam itaque e sapientibus viris iram dixerunt brevem insaniam; aequae enim impotens sui est, decoris oblita, necessitudinem immemor, in quod coepit pertinax et intenta, rationi consiliisque praeclusa, vanis agitata causis, ad dispectum aequi verique inhabilis, ruinis simillima, quae super id quod oppressere franguntur.

And so certain wise men have called anger a short-lived madness; for it is equally lacking in self control, forgetful of decency, unmindful of needs, unyielding and relentless in what it begins, closed off from reason and consideration, incited by pointless causes, incapable of discerning what is right and true, very much like collapsed buildings which break apart on top of that which they have buried.

(De Ira 1.1.2.1-2.6)

According to this passage, one of the similarities between ira and insania is that they are both “closed off from reason and consideration” (rationi consiliisque praecclusa). This is also a characteristic of Celsus’ third form of insania. Celsus does not use the exact same language, but he mentions that certain types afflicted by this form of insania are at a loss with respect to reason (animo desipiunt, 3.18.19.6), suggesting that the mind leads this type astray (vero

107 Rey observes that it is common for moral philosophers to make analogies between anger and madness, but she does not comment on Seneca in particular. (Rey 1995: 37)
consilium insanientem fallit, 3.18.21.1). Celsus does not discuss *ira* in this passage, or any other passage connected with *insania*\(^{108}\), but, like Seneca, he does mention *consilium*—one’s “mental capacities” or “reason”. Both Celsus and Seneca, then, suggest that *insania* leads one’s reason or *consilium* to be compromised.

Similar to how Celsus uses the adjective *brevis* to describe *phrenesis* (*plerumque breve esse consuevit*, 3.18.2.7), Seneca uses the word *brevis* to describe a form of *insania*. This is a similarity in usage which, to my knowledge, scholars have not previously remarked upon.

Celsus’ *phrenesis* and Seneca’s *brevis insania* do not have much in common in and of themselves, except that they are both acute conditions. In the passage that immediately follows, Seneca goes on to describe symptoms of *insania*, thus providing further opportunities for comparison with Celsus, and anticipating some of the language we will be seeing below in Seneca’s tragedies:

Ut scias autem *non esse sanos quos ira possedit*, ipsum illorum habitum intuere; nam ut *furentium* certa *indicia* sunt audax et minax vultus, tristis frons, torva facies, citatus gradus, inquietae manus, color versus, crebra et vehementius acta suspiria, ita *irascientium* eadem *signa* sunt: flagrant ac micant oculi, multus ore toto rubor exaestuante ab imis praecordiis sanguine, labra quatiuntur, dentes comprimuntur, horrent ac surriguntur capilli, spiritus coactus ac stridens, articulorum se ipsos torquentium sonus, gemitus mugitusque et parum explanatis vocibus sermo praeruptus et conflosae saepius manus et pulsata humus pedibus et totum concitum corpus magnasque irae minas agens, foeda visu et horrenda facies depravantium se atque intumescentium—nescias utrum magis detestabile vitium sit an deforme. Cetera licet abscondere et in abdito alere: *ira se profert et in faciem exit*, quantoque maior, hoc *effervescit manifestius.*

\(^{108}\) The term *ira* appears four times in *De Medicina* (1.Pr.4.3, 3.6.6.2, 4.15.4.3, 8.9.1c.2), but never in connection with *insania* or other forms of madness.
Indeed, in order to know that those whom anger possesses are not sane, observe their deportment itself. For just as the marks of madmen are clear—a rash and menacing countenance, a sorrowful brow, a fierce expression, a rapid gait, restless hands, an altered hue, quick and rather violent breathing—so too are the signs of angry men: their eyes flash and gleam, there is much redness on their entire face from the boiling up of blood from the depths of the heart, the lips quiver, the teeth are clenched, the hair shudders and stands on end, the breathing is labored and wheezing, there is a sound from the joints which distort themselves, there are groans and bellowing, speech bursts forth in scarcely intelligible utterances, very frequently there is a striking together of the hands and a stamping of the ground with the feet, the entire body is riled up and makes great threats in anger—the appearance of those who so abase themselves and swell up with anger is disgusting to look at and fearful, you would not know whether this disorder is more abominable or more unsightly. Other things can be hidden and nurtured in concealment, but anger displays itself and comes out in one’s expression—and the greater it is, the more obviously it boils forth. (De Ira 1.1.3.1-5.3)

Seneca identifies those “whom anger possesses” (quos ira possedit) with those who are “not sane” (non esse sanos). These people are also labeled furentes, suggesting, as in Epistula 94, that Seneca is not making a strong distinction between furor and insania. Seneca then proceeds to list numerous “symptoms” (indicia, signa)109 which can be observed in both those afflicted with madness and those in a state of anger.110 One of the symptoms mentioned is a sorrowful brow (tristis frons), which recalls how Celsus uses the adjective tristis and the noun tristitia in discussing each of his three forms of insania. One of the symptoms identified in Celsus’ comments on phrenesis is speaking nonsense (loqui aliena, 3.18.2.2-3), which recalls the

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109 The use of the words indica and signa in reference to “symptoms” is discussed in Chapter 3.

110 Monteleone’s recent discussion of De Ira also notes the symptoms of ira identified in this passage. She suggests that Seneca describes ira in terms of both moral and bodily decay: “ira = ugly, animal appearance, disease.” (Monteleone 2014: 128-129)
symptom of unintelligible speech (parum explanatis vocibus sermo praeruptus) described by Seneca, despite the difference in language usage.

The remainder of Seneca’s description of madness in this passage, however, bears little resemblance to Celsus’ comments on madness, both in terms of the symptoms identified and in terms of language usage. It is also apparent that in lumping together such disparate symptoms, Seneca is presenting a rather monolithic portrait of madness and not distinguishing between specific forms of madness in the way that Celsus does. At the same time, both Seneca and Celsus related that madness can be detected through the observation of symptoms. In doing so, Seneca uses some familiar vocabulary of revelation (proferre, exire, manifestius) to emphasize that ira/brevis insania tends to be readily apparent, unlike other conditions, which Seneca associates with language of concealment (abscondere, abditus\textsuperscript{111}).

After noting some of the signs that make it possible to identify ira, Seneca goes on to compare them with obvious signs that animals are about to spring into violent action:

Non vides ut omnium animalium, simul ad nocendum insurrexerunt, praecurrant notae ac tota corpora solitum quietumque egrediantur habitum et feritatem suam exasperent? Spumant apris ora, dentes acuuntur attritu, taurorum cornua iactantur in vacuum et harena pulsu pedum spargitur, leones fremunt, inflantur irritatis colla serpentibus, rabidarum canum tristis aspectus est: nullum est animal tam horrendum tam perniciosumque natura ut non appareat in illo, simul ira invasit, novae feritatis accessio.

Do you not see how the features of all animals who get up in order to do harm precede them, and that their entire bodies put aside their usual peaceful demeanor and goad on their own wildness? The mouths of wild boars foam, and their teeth are sharpened by grinding, the horns of bulls are brandished into the air and the sand is scattered by the beating of feet, lions roar, snakes’ necks puff

\textsuperscript{111} These items of vocabulary are discussed in Chapter 3.
up when they are disturbed, the countenance of raving dogs is grim: there is no animal so awful and destructive by nature that, when anger comes upon it, an attack of fresh wildness does not make itself known in it. (De Ira 1.1.5.3-7.1)

Here, we see that Seneca’s description of *ira* (i.e. *brevis insania*), emphasizes its violent and destructive aspects, unlike Celsus’ descriptions of madness.112 The most comparable remarks made by Celsus occur when he is describing the type of phrenetic who becomes riled up and act violently (*alii consurgunt et violenter quaedam manu faciunt*, 3.18.3.6-7). But Celsus does not make mention of *feritas* (wildness) during his discussion of *insania*; this word, in fact, does not appear anywhere in *De Medicina*. Nor does Celsus associate *insania* with animal behavior.

One of the various groups of animals mentioned in the above passage is raving dogs (*rabidarum canum*). Seneca again applies the adjective *rabidus* to dogs later in Book 1 (*rabidos...canes*, 1.15.2.5), again suggesting uncontrollability and volatility. Seneca also uses this adjective in reference to emotion in the very first sentence of *De Ira*, where it is stated that *ira* is the “most hideous and raving emotion of all” (*affectum...maxime ex omnibus taetrum ac rabidum*, 1.1.1.3-4). The adjective *rabidus* does not appear anywhere in *De Medicina*, but the closely related word *rabiosus*113 occurs twice. These two instances occur close together, in a passage in which Celsus is discussing how to treat someone affected by the poisonous bite of a rabid dog (5.27.2a.1; 5.27.2b.1). As noted in Chapter 2, Celsus considers the bite of a rabid dog

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112As Vogt comments, Seneca generally portrays anger as an “excitement, raging toward violence.” (Vogt 2006: 57) Boyle and Monteleone both observe that *ira* is connected with a desire for vengeance in various sections of *De Ira*. (e.g. 2.3.5.1-6; see Boyle 2014: 128; Monteleone 2014: 128)

113“rabid”, “raging”, “wild” (Glare 2012: s.v. *rabidus*); “rabid”, “frenzied” (Glare 2012: s.v. *rabiosus*)
to be particularly dangerous. Celsus does not apply the adjective *rabiosus* to people afflicted with madness or any other condition.

Later in Book 1 of *De Ira*, Seneca states that his views on anger are similar to those of Aristotle because both view anger as a desire for revenge. Seneca then elaborates upon his analogies between animal violence and human anger. Here, Seneca argues that even though human anger resembles certain elements of animal behaviors, animals themselves are in fact *not* capable of experiencing anger:

Aristotelis finitio non multum a nostra abest; ait enim *iram esse cupiditatem doloris reponendi*. Quid inter nostram et hanc finitionem intersit, exsequi longum est. Contra utramque dicitur feras *iras* nec *iruria inritatas nec poenae dolorisve alieni causa*; nam etiam si haec efficiunt, non haec petunt. Sed dicendum est feras *ira* carere et omnia praeter hominem; nam cum sit *inimica rationi*, nusquam tamen nascitur nisi ubi rationi locus est. Impetus habent ferae, *rabiem feritatem incursum*, *iram* quidem non magis quam luxuriam, et in quasdam voluptates intemperantiores homine sunt.

Aristotle’s definition is not much different from mine, for he says that anger is the desire to repay suffering. What is different between my definition and that one would be long to pursue. Against both [definitions of anger] it can be said that wild beasts become angry when they are neither disturbed by a wrongdoing nor [become angry] on account of another’s punishment or suffering; for even if they accomplish these things, they do not pursue them. But it must be said that wild beasts, and indeed everything except for man, are devoid of anger; for since it is hostile to reason, it can only arise where there is room for reason. Wild beasts do have impulses, raving, assaulting aggression, but they do not have anger any more than they have extravagance of living, and in certain pleasures they are even more unrestrained than man. (*De Ira* 1.3.3.4-5.1)

Seneca again describes *ira* as a force opposed to reason (*inimica rationi*), recalling language in his earlier equation of *ira* and *brevis insania* (*rationi consiliisque praecussa*, 1.1.2.4-5). But Seneca’s comments on *ira* and *ratio* now go further, explaining that *ira* can only occur in beings
that have a capacity for ratio. Seneca thus argues that animals do not in fact experience ira because they lack the capacity for ratio. Seneca does not explicitly state that animals cannot experience insania, but it seems safe to assume that he would not think this is possible, either, given the strong connections he makes between ira and insania. If ratio is a prerequisite for ira, presumably it is a prerequisite for insania as well. Even though Seneca asserts in De Ira that anger can only be experienced by human beings, some of his tragedies contain metaphors in which ira or furor are attributed to animals or non-living things. This reminds us that what Seneca expounds upon in his philosophical prose is one thing, while the ideas he explores in his poetic-tragic texts is another, even if the vocabulary is the same.

Later in Book 1, Seneca comments on the futility of ira, arguing against the idea that it can be useful in certain situations:

“Utilis” inquit “ira est, quia pugnaciores facit.” Isto modo et ebrietas; facit enim protervos et audaces multique meliores ad ferrum fuere male sobrii; isto modo dic et phrenesis atque insania viribus necessarium, quia saepe validiores furor reddit. Quid?

“Anger is useful,” it is said, “because it makes people more aggressive.” The same can be said of drunkenness, for it makes people bold and daring, and many have become better at the sword when drunk; in the same way, then, you might say that phrenesis and insania are necessary for strength, because frenzy often renders people stronger. But how can that be? (De Ira 1.13.3.1-5)

Here, the terms phrenesis and insania are very closely identified with furor. The similarity in the use of insania and furor is consistent with other examples we have examined in Senecan
prose, and Seneca also suggests a close correspondence between *insania* and *phrenesis*, such that Migliorini identifies the pairing of the two words in this passage as an example of hendiadys. Andre, on the other hand, argues that these uses of *insania* and *phrenesis* must have a difference in sense. Citing Celsus, he points out that *phrenesis* is a different from the more general *insania* because it is a condition accompanied by high fever, although Seneca does not mention this symptom in this passage. One could also argue that it seems unnecessarily redundant for Seneca to use two terms to refer to a single condition. Moreover, even if Seneca were intending to use *insania* and *phrenesis* as “synonyms” or “near-synonyms” in this context, the two words still have different connotations. Nevertheless, it is true that Seneca does not make a sharp distinction between *phrenesis* and *insania* in the above passage. Unlike Celsus, Seneca does not specify that *phrenesis* is a sub-category of *insania*, and he does not describe symptoms of *phrenesis* here or in any other context. The connections that Seneca makes between *ira*, *insania*, and *ebrietas* (drunkenness) in the above passage alone, however, the distinctions in usage suggested by Migliorini and Fernandez are not as apparent. Migliorini also claims that the terms *phrenesis* and *insania* (and also *dementia*) are used in Senecan prose generally without any significant difference in sense. (Migliorini 1997: 56)

Andre 1971: 53.

On the concepts of synonymy and near-synonymy, see the introduction of Chapter 2.

There are also brief references to phrenetics in Book 3 of *De Ira* (3.26.1.5) and in *De Constantia Sapientis* (1.13.1.4), but these references also do not serve to clarify how Seneca’s usage of *phrenesis* relates to his usage of *insania* or other words associated with madness.  

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115 Migliorini suggests that Seneca’s usage of *furor* differs from his usage of both *phrenesis* and *insania*, asserting that the latter two terms refer to a pathological condition, whereas *furor* refers to the actual manifestation of the madness associated with that condition. (Migliorini 1997: 57) Similarly, Fernandez suggests that in some cases Seneca represents *furor* as the outward expression of *ira*, citing the closing lines of *Epistula 18*: *Ita est, mi Lucili: ingentis irae exitus furor est, et ideo ira vitanda est non moderatioris causa sed sanitatis. Vale.* (So it is, my Lucilius: folly is the outcome of immense anger, and for that reason anger must be avoided—not only for the sake of moderation, but also for soundness of mind. Farewell. Ep. 18.15). (See Fernandez 1973: 307) From the above passage alone, however, the distinctions in usage suggested by Migliorini and Fernandez are not as apparent. 

116 Migliorini 1997: 57. Migliorini also claims that the terms *phrenesis* and *insania* (and also *dementia*) are used in Senecan prose generally without any significant difference in sense. (Migliorini 1997: 56)


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passage from *De Ira* resonate with comments he makes in *Epistula 83*, a letter which focuses on the matter of drunkenness:

Dic quam turpe sit plus sibi ingerere quam capiat et stomachi sui non nosse mensuram, quam multa ebrii faciant quibus sobrii erubescant, nihil aliud esse ebrietatem quam voluntarium insaniam. Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum: numquid de furore dubitabis?

Show how foul it is to take in more than one can withstand, and not to know the capacity of one’s own stomach; show how drunkards do many things that sober people blush at; show that drunkenness is nothing other than a voluntary madness. Draw the condition of the drunkard out for several days: will you have any doubt about his madness? (Epistula 83.18.4-8)

Whereas Seneca equates *ira* with *brevis insania* in the opening sections of *De Ira*, here he equates *ebrietas* with *voluntaria insania*. People who have this form of *insania* “do many things that sober people blush at” (*multa ebrii faciant quibus sobrii erubescant*). Although Seneca does not explicitly link *ebrietas* with *brevis insania*, these comments about the effects of *ebrietas/voluntaria insania* recalls a passage from *De Ira* in which Seneca states those who have *brevis insania* are “lacking in self control” and “forgetful of decency” (*impotens sui est, decoris oblita*, 3.1.2.2-3).

In addition, Seneca also helps us understand what *furor* is by proposing an analogy between the drunken state of *ebrietas*, which is brief, and the longer-lasting *furor* (*extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum: numquid de furore dubitabis*).

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120 Konstan notes that Seneca considers both *ira* and *ebrietas* to be states in which one may not be “fully conscious, and hence not responsible for his or her actions, [although] he or she does have the prior obligation not to become inebriated [or angered] to the extent of losing all control.” (Konstan 2013: 435)
I will come back to *De Ira* shortly, but first I will further explore the connections that Seneca makes between *insania* and *ebrietas* in some other texts. In *Epistula 59*, a letter concerned with pleasure and joy, Seneca notes the short-term nature of *ebrietas*:

...omnes istos oblectamenta fallacia et brevia decipiunt, sicut *ebrietas*, quae unius horae *hilarem insaniam* longi temporis taedio pensat...

...all those people are beguiled by deceptive and short-lasting amusements, such as drunkenness, which pays for a single hour’s cheerful madness with the wearisomeness of a long period of time... (Epistula 59.15.6-8)

In *Epistula 83* Seneca emphasizes the voluntary and short-term nature of *ebrietas*, and the connection between *ebrietas* and *insania*, but here he refers to a form of *insania* which has a “cheerful” (*hilaris*) aspect, and he associates that form of *insania* with *ebrietas*. The connection made between *ebrietas*, *voluntaria insaniam*, and *hilaris insaniam* in these passages has been noted by Fernandez¹²¹, but he does not further analyze Seneca’s usage of these terms. One aspect worthy of further attention is the use of *hilaris*, a word which Seneca uses in other contexts that discuss with *insania*.¹²² In his dialogue *De Vita Beata*, Seneca speaks of situations in which people become “mad with a cheerful madness, and rave in laughter” (*hilarem insaniam insanire ac per risum furere*, *De Vita Beata* 12.1). Here, *hilaris insaniam* is not explicitly linked to *ebrietas*; instead it refers to a form of madness which is characterized by a highly excited state. Seneca’s use of the word *hilaris* and the reference to laughter (*risum*) recall language used by Celsus. In the description of his third form of *insania*, Celsus relates that

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¹²² Fernandez also notes that Seneca uses this word in connection with *insania*, but he does not comment further. (Fernandez 1973: 307)
some individuals who suffer from this condition “laugh without cause” (*sine causa subinde rideat*, 3.18.22.3-4) and experience *hilaritas* (3.18.22.5). Celsus goes on to state that people with these symptoms are better treated by terrors (*terroribus...melius curatur*, 3.18.22.5-6), by which he means that they should be suddenly frightened, a form of therapy Celsus also mentions earlier. (cf. 3.18.18.2) Seneca, on the other hand, does not discuss treatments of *hilaris insania*, and the limited nature of his comments in on *hilaris insania* in this section discourage further comparisons with Celsus’ third form of *insania*.

As I briefly pointed out during my discussion of *Thyestes* in Chapter 3, Seneca uses the noun *hilaritas* to suggest that the character Thyestes is in a mad or deluded state. Before realizing that he has consumed the flesh and blood of his children, Thyestes is said to be lying about with a “cheerful expression” (*hilarique vultu*, 899), which sharply and ironically contrasts with the horror and suffering soon awaiting him. After imbibing what he believes is wine, but what actually contains the blood of his children (or at least a mixture of blood and wine123), Thyestes is portrayed in a drunken state of delusion. Even though the word *insania* is not used explicitly in this passage, the situation is much like what Seneca describes in *Epistula 59*: once Thyestes’ *ebrietias* wears off and he comes to his senses, he will exchange his short-lasting *hilaris insania* for long-lasting *taedio* (wearisomeness, loathing, disgust). We can also find comparable language in a passage from Celsus, although it is used to a very different effect. Although Celsus repeatedly associates the noun *hilaritas* and the adjective *hilaris* with *insania*124, he also

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123 The ambiguity of the contents of this drink is discussed in Chapter 3.
124 *hilaritas*: e.g 2.13.1.5-6; 3.18.20.3; 3.18.22.5; *hilaris*: e.g. 3.18.3.6; 3.18.9.8; 3.18.20.2.
states that a medicus should approach a patient hilari vultu (with a cheerful expression, 3.6.6.7). Here, hilaris vultus is not presented as a sign of madness (as in Thyestes), but a reassuring sign for a person suffering from illness. Nonetheless, this is a rather surprisingly choice of words in light of the connotations that hilaris and hilaritas take on in other sections of De Medicina.

Seneca also makes reference to hilaris insania in Epistula 29, a letter that discusses the abusive nature and psychological condition of Seneca’s friend Marcellinus. Seneca discusses some of the invective he has had to endure from Marcellinus, likening Marcellinus’ behavior to a fleeting form of madness:

Constitui tamen contumelias perpeti: moveat ille mihi risum, ego fortasse illi lacrimas movebo, aut si ridere perseverabit, gaudebo tamquam in malis quod illi genus insaniae hilare contigerit. Sed non est ista hilaritas longa: observa, videbis eosdem intra exiguum tempus acerrime ridere et acerrime rabere.

Nevertheless, I have chosen to endure insults; he may move me to laughter, but perhaps I will move him to tears, or if he persists in laughing, I shall rejoice, as it were, in a bad situation because he is afflicted by a cheerful type of madness. But that is not a long-lasting cheerfulness: observe, and you will see that those same people laugh bitterly and rave bitterly within a short period of time. (Epistula 29.7.2-8.1)

One aspect of Marcellinus’ condition which is highlighted by Seneca is his laughter (risum, ridere [used twice]). He actually takes this laughter as a positive sign, since it can only last for a short period of time (exiguum tempus). In the parlance of Celsus, we would say that Marcellinus’ condition is acute (acutus) in nature, not unlike phrenesis (cf. 3.18.1.6). While
Seneca does not use the adjective *acutus* here\textsuperscript{125}, he observes, like Celsus, that madness can affect people for varying durations of time; this criterion is thus important to both authors’ conceptualization of madness and to the categories they use to distinguish between different forms of madness. Seneca again presents *hilaris insania* as a short-term condition, as in *Epistula 59*, but unlike in *Epistula 59* he does not link *hilaris insania* with *ebrietas*. This suggests that there are different forms of *hilaris insania*, and that *ebrietas* is not always the cause of this condition.

Returning to *De Ira*, we find further grounds for comparison with Celsus in Seneca’s discussion of the *ira* of the mythological figure Ajax. Noting the personal dangers associated with *ira*, Seneca cites Ajax as an example:

\begin{quote}
Magis illud videndum est, quam multis *ira* per se nocuerit. Alii nimio fervore rupere venas et sanguinem supra vires elatus clamor egessit et luminum suffudit aciem in oculos vehementius umor egestus et in morbus aegri recidere. Nulla celerior ad *insaniam* via est. Multi itaque continuaverunt *ira* *furorem* nec quam expulerant *mentem* umquam receperunt: Alacem in mortem egit *furor*, in *furorem* *ira*. Mortem liberas, egestatem sibi, ruinam domui inprecantur, et *irasci* se negant non minus quam *insanire furiosi*.
\end{quote}

This [fact] must be observed even more, which is that anger in and of itself has done harm to many people. Some have burst their veins due to excessive passion, a shout carried beyond out one’s strength has led to bleeding, and an overly powerful flow carried into the eyes has stolen one’s sharpness of vision, and the sick have returned to their illnesses. There is no swifter road to madness. And so many have joined folly to anger, and they never restored the reason which they had driven out: folly drove Ajax to his death, and anger drove him into folly. They [i.e. those in a state of anger] invoke death upon their children, extreme poverty upon themselves, destruction upon their household,

\textsuperscript{125} Seneca does not use the adjective *acutus* frequently, and there is only one instance in the entire corpus of Senecan prose and poetry in which this word is used in relation to illness, namely when Seneca describes a short-term form of madness (*acutae delirationis*, Ep. 9.8.8). Seneca’s use of this phrase is discussed later in this chapter.
and they deny that they are angry no less than the frenzied deny they are mad. (De Ira 2.36.4.1-5.5)

This passage highlights the self-destructive nature of *ira* by pointing out examples in which it brings harm upon a person’s own body, family, or property. According to Seneca, people who reach this extreme state of *ira* lose their sense of reason and never get it back (*nec quam expulerant mentem umquam receperunt*). This sustained loss of reason recalls the prolonged nature of the form of *insania* that is associated with Ajax (and Orestes) in *De Medicina* (3.18.19.4). Seneca, however, emphasizes the loss and absence of reason sustained by figures like Ajax, which contrasts with Celsus’ idea that Ajax suffered from *imagines*, or visions (3.18.19.4-5), and not a loss of reason. Indeed, this speaks to exactly the dichotomy established in Celsus’ third form of *insania*, namely that some who suffer from this condition are led astray by *imagines*, while others are simply at a loss of reason (*nam quidam imaginibus, non mente falluntur...quidam animo desipiunt*, 3.18.19.4-5; cf. 3.18.21.1). Seneca’s description of Ajax’s madness is actually more similar to the type of madness that Celsus contrasts with the madness experienced by Ajax and Orestes. Even though Seneca and Celsus are both attempting to diagnose Ajax’s condition and to provide an explanation for his behavior, they have different ideas about the role that “reason” and “visions” play in Ajax’s illness, and understand the nature of his condition differently.

Seneca’s account also differs from Celsus’ description in that he considers *ira* to be an important aspect of Ajax’s condition, and in fact its cause. Celsus does not associate *ira* with Ajax, but Seneca describes *ira* as the root of Ajax’s *furor* and a force that ultimately leads to his
death: *Aiacem in mortem egit furor, in furorem ira*. The parallelism of this sentence provides a clear understanding of the outcomes of *furor* and *ira*, respectively, and the use of hysteron proteron calls attention to the eventual outcome of death, resulting from *furor*. It is implied that *furor* is more deadly than *ira*, or, to put it another way, that *ira* reaches the state of *furor* when it becomes deadly. Celsus does not make any comparable distinction in his comments about Ajax; in fact, shortly before discussing his example of Ajax, Celsus specifies that he is describing a form of *insania* which “does not threaten life itself” (*vitam ipsam non impediat*, 3.18.19.2). Seneca’s comments about Ajax’s madness thus focus on the outcome of Ajax’s madness in a way that Celsus’ does not. This speaks in part to the strategies of the authors: Seneca is attempting to demonstrate and dissuade people from the horrible *effects* of *ira*, whereas Celsus is using the well-known mythological figure Ajax as a way to explain a specific medical symptom (perceiving *imaginēs*). Seneca also suggests in the above passage that *ira* is the quickest road to *insania* (*nulla celerior ad insaniam via est*). This remark is slightly different in formulation from Seneca’s earlier equation of *ira* and *brevis insania* (cf. *De Ira* 1.1.2.1-2.6). Seneca is now stating that *ira* is a *cause* leading to *insania*, instead of being a form of *insania* itself. Connects this idea with the following sentence about Ajax, Fitch explains the relationship among these terms as such: “Ajax’s *ira* led to *furor*, and *furor* in turn to *insania*”.126 This is the logical implication of Seneca’s comments in the above passage, but the idea that *ira* progresses into *furor*, and then becomes *insania* is quite different from stating that *ira* is equivalent to, or

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126 Fitch 1987: 31. Harris similarly observes that this passage is stating that “anger can *lead* to madness”, instead of it *is* a form of madness/*insania*. (Harris 2001: 378)
definable as *insania*. At the beginning of *De Ira* Seneca appear to be equating *ira* and *insania*, but he now speaks of *ira* as a cause of *insania*. Perhaps Seneca is suggesting an equation between *ira* and *insania* because *ira* can only lead to *insania*, but he does not make this point explicitly.

In the following sentence, Seneca seems to put *ira* in a separate category from *insania* and *furor*. He states: *irasce se negant non minus quam insanire furiosi* (they deny that they are they are angry no less than the frenzied deny they are mad). Here, being angry (*irasce*) is not equated with being “frenzied” (*insanire*) or “mad” (*furiosi*). On the other hand, there is a close connection made between *insanire* and *furiosi*, which seems to imply that the “frenzied” (*furiosi*) actually do suffer *insania*. This implication is in keeping with other instances in Senecan prose where the terms *furor* and *insania* are used with little apparent differentiation in sense. But if Seneca is using these words with little semantic distinction here, it problematizes his idea of a progression from *ira* to *furor* to *insania*; indeed, if these terms are semantically equivalent, a progression from one to another would be logically impossible.

Seneca does, however, clearly describe such a progression in *Epistula 18*. Paraphrasing Epicurus, he states that uncontrolled *ira* gives rise to *insania*: *Delegabo te ad Epicurum, ab illo fiet numeratio: 'inmodica ira gignit insaniam'.* (I will defer to Epicurus—there will be a payment from him: “unrestrained anger begets madness”. *Epistula 18.14.3*) All this suggests that Seneca is not always consistent in his usage of such terms within his prose work. In this respect, he is different from a writer such as Cicero, who makes rather clear and consistent distinctions between terms such as *furor* and *insania*. Scholars such as Konstan and Merzlak have pointed
out the consistency of Cicero’s usage of such terminology, but to my knowledge, Seneca’s relative lack of consistency has not been pointed out in previous scholarship.\(^\text{127}\)

In *De Ira* Seneca also discusses “epilepsy”, the condition which Celsus calls *morbus comitialis* (cf. 3.23.2-4; 4.27.1b10-11). Seneca mentions this condition only once, referring to it as *comitiale vitium*. He draws an interesting analogy, observing that just as epileptics can sense that they are about to have an attack of their illness, people in general can train themselves to recognize the signs that *ira* is arising:

Qui *comitiali vitio* solent corripi iam adventare valetudinem intellegunt, si calor summa deservit et incertum lumen nervorumque trepidatio est, si memoria sublabitur caputque versatur; solitis itaque remediis incipientem causam occupant, et odore gustuque quidquid est quod alienat animos repellitur, aut fomentis contra frigus rigoremque pugnatur; aut, si parum medicina profecit, vitaverunt turbam et sine teste ceciderunt.

Those are accustomed to being seized by epilepsy recognize that the condition is about to come on, if heat escapes from their extremities and there is unclear sight, and there is a twitching of their tendons, and if their memory fails and their head spins; and so they preempt the cause as it is starting with the familiar remedies, and whatever it is that deprives one of reason is repelled by smelling and tasting [something], or the cold and stiffness is combated with warm applications, or, if the remedy is not effective enough, they avoid the crowd and fall down without any witness. (De Ira 3.10.3.1-4.1)

In drawing this analogy, Seneca strongly suggests that *ira* is a form of illness like any other. Unlike Celsus, he does not identify *comitiale vitium* as a form of *insania*, even though he observes that it deprives people of their reasoning capabilities (*alienat animos*). Seneca also states that this condition is characterized by a failure of memory (*memoria sublabitur*), without explaining whether the memory loss is short-term, long-term, or permanent. Despite this

\(^{127}\) On Cicero’s use of these terms, see Konstan 2013: 436-437 and Merzlak 1985: 195.
ambiguity, Seneca still offers more information than Celsus about how epilepsy affects the mind. Celsus only states that after an attack of the condition, the person “returns to their self” (*interposito tempore ad se redit*, 3.23.1.4). We can identify some similarities between the two authors’ descriptions of epilepsy, including similar symptoms, such as problems with vision or the eyes (Seneca: *incertum lumen*; cf. Celsus *oculi vertuntur*), spasms (Seneca: *nervorumque trepidatio*; cf. Celsus *distentione autem nervorum*, 3.23.2.1-2), and falling down (Seneca: *ceciderunt*; cf. Celsus *concidit*, 3.23.2; *prosternat*, 4.27.1a.4). Their descriptions of the symptoms also bear some significant differences: Celsus, unlike Seneca, says that foaming at the mouth occurs (*ex ore spumae moventur*, 3.23.1.3); Seneca states that heat escapes from the extremities (*calor summa deservit*), but no such symptom is mentioned by Celsus. Later in this chapter, these observations about the symptoms and effects of *comitiale vitium / morbus comitialis* will help shed light on the representation of Hercules’ condition in Seneca’s tragedy *Hercules Furens*.

Another work in which Seneca discusses madness is *Naturales Quaestiones*, an encyclopedia of various natural phenomena. In his discussion of earthquakes in Book 6, Seneca notes that movements of the earth and other calamities tend to give rise to fear, which in turn often gives rise to forms of madness:

Nam quod aliquos *insanis* attonitisque similes discurrere, fecit *metus*, qui *executit mentes* ubi privatus ac modicus est; quid, ubi publice *terret*? Ubi cadunt urbes, populi opprimuntur, terra concutitur, quid mirum est animos inter dolorem et metum destitutos aberrasse? Non est facile inter mala magna *consipere*. Itaque levissima fere ingenia in tantum venere formidinis ut *sibi exciderent*. *Nemo* guidem sine aliqua iactura sanitatis expavit, similisque est *furenti quisquis timet*. Sed alios cito *timor* sibi reddit, alios vehementius perturbat et in *dementia*
transfert. Inde inter bella erravere lymphatici, nec usquam plura exempla vaticinantium invenies quam ubi formido mentes religione mixta percussit.¹²⁸

For fear has made some people run around as if mad and stupefied, as it shakes up minds even when confined to the individual and of moderate degree; what then, when it terrifies the public? When cities fall, when peoples are crushed, when the earth is shaken, what wonder is it that minds wander astray, bereft between grief and fear? It is not easy to stay in one’s right mind in the midst of great adversity. And so, typically those of the most changeable nature arrive at such a state of fear that they lose themselves. Indeed, no one becomes fearful without some loss of mental soundness, and anyone who is fearful is like a madman. But fear restores some people to themselves quickly, while it disturbs others more deeply and carries them over into dementia. Thus during wars people wander about panic-stricken, and you will never find more instances of prophecy than when fear, mixed with divine reverence, strikes the mind. (Naturales Quaestiones 6.29.1.1-3.3)

Previously, we have seen that Seneca links insania with the experiences of anger and drunkenness, and now here he describes mental disturbance can be caused by fear (metus, timor). Seneca relates this issue to the central theme of Book 6—earthquakes—as he points out that the shaking of the earth (terra concutitur), can incite people’s minds to states of fear. Seneca’s language use even evokes the quaking of the earth when he states that fear can “shake minds” (excutit mentes).¹²⁹ In turn, these states of fear, according to Seneca, have a tendency to bring about states akin to madness, which is conveyed through the use of various terms. First, Seneca notes that fear makes some people act as if they are mad (insanis similes), not quite stating that they actually are mad. Seneca similarly goes on to state that anyone who is fearful is like a madman (similisque est furentis quisquis timet). In these two statements, the

¹²⁸ Here, I follow the Hine’s Teubner edition of Naturales Quaestiones (1996), since this text is not included in the Oxford Classical Texts.
¹²⁹ Gareth D. Williams has also noted Seneca’s use of the earthquake “as a metaphor for life’s more traumatic experiences and challenges” in Book 6 of Naturales Quaestiones. (Williams 2006: 139)
adjectives *insanus* and *furens* are used very similarly, each referring to an unsound states of mind resulting from fear; this similarity in usage parallels connections made between *insania* and *furor* in other works of Senecan prose. In addition, Seneca suggests that fear can bring about conditions, such as *dementia*, which are similar to, but not the same as, *insania* or *furor*.

Seneca also asserts that it is impossible to become fearful without some loss of sanity (*nemo quidem sine aliqua iactura sanitatis expavit*).

A condition involving a loss of *sanitas*, whether wholly or partially, would seem to suggest a state of *insania*, but in the above passage Seneca only goes so far as to say that the condition brought on by fear is similar to *insania*. It is possible that this reflects a slipperiness or lack of precision in his usage of words like *insanus* and *sanitas*. Or, it is also possible that Seneca is presenting *sanitas* as a continuum in which it is possible to lose some *sanitas* and thus enter into a state similar to madness, but without entering into a full-blown state of *insania*. This would suggest that Seneca is views *insania* and *sanitas* not as absolutes, but rather as categories with some gray area in between them. On the other hand, this could be an issue of semantics, indicative of a difference between the adjective *insanus* (which is usually applied to an illness which is mental or psychological in nature) and the abstract noun *sanitas* (perhaps more vaguely suggesting “health” or “soundness” of either of body or mind\(^\text{130}\)). Whatever Seneca intended, these complexities illustrate that the Latin words *sanus/sanitas* and *insanus/insania* cannot simply be understood as semantic opposites, and that a noun (e.g. *sanitas*) may not have the exact same semantic range as a related adjective (e.g. *sanus*).

\(^\text{130}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *sanitas*.  

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According to the above passage from *Naturales Quaestiones*, some people who are struck by fear fail to recover their wits quickly, thus entering into a state of *dementia*. Here, *dementia* refers to a form of madness that is longer in duration and more severe (*vehementius perturbat*) than *insania* or *furor*. As we have seen, Celsus describes *phrenesis* as a condition characterized by *continua dementia*, as well as by visions that overtake the mind (3.18.2.1-4). Celsus’ use of *continua* as a modifier of *dementia* suggests that *dementia* is not necessarily a long-lasting condition, and, according to Celsus, *phrenesis* is in fact the short-lasting form of *insania*. In Seneca’s words quoted above, however, *dementia* seems to be a longer-term condition because it is associated with fears which do not immediately go away and which continue to disturb people. Once again, we find fluidity on the lexical level, the absence of a clearly distinguished vocabulary for illness in general, and mental disorders or madness in particular, when looking across Latin texts of various genres, and even when looking at passages written in the same genre by a single author. A little later in this chapter, we will return to Seneca’s usage of the term *dementia* when discussing a passage from *De Tranquillitate Animi*.

As noted earlier, Celsus also discusses madness caused by fear (*metus*), which he describes as the central component of the condition he calls *delirium* (3.18.24.1-4). Seneca never uses *delirium*, but he does use the etymologically related noun *deliratio* and the verb *delirare* (each occur in one instance). *Deliratio* can be translated as “delirium”, “craziness”, or even “madness” (although Lewis and Short state that the latter sense is “very rare”)\(^{131}\); possible

\(^{131}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *deliratio*; Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *deliratio*. 
translations for *delirare* include “to be out of one’s mind”, “to be mad” and “to rave”\(^\text{132}\). The etymological sense of *delirare* is “to go out of [de] the furrow [lira]”—that is, “to deviate from a straight line”\(^\text{133}\)—an agriculture metaphor which came to suggest madness. In *Epistula 49*, Seneca uses the noun *deliratio* in observing that logic can be applied to create absurd arguments. He describes this practice as an *exemplum huius acutae delirationis* (an example of this sheer madness, 49.8.8). Here, *deliratio* is not associated with fear, as with Celsus’ *delirium*, but rather with the absurd application of logic. It is also worth noting that in using the adjective *acutae* to modify *deliratio* in this example, Seneca is emphasizing the “sharp” or “biting”\(^\text{134}\) nature of the *deliratio*, and not suggesting it is “short-lasting”, a sense which *acutus* often carries in medical contexts.

We can also compare Celsus’ description of *delirium* with Seneca’s description of madness caused by fear in *Naturales Quaestiones*. Celsus’ comments about *delirium* are rather limited, but he does make it clear that *delirium* has subcategories similar to the subcategories associated with his third form of *insania*, even though fear is not mentioned as a cause of that condition. Nonetheless, Celsus’ third form of *insania* bears some similarity to Seneca’s description of madness caused by fear. Celsus states that some people who suffer from this form of *insania* lose the faculties of reason (*animo desipiunt*, 3.18.19.6; *vero consilium insanientem fallit*, 3.18.21.1); these symptoms recall Seneca’s description of the loss of reason (*excutit mentes; animos...aberrasse, non est facile...conspere*, et al.) and the *insania*-like

\(^{132}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *delirare*.

\(^{133}\) Lewis and Short 1879: s.v. *delirum*; cf. Glare 2012: s.v. *delirium*.

\(^{134}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *acutus*. 

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condition brought on by fear in *Naturales Quaestiones*. In these ways, both authors relate that the inability to reason is indicative of a form of madness (or near-madness in Seneca’s case).

Celsius does not specify that fear is a cause of his third form of *insania*, but he does mention fear when commenting on the treatment of this form of *insania*. For the type that loses its reason, Celsius recommends various forms of physical and mental coercion, as well as the provocation of fear:


When one says or does anything wrong, he must be restrained by starvation, bindings, and beatings. He must be forced both to focus on something and to learn and remember it: thus little by little he will be forced by fear to consider what he is doing. Moreover, to be terrified suddenly and to become greatly frightened is beneficial in this illness, and so is anything in general that strongly shakes up the mind. (3.18.21.4-22.7)

Celsius’ promotion of fear as a remedy for madness starkly contrasts with the ideas of Seneca, who focuses on the capacity of fear to trigger forms of madness. Generally, Seneca’s prose works are less interested in how to treat madness, instead seeking to provide advice about how to avoid it in the first place. But according to Celsius, seemingly any stimulus that brings about fear can stir up the mind and help a person regain their wits. Indeed, he describes ways of inducing fear both gradually (*paulatim*) and suddenly (*subito*). The gradual method involves forcing people to focus, learn, and memorize things while being tortured. The fear that results from the torture is said to make the person more conscious of his actions (*metu cogatur considerare quid faciat*), thus restoring *ratio*. Celsius does not provide many details about how
this method is supposed to work, and one wonders how a person could concentrate and learn things while being tortured. The other method Celsus describes involves inducing a sudden fright or otherwise shaking up the mind (\textit{animum vehementer turbat}). For Celsus, the principle operating in these treatments suggests that madness and delusion can be corrected through the use of fear. Such a principle seems to run counter to Hippocratic ideas concerning the treatment of illness, which generally operate according to principles predicated upon opposing the perceived causes of illness. For instance, as a treatment for \textit{μελαγχολία}, the influential Hippocratic text \textit{On the Nature of Man} purging a patient of excess black bile, thus counteracting the cause of the condition.\footnote{\textit{Κατὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ χολὴ μέλαινα καθαίρεται, ἢν διδὼς φάρμακον ὅ τι χολὴν μέλαιναν ἀγεῖ. (Similarly, black bile can be purged if you give a drug that leads it up. \textit{On the Nature of Man} 5.16-18)} But with his third form of insania, Celsus recommends a treatment—fear—that would, at least initially, bring about a further disturbance of the mind, rather than countering the disturbance. In the passage from \textit{Naturales Quaestiones}, Seneca uses language of shaking (\textit{excutit mentes}) and disturbance (\textit{alios vehementius perturbat}) to indicate that fear can have a strong effect on the mind. But for Seneca, these effects are considered setbacks, not roads to recovery.

We have now seen that Senecan prose uses a variety of terms to convey madness or states of mental disturbance, and that these terms are not always clearly defined or used consistently. In another prose work, \textit{De Tranquillitate Animi}, Seneca describes a form of mental disturbance which apparently cannot be identified by any existing Latin term. Seneca’s text begins in the form of a dialogue, starting with comments by Serenus, a close friend and possibly a distant
relative of Seneca, as well as the dedicatee of *De Tranquillitate Animi*. Serenus opens by describing some of the symptoms of the curious condition he is experiencing, hoping that Seneca can help identify this condition and allay his distress:

Inquirenti mihi in me quaedam vitia apparebant, Seneca, in aperto posita, quae manuprehenderem, quaedam obscuriora et in recessu, quaedam non continua sed ex intervallis redeuntia, quae vel molestissima dixerim, ut hostis vagos et ex occasionibus assilientes, per quos neutrum licet, nec tamquam in bello paratum esse nec tamquam in pace securum. Illum tamen habitum in me maxime deprehendo (quare enim non verum ut medico fatear?), nec bona fide liberatum me iis quae timebam et oderam, nec rursus obnoxium; in statu ut non pessimo, ita maxime querulo et moroso positus sum: nec aegroto nec valeo. Haec animi inter utrumque dubii nec ad recta fortiter nec ad prava vergentis infirmitas qualis sit, non tam semel tibi possum quam per partes ostendere; dicam quae accidant mihi, tu morbo nomen invenies.

Reflecting upon myself, Seneca, some vices appeared to me out in the open—some which I could grasp with my hand, some that were more unclear and fading away, and some that were not persistent, but recurred at regular intervals; these I would call the most irksome, like a roaming enemy assaulting one at every chance, [an enemy] because of whom one can do neither of these two things: neither be prepared as if in war, nor be free of anxiety as if in peace. This is the condition which I detect in myself (for why would I not confess openly, as if to a doctor?), and I do not find myself freed in good faith from those things which I used to fear and hate, nor on the other hand am I rendered subject to those things. I am in a state which is not the worst, but which is very grievous and painful: I am neither ill nor well. What this weakness of the mind might be, when it is in doubt between both and inclining neither toward the right path nor toward the wrong, I am not so able to show you all at once, but rather piece by piece. I will tell you the things that are happening to me, and you will find a name for the illness. (*De Tranquillitate Animi* 1.1.-1.3; 1.4.-1.5.)

The seemingly ironically-named Serenus explains his symptoms, describing them to Seneca as if he were speaking to a doctor, as Serenus himself acknowledges (*quare enim non verum ut medico fatear?*). In the following section of this chapter, we will be seeing passages from Senecan tragedy in which characters, such as Hercules, are also portrayed as suffering and...
struggling to understand the cause and nature of their condition, as well as possible remedies. Serenus struggles to understand his own condition in part because it is highly ambiguous in nature, resembling various conditions known to him, while not fully fitting the description of any. He says that he is neither ill nor well (sum nec aegroto nec valeo), suggesting an elusive condition outside of the typical binary framework of illness and health. Unable to identify his condition, Serenus cannot diagnose himself and hopes that someone else can successfully interpret his symptoms and determine exactly what he is experiencing.

Seneca responds to Serenus later in this dialogue, but he too does not provide a name for Serenus’ condition. Instead, Seneca compares the condition to the experience of people who, after recovering from a long and serious illness, become overly concerned about a relapse whenever they experience any minor sign of distress (2.1). In modern parlance, this sounds a bit like the condition known as hypochondria, but Seneca still does not provide a name. This is significant, in light of the fact that Senecan prose, like Celsus’ De Medicina, is typically intent on naming the forms of illness that are described. Celsus is so thorough about this that he provides names in both Latin and Greek for a great number of conditions, reinforcing the impression that he is a precise and thorough compiler of medical knowledge. Conversely, the unsuccessful grasping for a name to give to Serenus’ condition in De Tranquillitate Animi suggests that not every form of illness can be straightforwardly identified and catalogued, at least not through the process of philosophical dialogue.

Although Seneca is not able to identify a name for Serenus’ condition, he later goes on to state that Serenus’ condition is characterized by a lack of euthymia (hanc stabilem animi Graeci
The condition known as *euthymia*, or εὐθυμία, might be contrasted with δυσθυμία, a term which appears in the Hippocratic Corpus and Greek tragedies. It is often translated as “despondency”, “despair”, and “depression.” Seneca equates the Greek word εὐθυμία with the Latin *tranquillitas* (calmness, 2.3), and he characterizes this state as a stable condition of uninterrupted joy in which the mind exists in a state of moderation, “neither overly exalting nor overly despairing” (*nec attollens se umquam nec deprimens*, 2.4). Seneca does not give a positive identification to Serenus’ condition, but he is clearly suggesting that Serenus suffers from a lack of *tranquillitas*.

Despite the fact that Seneca does not actually name Serenus’ condition, some scholars have suggested Serenus is suffering from “depression”. Lawlor in fact proposes that these sections of *De Tranquillitate Animi* provide “the best description of what might most closely correspond to modern depression in classical literature” (although he does note that “the text itself observes that there is no name for this condition”). Identifying Serenus’ condition as “depression” is tempting, especially since he is said to lacks εὐθυμία, and thus arguably in a state of δυσθυμία. However, we must be careful about assuming that εὐθυμία and δυσθυμία are diametrically opposed states, much like we cannot assume that the adjectives *insanus* and *sanus* are completely opposite in their senses and connotations. When we recall Serenus’ own comments that he is neither ill nor well (*nec aegroto nec valeo*), it may make

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137 Lawlow 2012: 25.
more sense to say that his condition is somewhere between εὐθυμία and δυσθυμία, not firmly situated under either category. This, in turn, might help explain why neither Seneca nor Serenus give a specific name to his condition.

One might also think that Serenus is suffering from “depression” because Seneca uses the participle deprimens in this passage (...sed placido statu maneat, nec attollens se umquam nec deprimens). This English word “depression” is in fact etymologically related this word, although, as Jackson observes, it was a “relative latecomer to the terminology for dejected states...” and that it was not used in this sense until the seventeenth century.138 One might also point to similarities between Serenus’ symptoms and symptoms associated with clinical depression, particularly his anxiety. Nevertheless, attempting to connect the dots between modern clinical depression and a condition described in a Latin text poses various problems. For one, the issue is muddled because the English word “depression” is notoriously imprecise. Marsella observes that it “lacks clarity”, as it is “used to denote a mood, a symptom, and a syndrome”139, and in addition, it is associated with a wide array of symptoms. Beyond its clinical psychiatric uses, “depression” and related verbs and adjectives carry other connotations that speak to the word’s great semantic fluidity; one finds, for instance, everyday, colloquial uses such as "why do you look so depressed (i.e. sad) today?" and “what a depressing (i.e. sorrowful) movie that was!”. One cannot expect any Latin term to have this exact semantic range, and there is every reason to believe that Latin terms like insania, furor, and dementia

138 Jackson notes that the English word “depression” is constructed from the Latin prefix de- (down from) and the verb premo (to press). (Jackson 1986: 5)
139 Marsella 1980: 238.
(and the Greek δυσθυμία) all have a similarly broad semantic range. Another, larger and more difficult problem has to do with the relationship between words and concepts, and cross-cultural studies of depression have shown that there is no single or universal concept of what is called “depression” in English.\(^{140}\) Furthermore, if we consider “depression” from a cross-historic perspective, we see that modern theorists in the Western medical tradition often view depression as a condition with causes which are deeply tied to one’s personality and social interactions, which in turn may be affected by a biochemical imbalance. In Celsus, and Greek and Latin texts that describe conditions which might be compared to depression (e.g. μελαγχολία and δυσθυμία), imbalance is an important part of the explanation, but we never see it explicitly suggested that these conditions are someone caused by or related to latent aspects of one’s identity or underlying character traits.\(^{141}\) In other cultures, it appears that no concept of depression exists at all.\(^{142}\)

Nevertheless, Lawlor finds Seneca’s description of Serenus’ condition to be so similar to our “depression” that he takes the passage as evidence that Latin lacks a term for depression. Others scholars suggest that the Latin word *tristitia* and related verbs and adjectives closely correspond to “depression” in English. Although Harris points out differences in modern thought and Greek and Roman thought pertaining to the causation of “depression”, he nevertheless states that the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, “not unreasonably gives ‘depressed’ as a

\(^{140}\) Marsella 1980: 274.

\(^{141}\) Harris 2001: 17 n. 47.

\(^{142}\) Marsella 1980: 274. Lyons discusses this phenomenon more generally, noting that there are “culturally explicable reasons” that one language gives lexical recognition to a concept which is not lexicalized in another language. (Lyons 1977: 236)
meaning of tristis and ‘depress’ as a meaning of contristare.”¹⁴³ In support of Harris’ point, we can recall that Celsus’ second form of insania—a condition which scholars such as Toohey have identified as “depression”—is characterized by tristitia (3.18.17.3). But it remains the case that no Latin term, including tristitia, possesses a semantic range that corresponds perfectly, or, I would argue even closely, to the semantic range of the English word “depression.” Because the English words “depression” and “depressed” come with so many connotations inappropriate to Latin words like tristitia, I avoid using them in my translations throughout this chapter (generally opting for the more generic “sadness” and “sad” instead). As for Serenus’ condition, even if there is no better English word to use than “depression”, I will refrain from referring to his condition as such; instead I will follow Seneca in not applying a label to his condition.

In works such as De Ira and Naturales Quaestiones, Seneca emphasizes that madness is characterized by disordered mental states and a loss of reason. Conversely, in a later passage of De Tranquillitate Animi Seneca observes that madness can actually have some beneficial effects on the mind:


It should not be done often, lest the mind take on a wicked custom, but sometimes it should be drawn into jubilation and boldness, and solemn

¹⁴³ Harris 2001: 17 n. 47 (cf. Glare 2012: tristis; contristare)
moderation must be set aside for a while. For, whether we believe with the Greek poet that “it is sometimes agreeable to be mad,” or with Plato that “one who is self-possessed knocks in vain on the doors of poetry,” or with Aristotle that “no great genius was without a mixture of madness”, the mind, unless roused up, is not able to say anything great and above others. When it has shown disdain for the common and the customary and risen higher by divine inspiration, then it has finally sung something greater than any mortal mouth. (17.9.5-11.3)

The idea that one should embrace madness (even if in a limited way), as well as the idea that genius cannot exist without madness, represent a radical departure from the way Seneca approaches madness in many of his other prose works. Here Seneca diverges from ideas he expresses elsewhere, but in quoting authors like Plato and Aristotle, he takes us down another traditional path, namely that which sees poetic and artistic inspiration as a type of madness. These comments lead us closer to usage patterns in Senecan tragedy, as if bridging the gap between his representation of madness in works of prose and poetry. Indeed, the two modes of discussing madness are to some extent aligned with the distinction between prose (whether Seneca’s philosophical writings or Celsus’ De Medicina) and poetry (Senecan tragedy). Very generally speaking, the former sees manifestations of madness as a problem to be explained and, when possible, to be avoided or (in Celsus’ case) cured; the poetic tradition comes with a heritage of, in some specific and limited ways, placing a more positive value on forms of madness. In the above passage from De Tranquillitate Animi, however, these distinctions disappear.
Indeed, the comments in the above passage represent a rare instance in which Seneca’s prose deviates from the Stoic emphasis upon maintaining constant mental composure.\textsuperscript{144} According to this passage, great genius (\textit{magnum ingenium}) is realized not through mental composure, but instead through a disturbance of the mind (\textit{mota mens}), which enables one to transcend common modes of thought and rise up to great intellectual heights. Seneca also observes that divine inspiration (\textit{instinctuque sacro}) is responsible for these realizations of genius. Commentators have noted Seneca is likely alluding to \textit{ἐνθουσιασμός}, a concept in various works of Greek literature which indicates that strokes of genius occur as a result of divine inspiration.\textsuperscript{145} This is reflected in the etymology of the word \textit{ἐνθουσιασμός} (ἐν [in] + θεός [a god]—literally “the state of having a god within oneself”).\textsuperscript{146} The divine aspect of this form of madness sets its apart from all of the other forms of madness which are described in Seneca’s prose works.

Seneca gives an added sense of authority to the idea that madness can inspire poetic creativity and other forms of genius by citing the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, paraphrasing them in Latin. Schiesaro has suggested that Seneca’s references to these philosophers are meant to suggest that the enthusiastic surrendering of mental composure is

\textsuperscript{144} Cf. Staley 2010: 41. Schiesaro also notes that the Stoics typically view poetry as “dangerous” because it can produce “an irrational movement of the soul”, and also because it “can deceive the reader into endorsing morally objectionable ideas, and, by representing passions in the characters, induce passions in the audience.” (Schiesaro 2003: 229, see also 25).

\textsuperscript{145} Picone 1984: 58; Staley 2010: 42.

\textsuperscript{146} Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v. \textit{ἐνθουσιασμός}. 
what drives both artistic and philosophical genius. Seneca attributes the same basic idea to both Plato and Aristotle, namely that this specific form of madness can inspire various forms of creative thought and expression, but Seneca uses various pieces of vocabulary to refer to this type of madness. First, before mentioning Plato and Aristotle, Seneca makes reference to an unnamed Greek poet, stating that it can be agreeable to go mad (insaniare). Here, Seneca uses a word with a very broad semantic range; the related noun insania is, for example, associated with a wide array of conditions in Senecan prose, including anger, drunkenness, and fear. As for the reference to Plato, Staley identifies this as an allusion to the Platonic dialogue Phaedrus, another work that “finds common ground between the poet and the philosopher through the divine madness they share.” In paraphrasing Plato, Seneca suggests that it is not possible to create poetry in a “self-possessed” (compos) state, and the final sentence of this passage further suggests that being “self-possessed” is at odds with being under the influence of divine inspiration (instinctuque sacro). In paraphrasing Plato, however, Seneca does not use insania/insaniare or other words that can be used to convey madness.

The final paraphrase in this passage suggests that genius always comes with the company of madness (and vice versa)—an idea which strongly resonates with ideas expressed in the pseudo-Aristotelian Problema 30.1. This work is an essay in the encyclopedic compendium

147 Schiesaro 2003: 23.
148 In his commentary on De Tranquillitate Animi, Costa states that “identification [of this poet] is uncertain, but the thought suits Alcaeus or Anacreon”, while also noting an analogous phrase in Horace (dulce mihi furere est, Odes 2.2.28). (Costa 1994: 197)
149 Cf. Phaedrus 248d-e. Staley also points out that Seneca is certainly not referring to Plato’s Republic, a work which takes a more negative view of poetry. (Staley 2010: 42)
known as the *Problemata*, a series of questions and answers concerning various topics, posed and answered by a post-Aristotelian author who emulates Aristotle in his ideas and use of language. *Problema 30.1* explores why people of genius and exceptional ability have a tendency to be melancholic in nature. Stok not only notes a connection between Seneca’s comments in *De Tranquillitate Animi* and the views on genius and μελαγχολία in *Problema 30.1*, he also suggests a connection between the condition in *De Tranquillitate Animi* and Celsus’ second form of *insania* because it is caused by *bilis atra* (black bile).  

While this is an interesting connection between Celsus and *Problema 30.1*, it is important to note that Seneca does not refer to black bile in *De Tranquillitate Animi*. It should also be noted that genius is not associated with Celsus’ second form of *insania*, or any other form of madness he describes. Seneca’s reference to a *mixtura dementiae* (a mixture of madness) amidst genius (*ingenium*) finds no parallel in Celsus, whose various forms of madness are never connected with genius or exceptional talent. In addition, in *Problema 30.1* μελαγχολία is strongly associated with “manic” individuals, including the mythological figure Ajax, whom Celsus mentions as an example of his third form of *insania*. But Celsus does not describe Ajax’s

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150 Stok 1996: 2368. Another similarity (not noted by Stok) between Seneca’s writings and the *Problema 30.1* is that both explore similarities between madness and drunkenness. The comments on drunkenness in *Problema 30.1*, however, are more equivocal than Seneca’s equation of *ebrietas with insania* (cf. *Epistula B3*). Indeed, *Problema 30.1* suggests that a little imbibing can make people “behave recklessly” (*πράττειν ἵταμοὺς*), that more imbibing can make people “hubristic” (*ὑβριστάς*), that even more imbibing can make people “manic” (*μανικοῦς*), and that the most extreme degree of imbibing can make people “stupid”—and not unlike epileptics and melancholics (*μορούς, ἡ εἴκοσι παιδών ἐπιλήπτους, ἢ καὶ ἔχομένους τοὺς μελαγχολικοὺς ἄγαν*). (*Problema 30.1.953.a39-b.7*) Thus, *Problema 30.1* describes various levels of drunkenness, which in turn correspond to various forms of mental impairment, establishing a continuum for these forms of “madness”; Seneca, by contrast, proposes a more straightforward, one-to-one correspondence between *ebrietas* and *insania*.  

condition as a divinely inspired form of madness, and this constitutes a very important
difference with the form of madness Seneca describes in *De Tranquillitate Animi*. Thus, while it
is interesting to compare the three conditions which Stok attempts to link together, ultimately
the differences between them considerably outweigh the similarities. It is also worth noting
that Seneca uses the term *dementia* in the above passage from *De Tranquillitate Animi*. Here,
*dementia* is closely linked with *ingenium*—so closely that the latter is said to be unable to exist
without the former. In *Naturales Quaestiones*, however, *dementia* is described as a condition
brought on by long-lasting fear (6.29.4.3-1). The *dementia* described in *De Tranquillitate
Animi* is not characterized as either long-lasting or caused by fear, and this is another example
from Senecan prose in which vocabulary of madness is used in a somewhat loose and
unsystematic way.

**Language of Madness in Senecan Tragedy**

Like his prose works, many of Seneca’s tragedies exhibit a profound interest in the mental
and psychological states of their characters. In some of these plays, including *Hercules Furens*
and *Medea*, the “madness” that afflicts certain characters plays an important role in driving the
plot. In this section, I analyze the representation of madness in selected scenes from these two
plays, closely examining language usage and drawing comparisons with Celsus’ *De Medicina*
and Senecan prose. There has been some scholarship on the language of madness in each of
these corpora, but only very limited comparisons between Celsus and Seneca, and between
Senecan prose and poetry. De Caprariis, for instance, has analyzed psychological and
psychosomatic manifestations of illness in Seneca’s tragedies\textsuperscript{152}, but this analysis contains only brief discussion of Senecan prose. Moreover, De Caprariis focuses primarily upon Seneca’s conceptualization of madness without giving as much attention to the relevant vocabulary and imagery. Stok, on the other hand, has provided some analysis of vocabulary pertinent to madness in Senecan prose, and he has even drawn some comparisons with Celsus’ usage of vocabulary, but his study does not explore Senecan tragedy.\textsuperscript{153} My analysis in this section will take the next step.

\textit{Hercules Furens}

\textit{Hercules Furens} begins with the goddess Juno seething in a state of anger and resentment. She is bitter that so many of the children Jupiter has sired outside of their marriage have received the honor of being placed into the heavens as constellations. Juno is aware that Jupiter’s son Hercules is also destined to be immortalized in this way, having has completed the series of daunting labors that she imposed upon him. With Hercules now making his return to his home in Thebes, Juno concludes that the only way that she might still overcome Hercules is to turn him against himself: \textit{Quaeris Alcidae parem? / Nemo est nisi ipse; bella iam secum gerat} (Do you seek a match for Hercules? / There is none but himself; now he must war with himself. 84-85). Hercules’ “war with himself” comes in the form of madness set in motion by Juno.

\textsuperscript{152} De Caprariis 1971.
\textsuperscript{153} Stok 1996: 2364-2371.
The process of inciting madness in Hercules begins with Juno summoning the Furies, the chthonic deities of vengeance. She encourages them to become riled up so that they can inflict their frenzy upon Hercules:

In Junicus, attendants of Dis, having been aroused,
shake the blazing pine torch, and let Megaera lead the line of battle,
frightful with snakes, and let her snatch an immense beam from a blazing funeral pyre with her grief-bringing hand.
Go to it, seek punishment for the violation of Styx!
Stir up your heart, let it boil your mind more fiercely than the fire that rages in the furnaces of Aetna;
in order for Hercules to be taken as a captive in mind, stirred up in a great frenzy,
first you must go mad. Juno, why are you not yet raging?
Me, sisters, first overturn me, driven out of my mind, if I am prepared to do something worthy of a step-mother. (100-112)

In Juno’s invocation of the Furies, they are characterized as capable of inflicting madness not only upon Hercules, but also upon Juno herself. They are portrayed as terrifying and difficult to control, both characteristics emphasized by the snakes and fire that surround them. The language of fire is particularly prominent, with mentions of a flaming pine torch
(ardentem...pinum, 100-101), a blazing funeral pyre (rogo flagrante, 103), and the fire of Mount Aetna (ignis Aetnaeis, 106). Fitch observes that madness is often connected with fire imagery in Greek and Latin literature, citing examples from Sophocles’ Electra (887), Virgil’s Aeneid (1.293-296), and other works of Senecan tragedy, including Medea.\textsuperscript{154} Juno also evokes fire imagery in commanding the Furies to “stir up their [their] heart and let it boil [their] mind more fiercely” (concutite pectus, acrior mentem excoquat, 105).\textsuperscript{155} The image of the pectus “boiling” the mens and thus causing it to seethe suggests a physical origin for the Furies’ madness.

Although Celsus’ descriptions of madness do not feature language of fire or boiling, we might compare the madness in the above passage with Celsus’ phrenesis, both because it starts with fever, and because it is acute. The Furies are being called upon to enter into a short-term state of madness so that they can inflict madness upon Hercules, whose madness in turn also lasts for only a short period of time. Seneca’s description, however, does not feature vocabulary reminiscent of Celsus’ description of phrenesis.

The Furies’ uncontrollable and destructive nature is also emphasized through the passage’s fire imagery.\textsuperscript{156} Indeed, the Furies are depicted not only as capable of driving others into a state of madness, but also as personifications of madness themselves. Their connotations of madness are repeatedly conveyed with the language of furor (furit, 106; furore, 108; furis, 109),

\textsuperscript{154}Fitch 1987: 151. Fitch also notes connections between madness and Mount Aetna. (154)
\textsuperscript{155}Due to singular forms of pectus and mentem, there has been some debate concerning whose pectus and mens are to be shaken up. Some translations indicate that the Furies must make Hercules’ heart “boil” his mind, while other translations, such as Fitch’s, suggest that the Furies must make their own heart boil their own mind. I follow Fitch, who points out that this line seems to not to be “introducing a new idea, but rather confirming and explaining the preceding lines…” (Fitch 1987: 153)
\textsuperscript{156}Staley has argued that the figures of Juno and the Furies “appealed to Seneca as images of furor because in them madness resumes the monstrous aspect of which Greek tragedy largely deprives it.” (Staley 2010: 99)
which plays a significant role not just here but throughout the tragedy. In this passage, Juno describes the great power of *furor* and how it can cause one’s mind to be “taken captive” (*animum captus*, 107), a phrase which implies a loss of reason. Seneca does not specifically refer to the mind being “taken captive” in his prose works, but he does suggest that *furor* has the tendency to deprive people of reason. In *Epistula 94*, Seneca states that *furor* renders people incapable of comprehending advice\(^{157}\), and in *De Ira* he relates how *furor* completely overcame the mind of Ajax and eventually led to his death.\(^ {158}\) Across these works, *furor* is consistently presented as a form of madness that deprives people of the ability to reason.

In addition to using language of *furor*, Juno also employs language of *insania*. Juno asserts that the Furies must first drive themselves mad (*vobis prius / insaniendum est*, 109-110), and then, just a line and a half later, asks herself why she, too, has not entered into such a state (*Juno, cur nondum furis?* 110). Here, the verbs *insanire* and *furere* are used with little semantic distinction, paralleling the close association that exists between *insania* and *furor* in Senecan prose.\(^ {159}\) Then, when Juno asks the Furies to drive her into a state of madness, she characterizes *furor* as a state in which one is driven out of one’s mind (*mente deiectam mea*, 109). This phrase reminds one of the term *dementia*—literally, “being out of (de) one’s mind (*mens*)”, which also appears repeatedly in Senecan prose. Later in *Hercules Furens*, as we will

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\(^{157}\) *Si quis furioso praecepta det quomodo loqui debeat, quomodo procedere, quomodo in publico se gerere, quomodo in privato, erit ipso quem monebit insanio: [si] bilis nigra curanda est et ipsa furoris causa removenda.* (Ep. 94.17)

\(^{158}\) *Multi itaque continuaverunt irae furorem nec quam expulerant mentem umquam receperunt: Aiacem in mortem egit furor, in furorem ira.* (De Ira 2.36.5)

\(^{159}\) See Ep. 83.18; Ep. 94.17; *De Ira* 1.13.3; 2.36.4-5; and *Naturales Quaestiones* 6.25.
see, Seneca uses a similarly constructed adjective, *amens* (1021, 1033), which also literally suggests “being out of one’s mind”. In this way, Seneca characterizes *furor* as an absence of *mens*. At the same time, “being out of one’s mind” is a rather generic formulation of madness, and there are no other mental or physical symptoms mentioned in the passage. Juno thus describes a highly generic form of madness, conveyed by various terms which are not strongly differentiated in sense.

Juno’s invocation of the Furies also raises interesting questions pertaining to the causation of madness. Although a goddess herself, Juno is apparently incapable of effecting madness either in others or in herself. She requires the Furies to bring about the sort of madness she wishes to instigate. In this way, it is suggested that *furor* / *insania* requires an external source or cause—an idea that differs from representations of *furor* and *insania* in Senecan prose. Ajax’s *furor*, for example, is said to originate from his own *ira*, and drunkenness is referred to as *insania voluntaria*. In both cases, the individual is held responsible for their own *furor* or *insania*. Seneca does describe a divinely-inspired (*instinctuque sacro*) form of madness in *De Tranquillitate Animi*, but the *ingenium* associated with this form of madness is certainly not an element of the madness brought on by the Furies in *Hercules Furens*. Thus, it appears that causation is not very important to how Seneca uses vocabulary of madness. This differs from what we find in Celsus, who describes causation as an important way to distinguish between various forms of *insania*. For instance, his first form of *insania* Celsus is said to be caused by

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160 *De Ira* 2.36.5.
161 Ep. 83.18.
162 *De Tranquillitate Animi* 17.9-11.
fever, his second form of *insania* is caused by black bile, and his third form of *insania* is caused either by one’s own mind, or by external visions. Additionally, he specifies that *delirium*, another type of madness, is caused by fear.

Whereas Juno’s invocation of the Furies strongly suggests that they are needed to bring about madness in Hercules, the rest of the play deemphasizes the element of divine causation. There is an element of paradox in the fact that Hercules requires an external force to bring him into a state of *furor*, since his own well-established identity is in many ways shaped and defined by *furor*. I will explain this point further in the following pages. The cause of Hercules’ madness has, in fact, been called “the most disputed problem in the scholarship of *Hercules Furens*”\(^{163}\), and the paradox just described lies at the heart of this problem. Fitch has persuasively argued that Hercules’ madness actually has “two levels of motivation: one divine and the other human, or one mythological and the other psychological.”\(^ {164}\) In other words, Hercules’ madness is caused by two different, but non-mutually exclusive factors, and I would argue that this is reflected in the structure of the play. The dual causes of Hercules’ madness never interfere with each other, as the play moves from its initial focus on role that Juno and the Furies play in instigating his madness to exploring how Hercules’ madness is caused by his own identity. In contrast, Celsus never suggests that an illness, “mental” or otherwise, can have more than one cause (although he does suggest that some conditions occur *sine causa*, as noted in Chapter 2).

\(^{163}\) Shelton 1978: 58. Here Shelton provides a thorough list of scholarship on the issue.

\(^{164}\) In his discussion of this matter, Fitch uses the term “double motivation” (Fitch 1987: 32), a phrase which suggests that Hercules’ madness is instigated by a divine force, but at the same time his own responsibility. On this point, see also Littlewood 2004: 84, 119; Billberck 2014: 430.
When the play depicts the actual onset of Hercules’ madness, there is certainly more focus placed upon Hercules’ identity and how it relates to the madness he is beginning to experience. This state of madness comes about after he has brought the dog Cerberus back from the underworld to complete his final labor, and then returned to Thebes and killed Lycus, the usurper of the city’s throne. After this killing, Hercules prepares to make sacrifices to the gods in the fourth act of the play, but he falls into a state of delusion. It is in this state that he mistakes his wife and three children for family members of Lycus, and murders them one by one. Hercules describes the onset of his madness, and his father Amphitryon then reacts:

**Hercules:**

**Amphitryon:**
Quod subitum hoc malum est?
Quo, nate, vultus huc et huc acres refers acieque falsum turbida caelum vides?

¹⁶⁵ Here, my quotation of the Latin (*rutilat*) departs from the Oxford Classical text (*rutilam*), following a reading strongly endorsed by Fitch. (see Fitch 1987: 365-366)
Hercules: What is this? Shadows enclose
the middle of the day. Phoebus proceeds,
his face darkened without a cloud. Who pursues daylight and drives it back
to where it rose? From where does this unknown night
rear its black head? From where do so many stars fill the heavens
during the day? Behold, my first labor, the lion,
gleams in a not-too-small part of the sky.
He boils all over in anger and prepares to bite.
Soon he will snatch up some star: he stands
threatening with his huge maws as he exhales flames and glows red,
tossing the mane on his neck, and in a single bound he will leap over
whatever harsh autumn or chilly winter carries back
in its icy path, and he will pursue
and break the neck of the bull of spring.

Amphitryon: What is this sudden misfortune?
Why, son, do you turn your gaze sharply here and there
and, with disturbed vision, see a false heaven? (939-954)

Disturbed vision and the perception of a false reality are the first discernible signs that Hercules
is in the grip of madness¹⁶⁶, and this is highlighted by the synchysis in Amphitryon’s remark
(acieque falsum turbida caelum). As we can recall, the perception of imagines is a key symptom
of one of the types of Celsus’ third form of insania (3.18.19.4-6). Celsus states that Ajax and
Orestes, as they have been described by poets, exemplify this type of madness, and now in
Seneca’s play we find another mythological figure whose madness is strongly tied to the
perception of visions. Even though the word imago does not occur here or elsewhere in the
play, the way in which Hercules’ experience is described is highly analogous to Celsus’
descriptions of imagines. We can also recall that Celsus associates imagines with phrenesis, his

¹⁶⁶ Littlewood and Rosenmeyer also state that these visions are the initial signs of Hercules’ madness. (Littlewood
2004: 118; Rosenmeyer 1989: 143, 153.)
first form of *insania*. There, he states that the perception of *imagines* indicate that the mind has been completely overtaken (3.18.3-4). Similarly, in Seneca’s play Hercules’ perception of “visions” serve as an obvious sign, and in fact the primary sign that he is in a state of madness. Following the above passage, Hercules continues to describe his visions, and then Amphitryon immediately describes Hercules’ state of mind as *caecus furor* (blind rage, 991). He then goes on to explain how Hercules strung his bow and unknowingly shot at his own family (992-995). Whereas Celsus associates visions with *insania*, here Amphitryon is suggesting that Hercules’ visions are an indicator of *furor*.

Even though his visions are strange and appear quite suddenly, Hercules is convinced that they are real, as reflected in his use of exclusively indicative verbs, and no subjunctives or expressions like *videtur*. Yet Hercules’ speech also contains language that suggests an image of obscurity and confusion (*tenebrae*, 940; *obscuro*, 940; *ignota*, 943), conveying that, even if Hercules himself is unaware of the fact, his perceptions are shadowy, impaired impressions of reality. Amphitryon’s response questions the veracity of Hercules’ perceptions by directly asking him why he perceives as a “false heaven” (*falsum...caelum*, 954). As noted above, Amphitryon also characterizes Hercules’ condition as a “blind madness” (*caecus...furor*, 991), and the chorus later uses language of blindness as well, describing Hercules’ acts of murder as a “blind error” (*error caecus*, 1096). All of this language of blindness and concealment has an element of irony, since the passage places so much emphasis on what Hercules says he is actually seeing. This element of irony draws further attention to the false nature of Hercules’ perceptions, and more generally his lack of self-awareness. Seneca also associates *furor* with
blindness in *Thyestes* (*caecus furor*, 27); this use similarly suggests that the entire house of Tantalus is blind and lacks awareness.\textsuperscript{167} In *Oedipus*, *caecus Furor* (590) is one of the personified forms of illness plaguing the city of Thebes, and this phrase also resonates with Oedipus’ later, literal act of blinding himself.\textsuperscript{168} There are numerous references to blindness in Senecan prose, but they are never connected with *furor*, *insania*, or other terms having the sense of “madness”. Celsus describes several conditions that can lead to blindness if left untreated\textsuperscript{169}, using vocabulary such as *caecus*, *obcaeco*, and *excaecatus*\textsuperscript{170}, but he never links blindness with madness. Whereas Seneca’s poetic tragedies repeatedly suggest that *furor* is a form of blindness, neither Seneca’s prose works nor Celsus’s *De Medicina* associate literal blindness with *furor* or other forms of madness. The language of obscurity and confusion present in Hercules’ speech (*tenebrae*, 940; *obscuro*, 940; *ignota*, 943) highlights not only the delusional aspect of his perceptions, but also their paradoxical nature. Several of Hercules’ observations describe an inversion or rejection of the natural order: darkness comes about in the middle of the day (939-940), the face of the sun (*Phoebus*) is “darkened without a cloud” (*obscuro... / sine nube vultu*, 940-941), and the sun reverts course (941-942), causing stars

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{167} See Boyle 2011: 250.
  \item \textsuperscript{168} The vocabulary of *furor* makes multiple appearances in the description of Oedipus’ self-blinding (cf. *furit* 957, 970).
  \item \textsuperscript{169} These conditions include *proptosis* (6.6.8g-9c), *phthiriasi* (6.6.15), *mydriasis* (6.6.37), and *hypochysis*, or cataracts (6.6.35). Quite impressively, Celsus discusses a possible surgical treatment for the latter condition. (7.7.14) For a discussion of some of these conditions, see Trentin 2013: 96.
  \item \textsuperscript{170} *caecus* (4.1.8.7; 4.21.1.2); *obcaecare/obcaecatus/occaecare/occaecatus* (6.6.37b.3; 8.4.1.2; 8.4.7.7); *excaecatus* (7.7.15g.5)
\end{itemize}
appear during the day (943-944). Like Oedipus’ act of self-blinding, Hercules’ own form of blindness is associated with the toppling and reversal of natural order (cf. Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda, Oedipus 943). The celestial confusion he perceives is a manifestation of his own mad, confused mind. This is evident Hercules’ references to the Nemean lion, the beast he had subdued long ago to complete his first labor. Like Hercules, the lion is boiling up in anger (iraque totus fervet, 956), overstepping its bounds, and becoming wild and uncontrollable. All of these actions apply to Hercules in this scene, and in this sense his visions are not entirely false. The lion is spreading violent disorder in the heavens, and Hercules is about to carry out mad carnage and introduce disorder into his own home. Hercules is confused by the sight of the lion, since he had subdued this beast long ago; this brings him back to his first labor, perhaps suggesting to his deluded mind that his labors have been for naught, or even that he must restart them from the beginning. His perception of the lion and the various manifestations of cosmic disorder help trigger the furor that is constantly lurking near the surface of his mind. All this is in stark contrast with the tone at the beginning of this speech, when Hercules is celebrating the order and safety he has finally brought about for the world (iuuss in lucem extuli / arcana mundi, 596-597). These thoughts turn out to be ironic misunderstandings of reality, immediately preceding his visual misperceptions.

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171 This recalls the sun’s reversal of course in Thyestes (802-804; see Chapter 3), which occurs before terrible violence is carried out in Thyestes’ own home. In both that passage from Thyestes and the passage from Hercules Furens, the sun’s reversal of course is marked by language of concealment.
172 This verse is also discussed in Chapter 2.
173 Fitch also notes connections between Hercules’ actions and the perceived actions of the Nemean lion. (Fitch 1987: 364-365)
174 As Fitch states, “the picture of disorder in the heavens reestablishes the interplay between the individual and the universe...” (Fitch 1987: 29)
Even after Hercules finishes wreaking his carnage and becomes unconscious, he continues to be affected by disturbing visions (somnia). The chorus observes that “he turns over cruel dreams in his wild heart” (saeva feroci corde volutat / somnia, 1083-1084). How the chorus has knowledge of Hercules’ “cruel dreams” is not entirely clear — this knowledge may be explained as a dramatic device, or it is possible that the chorus is inferring that his dreams are cruel based upon the restless movement he continues to display (1085-1088). Kohn is one scholar who has noted that the false nature of Hercules’ perceptions in this scene — while he is both awake and asleep — give rise to many dramaturgical uncertainties. Kohn adds that the sense of uncertainty associated with these visions contributes to unsettling nature of the entire scene, which together “reinforce the central theme [that] Hercules is mad and not in control of his senses.”

The way in which Hercules falls under the spell of false perceptions recalls the sensory confusion that Thyestes experiences before he realizes that he has consumed his own children. In both situations, acts of violence against one’s own children are associated with — and enabled by — a breakdown of the sensory experience.

In focusing on Hercules’ “visions”, Seneca presents the onset of Hercules’ madness rather differently than Euripides’ Hercules. Euripides’ play initially devotes attention to describing Hercules’ physical symptoms (especially his revolving, bloodshot eyes and frothing at the mouth), but in Seneca’s play Hercules’ physical condition is hardly addressed until his madness has begun to subside. Fitch points out that visions and hallucinations are frequently

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176 Fitch has also noted this difference. (Fitch 1987: 363)
177 See Euripides’ Heracles 930-935.
identified as symptoms of madness by Greek writers on medicine such as Hippocrates and Aretaeus, but those symptoms are not emphasized in Euripides’ portrayal of Hercules’ madness. It is also a bit surprising that Fitch only brings up Greek authors here, not mentioning Celsus or any other Latin writer who discusses *imagines*.

In both Celsus and Senecan tragedy, then, visual hallucinations are a defining sign of madness. In his discussion of hallucinations in Greek tragedy, Most observes that tragic hallucinations are usually visual in nature (as opposed to being auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory). This does not correspond to the “supposed prevalence of auditory rather than visual hallucinations” noted by modern researchers in the field of psychology. Of course, this does not mean that visual hallucinations were more common than other kinds of hallucinations in Greco-Roman antiquity. In any case, Most considers the prevalence of visual hallucinations in Greek tragedy to be a reflection of the fact that these plays were written with visual performance in mind. Seneca’s tragedies, on the other hand, may not have ever been intended for theatrical performance, but they nonetheless assume the form of being staged performances, and one can find a similarly strong visual emphasis in these plays. At the same time, Seneca’s plays show an interest in exploring other senses, as well as the mixing of the senses, as noted in the previous chapter’s discussion of *Thyestes* (cf. 943-969; 1064). The role

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179 Most goes on to state that “it requires only a little reflection to realize that other forms of madness cannot easily be staged so effectively as visual hallucinations can. For example, how is a dramatic character supposed to convey voices?” (Most 2013: 404, see also 405)
180 Harris 2013: 17. For further discussion of hallucinations in various Greek and Latin texts, see Harris 2013: 285-306.
of the senses and sensory experiences in both Greek and Roman tragedy are topics that would benefit from further scholarly discussion, and we might be able to gain more insight into these topics by drawing comparisons with how sensory experiences are understood and described by authors like Hippocrates and Celsus. This is an area of inquiry that cannot be pursued further here, but one that I would like to explore more in depth in future studies.

Besides the Nemean lion, Hercules relates several other specific visions to Amphitryon. These include his perception that he has been summoned to the heavens by all the gods, except for one unnamed goddess (but presumably Juno), who denies him entry (961-964). Denied such access, Hercules declares his plan to lead the Titans (whom he also describes as furentes) in a rebellion against the gods (967-973). He then relates his perception that the Giants are armed and ready to attack the heavens (976-981) and that he is being threatened by the Fury Tisiphone (982-986). Finally, he perceives Lycus’ children hiding from him (987-991), although these are in fact his own children. Taken together, his visions are extremely violent in nature, and this, I would argue, offers some insight into Hercules’ psyche and Seneca’s portrayal of the causes of his furor.

There have been various interpretations of Hercules’ visions, and how they relate to his identity. Fitch takes a psychological perspective, stating that Hercules’ “series of hallucinations powerfully suggests the fluctuations of a distraught mind” and that “the various hallucinations result from anxieties and conflicts present whether at a conscious or subconscious level, in his
sane mind.” Fitch does not specify what Hercules’ anxieties might be, but it is evident that, even though he has completed his labors, he continues to be consumed with concern about maintaining order in the world and the universe more generally. He directly expresses these concerns in the prayer he makes immediately before the onset of his visions (cf. 926-939). Even though he is returning home, Hercules is not yet prepared to rest and cannot set his mind at ease. Having just returned from the underworld after completing a series of intense labors, his mind is still bent toward violence and furor. In this sense, Seneca’s portrayal of Hercules’ return home is a psychologically realistic one. In the mythic narratives about his life, Hercules deals constantly with dangers and disposes of them with violence. During this past, Hercules’ deeply-rooted furor serves him well, but it now inhibits his ability to understand the present reality. Hercules is conditioned to identify and react to the slightest danger—and this scene shows that he is in fact overconditioned, since he perceives dangers that do not actually exist. This speaks to the thin line between Hercules’ furor and sanitas; as Owen puts it, “his madness is merely an extension of his sanity.” Hercules’ furor is thus constantly threatening to emerge, and this may be why we do not find the progression from ira to furor that Seneca speaks of in his De Ira (cf. 2.36.4-5). Hercules skips the step of ira, with furor emerging full-blown.

Fitch 1987: 28-29. Fitch goes on to observe that Hercules’ hallucinations reflect the play’s broader interest in exploring “the continuity between the sane and insane mind.” (Fitch 1987: 30)

Owen 1968: 305; see also 304.
These interpretations analyze Hercules madness and perceptions through a psychological lens, connecting them with his personality and mythic narratives of his life.\footnote{Konstan comments on how this sort of interpretation has been applied to the Herakles of Euripides’ play: “ever since Wilamowitz, some have seen Heracles’ madness as a consequence of his own nature or actions; most recently, for example, Robert Emmet Meagher states that ‘Lyssa is merely a prop, an empty mask, as it were. ... [Herakles’] domestic violence is simply an extension of his martial savagery.’” (Konstan 2013: 433-434) Although Konstan is commenting on Euripides’ play, the same basic idea applies to Seneca’s representation of Hercules (if we replace his reference to Lyssa with Juno).} This lens aids in the understanding of Hercules’ \textit{furor} and how it shapes and defines his identity. Other lenses of interpretation offer additional insight into Seneca’s representation of Hercules’ madness. Scholars such as Pigeaud and Toohey have looked at Hercules’ madness from a more medically-oriented perspective, attempting to analyze the causes and nature of Hercules’ condition based upon the physical symptoms that are described. Hercules’ symptoms are related almost entirely by Amphitryon, who first observes that Hercules terrifies his children with an “inflamed expression” (\textit{igneo vultu}, 1022) as he is committing the murders. This recalls the fire imagery that Juno uses when addressing Furies in the opening scene of the play (cf. \textit{ignis Aetnaeis furit}, 106), asking them to infect themselves and her with a state of madness. This also recalls the feverish aspect of Celsus’ \textit{phrenesis} (3.18.17.1-3), even though Celsus does not make specific reference to fire. Like \textit{phrenesis}, Hercules’ bout of madness in the play is short-lasting, although his enduring identity is very much defined by his \textit{furor}.

After Hercules carries out the murders, Amphitryon observes other symptoms that he is exhibiting:

\begin{quote}
Quid hoc est? Errat acies luminum
visusque maeror hebetat an video Herculis
\end{quote}
manus trementes? Vultus in somnum cadit
et fessa cervix capite summisso labat;
flexo genu iam totus ad terram ruit,
ult caesa silvis ornus aut portum mari
datura moles. Vivis an leto dedit
idem tuos qui misit ad mortem furor?
Sopor est: reciprocos spiritus motus agit.
Detur quieti tempus, ut somno gravis
vis victa morbi pectus oppressum levet.
Removete, famuli, tela, ne repetat furens.

What is this? Does my vision miss the mark,
and does grief dull my sight, or do I really see
the hands of Hercules trembling? His expression is fading into sleep
and his weary neck falls with his sinking head;
now with bent knee his whole body tumbles onto the ground,
as a wild ash tree cut down in the forest, or as a mass [put into] the sea
in order to create a mole. Are you living, or are you killed
by the same madness that sent your family to death?
It is a deep sleep: his breath brings movement up and down.
Let there be time for rest, so that the strength of the illness,
having been overcome by heavy sleep, may alleviate his spirit.
Remove the weapons, slaves, lest he strike again in madness. (1042-1053)

It is noteworthy that Amphitryon cries out quid hoc est? (1042) when he first starts observing
these symptoms—this is the almost same phrase that Hercules utters when he begins to
perceive his visions (quid hoc? 976). In both contexts the phrase marks a transition to
astonishing visual observations. Though they are based in reality, Amphitryon actually doubts
his own perceptions and the condition of his own senses (errat acies luminum / visusque
maeror hebetat, 1042-1043), expressing a skepticism that underscores his own sanity, which is
in contrast with Hercules’ ready acceptance of his fantastical visions. He finds it difficult to
believe that Hercules’ hands are trembling (manus trementes, 1044); this is a jarring image,
since Hercules is so known for being dextrous and coordinated, especially with his weapons. Amphitryon also informs us that Hercules falls into such a deep sleep (\textit{vultus in somnum cadit, 1044; sopor, 1050; somno gravis, 1051}) that it is at first not clear whether he is alive or dead (1048-1049). This ambiguity mirrors the unknown state of Hercules prior to his return home, as own family is uncertain whether he is alive or dead.\footnote{Earlier in the play, Megara wonders: even if [Hercules] were still alive, how he could return from the underworld? \textit{(Demersus ac defossus et toto insuper / oppressus orbe quam viam ad superos habet? 317-318)}} These symptoms thus not only characterize Hercules’ present condition, but also resonate in a broader sense with his situation in the context of the play. Amphitryon concludes that Hercules is just sleeping and not actually dead based upon the slight movement of his chest as he breathes (\textit{reciprocis spiritus motus agit, 1050}). Amphitryon is so struck by the sight of Hercules overcome by this death-like sleep that he likens it to two grandiose images: a felled wild ash tree (\textit{caesa silvis ornus, 1047}) and a mass of masonry dropped into the sea for the purpose of constructing a mole (\textit{portum mari / datura moles, 1047-1048}). These comparisons, which are modeled upon similes in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}\footnote{Fitch has noted that language used in these similes is closely modeled upon similes employed by Virgil: the former simile is used to describe the fall of Troy (\textit{Aeneid 2.636}), and the latter is used to describe the collapse of the giant Bitias (\textit{Aeneid 9.71}). (Fitch 1987: 389)}, evoke the larger-than-life world of epic, a context which sharply contrasts with the image of a sick person falling asleep, thus adding to the paradoxical nature of the scene. Despite all of this, Amphitryon still expresses concern about Hercules’ potential for destruction, referring to him as \textit{furens} even as he is unconscious and stricken by debilitating symptoms. The use of this descriptor at the very end of Amphitryon’s speech (and in fact at the very end of the
scene, immediately preceding the beginning of the fourth choral ode), punctuates the idea that
furor is ultimately inextricable from Hercules’ identity.

Amphitryon suspects that sleep might alleviate Hercules’ madness (1051), and he turns out
to be right, as Hercules no longer exhibits any active symptoms after awakening. Fitch
compares this to how sleep seemingly helps Orestes return to sanity in Euripides’ Orestes. He
also compares the situation to a passage in Celsus:\(^{186}\):

*Omnibus vero sic affectis somnus et difficilis et praecipue necessarius est: sub hoc enim plerique
sanescunt.*

But certainly for all affected in such a way sleep is both difficult and especially needed: for
under it many regain their senses. (3.18.12.1-3)

The form of madness that Celsus is discussing in this context is *phrenesis*, although this is not
noted or commented on by Fitch. Since Celsus considers *phrenesis* be a short-lasting form of
*insania*, it is not surprising that he imagines sleep would help it run its course. This suggests
another similarity between Celsus’ description of *phrenesis* and Seneca’s representation of
Hercules’ madness.

Some of Hercules’ symptoms also correspond to conceptualizations of epilepsy (i.e. *morbus
comitialis* or *comitiale vitium*) in Latin literature, as has been noted by Pigeaud.\(^{187}\) We can
recall that the symptoms Celsus associates with *morbus comitialis* include suddenly losing one’s
wits (*exanimat*), spasms (*nervi distenduntur*), suddenly falling down (*subito concidit*), entering

\(^{186}\) Fitch 1987: 390. The translation of the passage is mine.

\(^{187}\) Pigeaud 1981: 411-413. As Grmek notes, epilepsy was in fact also known as “Heracles’ disease” in antiquity.
(Grmek 1991: 41).
into a deep sleep (*sopor tantum est*), and then returning to one’s self (*ad se redit*). Seneca does not use the same language as Celsus, but the symptoms identified by Celsus correspond to Hercules’ experience in Seneca’s play. Celsus does mention other symptoms which Seneca does not attribute to Hercules, such as foaming at the mouth (*ex ore spumae moventur*) and revolving eyes (*oculi vertuntur*), although those symptoms are not present in Euripides’ *Herakles*. Celsus’ descriptions of *morbus comitialis* also lack some of the symptoms demonstrated by Hercules in Seneca’s play. Perhaps most notably, Celsus does not associate *morbus comitialis* with the perception of visions, nor does he suggest that one could carry out coordinated acts of violence (as Hercules does) while under an attack of the condition. To the contrary, Celsus associates *morbus comitialis* with movements that are uncoordinated and/or involuntary.

There are thus some similarities between Celsus’ description of *morbus comitialis* and Seneca’s depiction of Hercules’ madness, as well as some significant differences. These differences remind us of very different aims of each author. Seneca’s tragedy is not, as we see in Celsus’ text, aiming to produce a diagnosis or prognosis by means of a review of symptoms, but instead describes illness for its own strategies of characterization and rhetorical effects, drawing upon, selecting, combining and recombining elements and language from various sources of poetry and prose. Seneca’s tragedy also departs from Celsus’ approach in introducing a divine component in the causation of Hercules’ condition. The idea that epilepsy

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188 Cf. 3.23.1.1-4; 4.27.1a.1-8; 4.27.1b.10-11.
189 I am interpreting the spasms (*nervi distenduntur*) mentioned by Celsus to be comparable to the trembling of Hercules’ hands (*manus trementes*).
was caused by the gods was popular in antiquity, and although Celsus does not address this belief specifically, it is addressed—and strongly criticized—in some earlier works of medical prose, such as the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Seneca also comments on *comitiale vitium* and its symptoms in Book 3 of *De Ira* (3.10.3.1-4.1). Some of the symptoms described there are similar to symptoms seen with Hercules, such as twitching of the tendons (*nervorumque trepidatio*) and the loss of reason (*alienat animos*). Seneca also refers to memory loss (*memoria sublabitur*) in *De Ira*, a symptom which Hercules exhibits when he awakens and does not know where he is and has no recollection of the murders he has just carried out (cf. 1138-1159). Other symptoms that Seneca associates with *comitiale vitium*, however, do not correspond to Hercules’ condition, such as stiffness (*rigoremque*) and a lack of warmth (*calor summa deseruit; frigus*). In *De Ira*, Seneca also relates that people affected by *comitiale vitium* are able to detect attacks of their own condition coming on, but there is no indication that Hercules has any foresight of his bout of madness. Another symptom that Seneca mentions in *De Ira* is *incertum lumen* (unclear sight), which may suggest blurry vision. This symptom is not explained very specifically, making it difficult to compare with Hercules’ experience. Hercules’ sight is affected in that he sees things that those with normal (i.e. clear) vision do not see, but his vision does not seem blurry; to the contrary, he perceives his false visions (or at least relates what he is seeing) rather vividly. Based on these comparisons, it does not appear that Seneca’s representation of Hercules’ condition was strongly influenced by his understanding of *comitiale vitium* as described in *De Ira*. At the same time, it is possible that Seneca’s awareness of the
symptoms associated with this condition and with other medical conditions may have enabled him to portray Hercules’ condition and his symptoms in a more medically-focused way.

It is also important to note that Seneca does not use terms such as *insania*, *furor*, *dementia*, or other terms suggesting madness during his description of *comitiale vitium* in *De Ira*. The closest he comes to connecting *comitiale vitium* with “madness” when he states that it may deprive one of reason (*alienat animos*). When describing Hercules’ “madness”, on the other hand, Seneca uses various pieces of vocabulary, instead of using just one specific term. In this way, Hercules’ madness, like Hercules’ himself, is larger-than-life and transcends simple categorization, having some aspects that resemble the description of *comitiale vitium* in *De Ira*, other aspects that recall various forms of *insania* described by Celsus, and yet other aspects that seem totally unique to Hercules himself.

Ultimately it is impossible to find an exact correspondence between Seneca’s representation of Hercules’ madness and any condition identified by Celsus. But I would argue that Seneca’s representation bears the closest similarity to Celsus’ third form of *insania*, a condition in which able-bodied individuals (*robusti corporis*, 3.18.19.2-3) may be misled by visions. As previously noted, Celsus associates these visions with other mythological figures (Ajax and Orestes), making it all the more tempting to find parallels with Hercules’ condition. This is, in fact, the only time that Celsus mentions a mythological figure in all of *De Medicina*.190

Nevertheless, connecting this form of *insania* with Seneca’s depiction of Hercules is still

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190 The word *Hercules* occurs four times in *De Medicina*, but in each instance it is used with exclamatory force (on the use of the word *Hercules* as an interjection expressing emphasis or strong feeling, see Glare 2012: s.v. *hercle, ercle, hercule*). The mythological figure Hercules is not mentioned in *De Medicina*.
problematic, especially since Celsus says that it is the most long-lasting form of madness
(*tertium genus insaniae ex his longissimum*, 3.18.19.1) Hercules, on the other hand, perceives
visions and exhibits symptoms of madness for only a single act of Seneca’s play.

In Greek and Latin literature, the madness in mythological figures is also sometimes
connected with the condition known in Greek as λύσσα and in Latin as *rabies*. Both the Greek
and Latin terms can refer to a disease passed on by animals (often dogs), as well as “frenzy” or
“madness” (similar in this sense to *furor* and *insania*).\(^{191}\) Auvray has suggested that *rabies* is
form of madness “spécifique au héros”, particularly in Greek and Roman tragedies.\(^{192}\) It is
striking, then, that Seneca does not associate the word *rabies*, or the related words *rabiosus*
and *rabere*, with Hercules or his condition in *Hercules Furens*.\(^{193}\) As noted earlier, Seneca uses
the adjective *rabidus* in the opening lines of *De Ira* when he is describing the “raving” nature of
anger (1.1.4). Seneca and Celsus also use *rabidus* or *rabidosus* in reference to diseased dogs,
with the usage of both authors emphasizing the dogs’ uncontrollability and potential to harm
human beings. Given Hercules’ penchant for violence and the brutality that he commits against
his own family—and the fact that it is foreshadowed by animal imagery involving the Nemean
lion—it is a bit surprising that Seneca does not use the vocabulary of *rabies* to characterize
Hercules’ condition. In this respect his play differs from Euripides’ *Heracles*, where the goddess
Λύσσα, a personification of madness, appears shortly before Heracles goes mad, making the

\(^{191}\) Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie 1996: s.v λύσσα; Glare 2012: s.v. *rabies*.


\(^{193}\) In *Hercules Oetaeus*, Hyllus refers to Hercules’ condition as antiquam ... / rabiem (former madness, 806-807),
but this term is not used in relation to Hercules’ madness in *Hercules Furens*. 
divine cause of Hercules’ madness extremely transparent. In Seneca’s play, there is no character who personifies madness in such an obvious way (the closest may be Hercules himself), and this is another reminder of how the tragedy downplays the gods’ role in causing Hercules’ madness after Juno’s initial speech.

When Hercules is describing his visions, Amphitryon interjects, urging him to come back to reality:

Infandos procul
averte sensus; pectoris sani parum
magni tamen compesce dementem impetum.

Turn those unspeakable notions
far away; suppress the mad attack
of your scarcely sane mind, even though it is great. (973-975)

Amphitryon’s use of language suggests that the attack which is affecting Hercules is “out of its mind” (dementem impetum). Similar language is used by Juno when she is asking to be overcome with madness earlier in the play (mente deiecta mea, 110) so that she can attack Hercules with madness, and now the attack itself is labeled demens. This similarity in language serves as a very subtle reminder of the connection between Juno and Hercules’ present attack of madness. Typically, the words demens and dementia are applied to a person or a condition suffered by a person, as we have seen in our discussion of their usage in Senecan prose and Celsus.194 By applying this adjective to the attack itself, Seneca gives Hercules’ madness a sense of personification, while not actually labeling Hercules himself demens. Amphitryon actually suggests that Hercules’ mind is still just barely sane (pectoris sani parum), making some

194 e.g. Naturales Quaestiones 6.29.3.1; De Medicina 3.18.2.1.1.
distinction between the mad force which is attacking Hercules and the mind of Hercules. Later, the chorus makes a similar distinction, telling Hercules to “drive the maddened waves from your mind” (*pelle insanos fluctus animi*, 1092). This again suggests that Hercules’ mind is under attack by external forces which are mad, without describing Hercules himself as mad.

Just a little later, however, Amphitryon is less equivocal in suggesting that Hercules is out of his mind, when he directly asks him: *Quo tendis amens?* (To what end are you striving, being out of your mind? 1021). The adjective *amens*, which occurs one other time in the play, is etymologically related and morphologically similar to the adjective *demens*. In the other instance of usage, the chorus, similar to Amphitryon, asks Hercules: *Quo pergis amens?* (To what end are you proceeding, being out of your mind? 1033) As these examples suggest, there is not a clear distinction in sense between *amens* and *demens* in this play.

The word *impetum* (975) can refer to a paroxysm or attack of illness, which is the most obvious sense of the word here, but in Latin literature it is more frequently used to refer to a military charge or assault.¹⁹⁵ Both senses of *impetus* are relevant in this context, as Hercules’ attack of illness leads him to make a violent assault upon his family. Celsus uses this word to refer to an attack of illness multiple times, including during his discussion of *phrenesis*: *levatoque accessionis impetus protinus mens redit* (when the attack of the condition is relieved, the mind is restored, 3.18.2.6). In this example we also find the familiar language of *mens*, and the idea that the *mens* is incapacitated by an attack of madness.

¹⁹⁵ Glare 2012: s.v. *impetus*; cf. *De Medicina* 2.15.1.5-2.2.
Fernandez claims that Seneca uses a limited vocabulary to convey Hercules’ madness\textsuperscript{196}, but we have seen that the play uses a variety of words, images, and metaphors to represent his madness. Fernandez is nevertheless correct in singling out \textit{furor} as a word of special significance, and its usage in the play has received a good deal of scholarly attention. Scholars have repeatedly pointed out the word’s decidedly broad semantic range, which is evident in Seneca’s plays\textsuperscript{197} and in Latin literature in general.\textsuperscript{198} The following comments on \textit{furor} will build upon observations made by other scholars concerning the word’s semantic nuances and its significance in the play.

The word \textit{furor}, and the related verb \textit{furere} and adjective \textit{furens}, together are used more than twenty times throughout \textit{Hercules Furens}. These words play a particularly prominent role in the fourth act of the play and in the chorus immediately following that scene. One example comes when Amphitryon is describing Hercules’ infanticides:

\begin{quote}
Dextra precantem rapuit et circa \textit{furens} \\
bis ter rotatum misit…
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
He snatched him, though he was pleading, in his right hand, and being mad, whirled him around two, then three times… (1005-1006)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{196} “En el \textit{Hercules Furens} excepto la expression \textit{dementem impetum} y la palabra \textit{insania} que aparece una sola vez, siempre utilize el término \textit{furor}.” (Fernandez 1973: 307)

\textsuperscript{197} Some studies that address the Seneca’s usage of \textit{furor} are Boyle 1997; Fernandez 1973; Merzlak 1985; Picone 1984; Rosenmeyer 1989.

\textsuperscript{198} One highly influential representation of \textit{furor} occurs in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}, where it is memorably personified (1.294-296). The \textit{Aeneid} also features the recurring theme of Aeneas attempting to resist \textit{furor}, which culminates at the very end of the poem.
Here, Amphitryon uses *furens* to describe Hercules’ violent and irrational state. His irrational *furor* prevents him from recognizing that he is brutally murdering his own child, further reinforcing idea that *furor* is a form of blindness (cf. 991, 1096). A little later, Amphitryon asks Hercules whether he is still alive, or whether *furor* has brought about his demise as well as the demise of his family (*Vivis, an letō dedit / idem tuos qui misit ad mortem furor?* 1048-1049). In asking this, Amphitryon underscores that *furor* is a destructive and uncontrollable force, capable of overcoming even the great Hercules. These examples illustrate that *furor* is not only a form of blindness, but also an inclination to violence, which is of course a defining feature of Hercules himself. Hercules’ proclivity toward violence constantly places him on the precipice of *furor*, which may be useful for vanquishing beasts and monsters, but poses a danger when active within the realm of society. Seneca’s play thus explores the relationship between *furor* and the heroic psyche, and the place of each in human society. While Hercules is incapacitated, Amphitryon asks the household slaves to remove Hercules’ weapons from him, in case Hercules should once again become *furens* (*removete, famuli, tela, ne repetat furens*, 1053). When Hercules wakes up and begins to regain his senses, he quickly recognizes that his weapons have been removed (*Ubi tela? Ubi arcus?* 1153), and he begs Amphitryon to return them to him, but only if his *furor* no longer remains:

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199 Pratt notes that *furens* is “one of the terms used most heavily by the philosophers to denote irrationality.” (Pratt 1983: 117)
200 Littlewood similarly asserts that Seneca’s play seeks to show that “the heroic life is a form of madness.” (Littlewood 1984: 94; see also Picone 1984: 21)
Sana si mens est mihi,  
referte manibus tela; si remanet furor,  
pater, recede: mortis inveniam viam.

If my mind is sound,  
restore my weapons to my hands; if madness remains,  
father, stand back: I shall find a way to death. (1243-1245)

It is very striking that Hercules cannot recognize whether he is still in a state of furor, or whether he now has a sound mind (sana...mens). Hercules’ use of language suggests a diametrical opposition, but the play repeatedly presents the relationship of these states in a much less straightforward way. Here, Hercules cannot tell what state he is in, and asks an external observer, Amphitryon, to offer a diagnosis. Even in a moment of relative calm and self-reflection, Seneca portrays Hercules as a character who straddles the lines between furor and sanitas, and who is not able to tell the difference between the two states. At the same time, even though Hercules is uncertain about the nature of his present condition, he remains aware of the violent potential he possesses when under the active influence of furor.

A little later in his conversation with Amphitryon, Hercules reflects on all that he has lost as a result of his deranged killings. In doing so, he conveys that furor is an integral part of his identity:

...cuncta iam amisi bona,  
mentem arma famam coniugem gnatos manus,  
etiam furorem. Nemo polluto queat  
animo mederi; morte sanandum est scelus.

...now I have lost all good things—  
my mind, weapons, reputation, wife, sons, hands,  
even my madness. No one could remedy a corrupted mind;  
the crime must be corrected with death. (1259-1262)
Hercules regretfully groups madness (\textit{furorem}) with the other “good things” (\textit{bona}) he has lost, which include his weapons, his reputation, and his family. As Fitch observes, the inclusion of \textit{furor} in this list is paradoxical, since it in a large sense responsible for the loss of the other \textit{bona}.\footnote{Fitch 1987: 440.} It is also paradoxical for Hercules to say he has lost his madness, not only because it is a strange thing to lament losing, but also because the events and language of the play suggest that he is a character who cannot escape from \textit{furor}. Indeed, just a few lines earlier, he expresses uncertainty about whether or not he is still in a state of \textit{furor} (1243-1245). While the play presents an episode in which Hercules’ \textit{furor} is particularly active and apparent (what might be called an acute “attack” [\textit{impetum}, 975]), there remains the sense that his \textit{furor} lingers on. In this sense, he is like a person who suffers from \textit{morbus comitialis} in that he continues to have the condition even when it is not presently attacking him. In fact, the word \textit{furor} occurs six times after the attack\footnote{1098; 1134; 1220; 1240; 1244; 1261}, providing a constant reminder of his \textit{furor} and suggesting it has not totally subsided. This also further underscores the sense that \textit{furor} is a condition that affects and defines Hercules over the long-term, and which ultimately cannot be disentangled from his identity. Seneca’s portrayal of Hercules’ \textit{furor} therefore problematizes the dichotomy between acute and chronic forms of illness so frequently drawn by Celsus and other writers of medical prose.

While it is hard to accept Hercules’ assertion that he has lost his \textit{furor}, other possible interpretations could give his words more credence. Since \textit{furor} is so tied to Hercules’ identity
as a hero, he may be implying that he has lost his sense of heroism, and that, more than the furor per se, is perhaps what he is really lamenting. It is also possible that Hercules is still very much under the intense influence of furor, and unable to reason clearly, as in earlier scenes of the play. While the play shows Hercules regaining some self-awareness after his attack, there remains reason to question his level of self-awareness, as discussed above. In this case, even though Hercules claims he has lost his furor; he may actually still be furens, and that very fact would lead him to misunderstand himself and prevent him from seeing the very furor that still possesses him.

Hercules also feels that his mind is corrupted (polluto animo, 1261-1262) and beyond any remedy except for death. This makes an apparent distinction between his animus and his mens (1260), which he says he has lost. Fitch suggests translating mens as “self-possession”, “composure”, and “mental control”\(^\text{203}\), but I have chosen to translate mens as mind (as I have throughout this chapter), because it is in keeping with the paradoxical nature of Hercules remarks. He seems to be saying that his mind has been lost, which recalls the recurring language of demens and amens—but at the same time he seems to be saying that his mind is corrupted. This ambiguity reinforces the idea that Hercules does not totally understand his own mental condition, and that he is, to some degree, still lacking in self-awareness after emerging from his attack of madness.

Perhaps most paradoxical of all is Hercules’ statement that death is the only way to correct or “remedy” for his situation (morte sanandum est scelus). This is, of course, in stark contrast

\(^{203}\) Fitch 1987: 440. Unfortunately, he does not offer a suggestion about how to translate animus in this context.
with Celsus’ work, which always shows mors as negative outcome of illness, and never a remedy and never desirable. It is important to observe that Hercules is literally stating that his crime (scelus), rather than he himself, must be cured by death; this makes his use of the verb sanare all the more striking. This is a verb which often takes a human object, in which case it often has the sense “to cure” (either the body or the mind), rather than “to correct”, as translated above. But Hercules uses it with the abstract noun scelus, which may suggest, even more bleakly, that even if his scelus can be corrected/cured, there is still no hope for him.

The verb sanare also immediately brings to mind related words such as sanus and sanitas. Even though Hercules is claiming that he has lost his furor, he is still implying that he is not sanus, further adding to the sense of paradox and hopelessness. This also speaks to the complicated relationship that the play repeatedly presents between furor and sanitas. There is no diametrical opposition between these states, and the lines between them are often unclear, unlike what we see with Celsus’ specific, well-defined categories of madness.

As we have now seen, furor plays an extremely significant role in Hercules Furens, unlike in De Medicina, where the word appears only three times. To review, Seneca presents Hercules’ furor as both an acute attack of madness that affects him in the fourth act of the play, as well as a chronic, deeply-rooted component of his identity. In both of these aspects, furor is typified by a strong tendency toward unbridled violence. Hercules repeatedly refers to his own condition as furor, and in doing so often invokes elements of paradox which speak to the limitations of his

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204 e.g. 2.8.25.11-13; 5.26.19.3-4; 7.23.1.9-12.
205 Glare 2012: s.v. sanare.
self-awareness. Other terms are used to describe Hercules’ condition as well, including *insanus*, *demens*, and *amens*, and the uses of these words sometimes produce a sense of paradox as well. As a cumulative effect of these repeated instances of paradox, Hercules’ form of madness takes on the impression of being incomprehensible and impossible to treat, as highlighted by some of Hercules’ own remarks. Seneca’s play also suggests that Hercules’ form of madness is beyond comprehension by not giving it a single name or fixed identity. It resembles descriptions of various forms of *insania*, *morbus comitialis/comitiale vitium*, and *rabies* as described by Celsus, but ultimately it cannot be pinned down as any of these conditions, not unlike the plague in *Oedipus*. Hercules’ condition is thus not any one exact form of madness, but simultaneously an amalgam of various forms of madness, drawing upon language and representations of madness from various traditions in poetry and prose, in effect making Hercules’ condition perplexing to himself, other characters, and the audience of the play.

**Medea**

*Medea* opens with the character Medea lamenting how she has been spurned by her husband Jason in favor of a new wife, and seething with a desire to obtain vengeance upon him. In the second act of the play, Medea is wracked with uncertainty about how to exact this vengeance. While contemplating the possibilities, Medea reflects upon on her psychological state:
Incerta vecors mente non sana feror
partes in omnes; unde me ulcisci queam?

Uncertain, mad, with a mind not sound I am tossed
in all directions; where can I derive my revenge from? (123-124)

At this point of the play, Medea is fully aware of her own uncertainty, describing herself as *incerta* and as being pulled in various directions (*feror partes in omnes*). The word *incertus* is used five times in this tragedy and, as we will see, it plays an important role at certain key moments. Medea also describes herself as *vecors*, which can be translated as “mad” or “senseless”, and which also also suggests an outpouring of woe through its etymological connection to *vae* (woe!).

*Vecors*, and the etymologically-related *vesanus*, do not appear in Celsus, perhaps because of their emotional connotations. Celsus' discussions of madness are from a clinical perspective, keeping an emotionally-detached stance as he proceeds to review symptoms in order to aid in the processes of diagnosis and treatment. By contrast, the emotionality of Medea’s speech is evident not only in her choice of words, but also in their arrangement. For example, the asyndetic pairing of *incerta* and *vecors* parallels the disordered state of Medea’s mind as she struggles to formulate a coherent plan of action.

Medea also states that she is tossed about with a mind that is not sound (*mente non sana*). Medea applies the adjectives *incerta* and *vecors* to herself, but *non sana* is applied to her mind. This recalls the subtle distinction Hercules makes between his lost *mens* and his

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206 Glare 2012: s.v. *vecors; vae.*
207 Costa states that *vecors* and *vesanus* are “virtually synonymous.” (Costa 1973: 82)
208 This distinction is not reflected in Fitch’s translation: “perplexed and frenzied and maddened I turn one way and another”. (Fitch 2002: 355)
The phrase non sana raises other interesting questions, such as whether the play suggests any significant distinction between a mind that is non sana, and one that is insana. It is possible that non sana is used instead of insana for metrical reasons, but it is noteworthy that Medea never refers to herself as insana in this play. At one point in the play which I later discuss in more depth, Medea’s nurse uses the verb insanit (383) when comparing Medea to a maenad, but Medea does not use such language to describe her own experience. It seems plausible that the word insana possesses stronger connotations of madness than the phrase non sana (at least to Medea), and therefore, even if Medea knows there is something wrong with her mens, she may not view herself as insana at this early point in the play. This relates to the issue of self-awareness: in the same way that Hercules fails to recognize his false visions, it is possible that Medea is in fact insana, but fails to recognize it or refuses to acknowledge it at this point. Medea is nevertheless at least aware of her own uncertainty at this point. While her self-awareness is at times problematized, I would argue that she retains some degree of self-awareness throughout the entire play.

While Medea refers to her mind as not sound (non sana), she does not characterize herself as “being out of her mind” here or elsewhere in the play. There are, in fact, only two instances in the play employing the language of “being out of one’s mind” (e.g. demens, amens, ex animo, ex mente) in the entire play. In one instance, the nurse refers to Medea as demens (174) as she is informing her of her plans for revenge; in the other instance Medea refers to her demens furor (senseless madness, 930). With the latter phrase, we again see that Medea does not label herself as demens, but rather her furor; this suggests, in this instance, that Medea’s furor is
what is “out of its mind”, and not Medea herself. I will return to this point of usage later in this chapter.

We can gain insight into how Seneca depicts Medea’s madness by drawing comparisons with his representation of Hercules’ madness. We find some important differences, especially the fact that Medea’s madness is in no sense “acute”—that is, she is not overcome by a sudden “attack”, as we see with Hercules. Because Medea is not consumed by a sudden attack of madness, and because her identity is not defined by furor in the same way that Hercules’ identity is, she is able to maintain a greater degree of self-awareness. As seen in the passage above, she is especially aware of her own uncertainty and psychological instability; Hercules, on the other hand, shows little uncertainty and does not question the strange visions he perceives, which enables him to take decisive, violent action. In their respective states of madness, both characters commit shocking acts of violence against their own family members, but Medea’s violence is well planned and consciously executed. Despite these differences in the experiences of Medea and Hercules, we will see that there are significant similarities in the language which is used to convey their madness.

In the third act of the play, the nurse observes Medea and notes her uncertainty, suspecting that she is about to do something rash. Describing Medea’s condition, the nurse likens Medea to a raving maenad, and in doing so uses an abundance of language suggesting madness:

\[\text{Pigeaud similarly observes, “Medée est un personnage qui sait ce qu’il fait...Cela signifie qu’en effet elle connaît et reconnaît ses enfants (par opposition à Héraclès)...” Pigeaud goes on to point out that self-awareness is a key component of Medea’s characterization in various works of Latin literature, quoting a line from Ovid’s Metamorphoses: video meliora proboque / deteriora sequor (I see and consider better things, but I pursue worse things, Metamorphoses 7.20-21). (Pigeaud 1981: 397)}\]
Alumna, celerem quo rapis tectis pedem?

Resiste et iras comprime ac retine impetum.

Incerta qualis entheos gressus tuit
cum iam recepto maenas insanit deo

Pindi nivalis vertice aut Nysae iugis,
talis recursat huc et huc motu effero,
furoris ore signa lymphati gerens.

Flammata facies, spiritum ex alto citat,
proclamat, oculos uberi fletu rigat,
renidet: omnis specimen affectus capit.

Haeret: minatur aestuat queritur gemit.

Quo pondus animi verget? Ubi ponet minas?
Ubi se iste fluctus franget? Exundat furor.

Non facile secum versat aut medium scelus:
se vincet: ivae novimus veteris notas.

Magnum aliquid instat, effe rum immane impium.

Vultum Furoris cerno. Di fallant metum!

Child, to where do you hurry your swift foot from the house?

Halt, contain your anger and hold back your impulse!

Unsettled, as when a maenad, possessed by the god, goes mad,
she takes divinely inspired steps

on the snowy peak of Pindus or the the ridges of Nysa;
in such a way she runs back and forth here and there in wild movement,

wearing the signs of frenzied madness on her face.

Her expression is enflamed, she draws up breath deeply,
she shouts out, she wets her eyes with plentiful weeping,
she smiles again; every type of emotion comes over her.

She hesitates, makes threats, seethes, laments, groans.

Where will the burden of her mind incline itself? Where will she direct her threats?

Where will that wave break itself? Her madness is overflowing;

she is mulling no simple or moderate crime:
she will outdo herself. I recognize the signs of old anger.

Something large is looming: savage, monstrous, wicked.

I detect the face of madness. May the gods prove my fears wrong! (380-396)

At the beginning of this speech, the nurse addresses Medea directly, urging her to restrain her

*irae* (angers) and *impetus* (impulse). As we have seen in *Hercules Furens*, *impetus* can refer to

an act of violence or to an attack of illness, and both senses are again relevant in this context.
The nurse views Medea’s present condition as an “attack”, but in this sense she does not fully understand the prolonged nature of Medea’s *ira*, and the extended planning that goes into her revenge. Nonetheless, Medea’s *ira*, like Hercules’ *furor*, is associated with violence. The nurse is imploring Medea to restrain her *ira*, and the seriousness of her pleading is evident in her use of three imperatives (*resiste*, *comprime*, *retine*). She represents *ira* as a volatile, vengeful force that must be held in check, and this is very much consistent with how Seneca describes *ira* in *De Ira*.\(^{210}\)

There are also many similarities in the symptoms of anger (*notas...rae*, 394; cf. *furoris signa*, 386) identified by the nurse, even if the vocabulary used in the two texts does not exactly correspond: *recursat huc et huc* (cf. *citatus gradus*, *De Ira* 1.3.3.4); *flammata facies* (cf. *minax vultus*, *De Ira* 1.3.3-4; *torva facies*, *De Ira* 1.3.3.4); *spiritum ex alto citat* (cf. *crebra et vehementia acta suspiria*, *De Ira* 1.3.3.5; *spiritus coactus ac stridens*, *De Ira* 1.3.4.4); *proclamat* (*parum explanatis vocibus sermo*, *De Ira* 1.3.4.6).\(^{211}\) Hine suggests that these symptoms of *ira* underscore Medea’s “indecisiveness”\(^{212}\); I would add that this indecisiveness, which is particularly evident in 390-392, finds a parallel in Seneca’s identification of “restless hands” (*inquietae manus*) as a symptom of *ira* in *De Ira* (1.3.3.5). The nurse’s use of language also suggests that there is something animalistic about Medea’s *ira* (*efferum immane*, 395); this resembles the connection that Seneca makes in *De Ira* between *ira* and the behavior of wild

\(^{210}\) Various scholars have commented on the similarity between this passage and sections of *De Ira*. (see Costa 1973: 108; Pigeaud 1981: 398; Pratt 1983: 90; Boyle 2014: 231; Fischer 2014: 754-757)

\(^{211}\) One also finds correspondences between language used in this passage of *De Ira* and language associated with *ira* in Seneca’s *Oedipus* (cf. 919-924; 960-963).

\(^{212}\) Hine 2000: 154.
animals, as well his description of *ira* as *rabidus*.\(^{213}\) This connection is borne out further later in the play, when the chorus compares Medea to a tigress separated from its children (862-865).\(^{214}\)

Robin offers another perspective on the nurse’s description of Phaedra’s symptoms, suggesting that Medea’s condition is comparable to descriptions of “hysteria” in Celsus and Soranus.\(^{215}\) Robin focuses on the idea that works of Greek and Latin literature often represent the female body as “generative of emotional illness”, and as examples she cites the characters Phaedra and Clytemnestra from Seneca’s *Agamemnon*, as well as Seneca’s Medea.\(^{216}\) Robin is persuasive in pointing out that these characters experience similar physical and psychological symptoms, but there does not seem to be a close resemblance between Medea’s condition and Celsus’ description of “hysteria” (4.27.1a.1-8).\(^{217}\) As we will recall, Celsus’ account emphasizes the tendency of this condition to put women “out of their minds” (*sic* *exanimat*), and to make them prostrate (*ut tamque comitiali morbo prosternat*) and overcome by a deep sleep (*sopor tantum est*). Conversely, Seneca’s play contains hardly any language suggesting that Medea is “out of her mind” (the verb Celsus uses, *exanimare*, does not appear in the play, and, as noted previously, there is only one use of *demens* and no other similar language). In addition, Medea

\(^{213}\) cf. *De Ira* 1.1.1.4; 1.1.6.4.

\(^{214}\) Fischer has observed that *ira* is characterized as animalistic in *Phaedra*, suggesting that the bull which kills Hippolytus “symbolizes the power of *ira*” and also noting parallels in the description of the bull’s eyes (*flamma vomunt / oculi* (1040-1041) and personifications of *ira* in *De Ira* (e.g. *flamma lumina ardentia*, *De Ira* 2.35.5.7; Fischer 2014: 749).


\(^{217}\) As previously mentioned, Celsus does not actually give this condition a name, but based upon his description scholars often refer to it as “hysteria”.

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is not prostrate or overcome by sleep; to the contrary, she is characterized as a hyperactive maenad. Medea’s hesitant and erratic movement reflects her wandering mind, which brings to mind the “wandering womb”—a feature associated with hysteria by Aretaeus and Greek and Roman writers on medicine. This parallel may seem like a bit of a stretch, but Lefkowitz has insightfully pointed out that the itinerant nature of the maenads in Euripides’ *Bacchae* and Io in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* mirrors the concept of the wandering womb; as she puts it, “the womb in its wandering behaves like insane women in myth.” But this is not the point that Robin is making. She draws a parallel with Celsus, but the condition described by Celsus mentions neither wandering of the womb (in contrast with Aretaeus’ description of hysteria), nor does he suggest that individuals with this condition physically wander about. It would therefore be impossible to diagnose Medea with the condition described by Celsus. All this underscores the fact that Medea’s *ira* is characterized by intense, restless movement.

At the beginning of the nurse’s speech, it is apparent that she is directly addressing Medea; this is evident in her use of the vocative *alumna* and the second person *rapis* (380), and the three imperatives (381). The nurse then continues to comment on Medea’s condition in an aside seemingly unintended for Medea to hear. This shift is marked by the nurse’s use of the word *incerta*, the first word in the aside, and a word that echoes Medea’s earlier description of herself (123). The nurse and Medea are in agreement, then, about the fact that uncertainty

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218 Cf. Aretaeus’ *De Causis et Signis Acutorum Morborum* 2.10.
219 Lefkowitz 1981: 16; see also 17-23.
220 Hine notes that the nurse’s remarks in 382-396 have been “taken as a sign that the plays were not really meant for stage performance”, but he also recognizes that “it is possible to regard the Nurse’s description....as a long aside.” (Hine 2000: 155)
very much defines Medea’s condition. By contrast, Celsus does not use the word *incerta* in his comments on madness, nor does he otherwise identify uncertainty as a symptom or feature of any form of madness.

The nurse proceeds to highlight Medea’s uncertainty by employing a simile which compares Medea to a maenad, who is described as being drawn into a state of madness through divine possession (*recepto maenas insanit deo*). This description of Medea, along with the nurse’s reference to Medea’s “divinely inspired steps” (*enteos gressus*), strongly suggest that Medea’s madness has a divine element, or at least that the nurse perceives a divine element. These ideas recall Seneca’s comments in *De Tranquillitate Animi* (17.9-11), where madness (*dementia; insanire*) is associated with divine inspiration (*instinctuque sacro*). In that text, divinely inspired madness is imagined to engender poetic creativity and strokes of genius (*ingenium*). The nurse’s comments differ from *De Tranquillitate Animi* in terms of language usage, and also in that they do not imply any sense of creativity or “genius”; to the contrary, the nurse is expressing fear and concern about the destructive potential of Medea’s madness. As Ker observes, the maenad comparison “introduces associations with temporary insanity and

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221 The unidentified god (*deo*) is almost certainly a reference to Dionysus, whose followers were known as maenads and whose birth was often associated with Mount Nysa (cf. 384) in Greek and Latin literature. Hine observes that “the Greek word ‘Maenad’ means ‘mad woman’ and that it is etymologically related to the verb *mainomai*, ‘I am mad...’”—language highly appropriate to Medea’s condition. (Hine 2000: 155)

222 As Costa notes, “enteos...is exactly ‘recepto deo’” in semantics. (Costa 1973: 108) In this respect, the expression might be considered a calque. Boyle suggests that the use of this “strange” Greek loan-word (which is first attested in Seneca tragedy) emphasizes the “‘strangeness’ of Medea’s behaviour.” (Boyle 2014: 232)

223 Later in the play, however, Medea states that her “genius has grown through her evils” after boldly declaring that she has “now become Medea” (*Medea nunc sum: crevit ingenium malis*, 910). The irony of Medea’s use of *ingenium* becomes even thicker in light of Seneca’s description of *ingenium* in *De Tranquillitate Animi*.
violence.” Moreover, in comparing Medea’s condition with a temporary form of madness, the nurse once again shows that she is underestimating the long-lasting nature of Medea’s *ira* and its seemingly permanent integration with her identity. In this sense, she is like the nurse in *Phaedra*, another character who does not understand the full extent of her “patient’s” illness and remains unable to prevent it from erupting.

Syntactical aspects of the nurse’s speech also contribute to the characterization of Medea, emphasizing certain aspects of her madness. Medea’s disordered state of mind is reflected in the convoluted syntax in 382-384, where the subject of the sentence (*maenas*) is separated from its antecedent (*qualis*) by a line and a half, and the action of walking (*enteos gressus tulit*) attributed to the maenad is syntactically disconnected from the place where the walking is said to occur (*Pindi nivalis vertice aut Nysae iugis*). We see a similar rhetorical effect a little later in the speech, where five verbs are amassed without any conjunction (*Haeret: minatur aestuat queritur gemit*, 390), suggesting many actions being hyperactively performed all at once. This highlights the uncertain, erratic nature of Medea’s behavior. There is another instance of asyndeton when the nurse expresses her concern that something “savage, monstrous, wicked” (*efferum immane impium*, 395) is looming, further underscoring the volatile, hyperactive nature of Medea’s condition. In these examples Seneca is painting a picture of Medea’s madness by toying with syntax.

Following the maenad comparison, the nurse observes that Medea’s face displays *furoris...signa lymphati* (signs of frenzied madness, 386). *Lymphatus*, and the related adjective

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224 Ker 2011: 90.
lymphaticus, do not frequently occur in Senecan poetry or prose, appearing a combined six times in the entire corpus. This is the only time either word is used in Medea. Due to the infrequency of usage, it is difficult to compare the usage of lymphatus with the usage of other adjectives having the sense of “mad” or “frenzied” (insanus, demens, furens, etc.). It is noteworthy, however, that Seneca sometimes associates lymphatus, and the related adjective lymphaticus, with panic and fear, qualities strongly associated with Medea’s experience. In fact, the noun metus occurs nine times in the play, and the verb metuere occurs six times; both words are often connected with Medea. Some writers, such as Pliny, use the word lymphatus as a way to refer to the condition better known as hydrophobia, which is characterized by a fear of consuming water, even when a person is thirsty. Celsus describes this condition (5.27.2c.2), using the term hydrophobias, but never lymphatus or related words. Based upon Seneca’s portrayal, however, there is nothing to suggest that Medea is experiencing this condition or anything similar to it.

The word furor appears several times in the nurse’s speech (386, 392, 396), and also in the following speech by Medea. There, Medea states that her furor will never cease to seek

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225 e.g. Nulli itaque tam perniciosi, tam inrevocabiles quam lymphatici metus sunt. (Ep. 13.9; see also Ep. 85.27). Bosman also suggests that Senecan drama tends to employ lymphaticus in contexts of “sudden and traumatic change of status from royalty to slave.” (Bosman 2009: 97) These connotations certainly resonate with Medea’s situation.

226 e.g. Est et his maior metus:/ Medea. (516-517)

227 e.g. Pliny, Naturalis Historia 25.60.3-4.

228 The verb lymphare, which is related to lymphatus and lymphaticus, can be translated “to make [one] mad” and, according to Lewis and Short, “to dilute with water” (Lewis and Short 1879: c.v. lymphare; the latter sense of the word is not mentioned in the Oxford Latin Dictionary). It is generally held that lymphare and related words are derived from the Greek word νύμφη, because nymphs are often portrayed as instigators of madness in Greek myth, and because they are sometimes associated with water (see Bosman 2009: 97; Costa 1973: 386; Ernout and Meillet 1951: s.v. lymphare; Rosen 1968: 90-91).
revenge, and that it will only continue to grow (*numquam meus cessabit in poenas furor / cresce semper*). 406-407), directly acknowledging that her madness is not short-lasting in nature. Much like in *Hercules Furens*, the word *furor* and related verbs and adjectives appear repeatedly throughout the play.⁹²⁹ One key difference, however, is that Medea’s *furor* is more closely linked to *ira*. This is apparent in the nurse’s speech, where she first speaks of Medea’s *furoris...signa lymphati* (signs of frenzied madness), then eight lines later refers to Medea’s *ira...veteris notae* (signs of old anger, 394). The parallelelism of these phrases, along with the mention of *ira* earlier in this passage (381), builds a strong association between *furor* and *ira*, unlike what we find in *Hercules Furens*. This connection accentuates that fact that Medea’s *furor* is in large part motivated by her *ira* toward Jason and her desire for revenge, whereas Hercules’ madness is depicted as being motivated by *ira* or revenge. The distinction between Medea’s *ira* and *furor* is further blurred by the way in which these words are used throughout the play. Medea uses both words in reference to her own condition, sometimes vacillating in her usage within a few lines (cf. 909, 916, 927, 930, 938, 943). Medea also makes apostrophes to both *ira* (916, 953) and *furor* (930), underscoring her personal connection to them.⁹³²

Migliorini has observed that Seneca creates links between *furor* and *ira* in various works, including *Medea* and *Phaedra*.⁹³³ She asserts that in such works the words *furor* and *furere* are

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²²⁹ Boyle notes that the noun *furor* occurs eight times in the play, always in connection with Medea. (Boyle 2014: 234)
²³⁰ As noted in Chapter 3, both *signa* and *notae* be used to refer to “symptoms”.
²³¹ Vogt also notes that Seneca’s writings often make a connection between *ira* and revenge. (Vogt 2006: 62)
²³² Segal notes a similar element of usage in *Phaedra*, observing that Phaedra’s sometimes speaks of *furor* as though it were an “omnipotent force, almost a living being.” (Segal 1986: 45; cf. *Phaedra* 184--185)
²³³ Migliorini 1997: 84.
used “senza sostanziali differenze” in relation to words such as *insanire, amens, dementia,* and *demens.* This assertion is problematic, not only because it equates words belonging to various parts of speech, but also because it overlooks the fact that *furor* occurs much more frequently—and is thus given more emphasis—in *Medea* than the other words in the list. Indeed, *amens* and *dementia* do not occur at all in the play, and, as we have noted, *demens* appears only twice (174, 930); in this way, Seneca’s tragedy downplays the idea that Medea or any other character is “out of their *mens*”. In addition, the words *insanire* and *insanus* appear only twice (383, 765), while other relevant words that appear, such *vecors* and *vesanus* (one time each), are left off of Migliorini’s list. The fact that *furor* and *ira* are given such weight in comparison to the other word suggests that they have specific connotations and semantic nuances that are important to Seneca’s representation of Medea’s condition in this play.

When Medea is considering whether or not to kill her children in the fifth act of the play, we can notice a subtle distinction in the usage of two of the words Migliorini equates. Feeling deeply conflicted and disturbed by her own plans, Medea exclaims: *melius, a, demens furor!* (Let it be better, ah, sensless madness! 930) According to Migliorini’s list, the phrase *demens furor* would seem to be redundant or intensifying (like “mad madness” in English), with no significant semantic distinction between the two words. While these two words certainly do reinforce and complement each other, I would argue that there is an important semantic distinction in that the adjective *demens* draws attention to a particular feature of Medea’s

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234 Migliorini 1997: 85; see also 56. Hine expresses a similar idea, but in a more nuanced way, stating that some of these words are “closely related in sense”, and as such he consistently translates them as “mad” or “madness.” (Hine 2000: 133-134)
furor, namely the escalating sense that Medea is on the brink of being out of her mens. The use of demens at this particular moment also highlights the near-complete dissolution of Medea’s mental faculties which occurs when she perceives seemingly false visions of the Furies later in this scene (958-971\(^{235}\)). This element of usage also recalls language associated with the perception of visions in Hercules Furens and Celsus. If Seneca were to have used an adjective such as insanus instead, it would not be as apparent that Medea’s is losing control of her mens.

The nurse’s speech also paints a picture of Medea’s condition through the use of metaphorical language, much of which recalls the depiction of madness in Hercules Furens. The nurse notes Medea’s “enflamed expression” (flammata facies, 387), which reminds us of language of fire and flames that Juno associates with the madness of the Furies (cf. 100-101; 103; 106). Both plays also describe furor with references to the volcano Mount Aetna. Medea connects her burgeroning furor with boiling up of the volcano, using a word, fervebit (410) that even sounds like furor; this is similar to how Juno connects Aetna with the raging of the Furies (acrior mentem excoquat / quam qui caminis ignis Aetnaeis furit, 106). Both comparisons suggest that furor is building up and on the verge of erupting with an intense and destructive potential. The nurse applies other natural imagery to Medea’s condition, namely the turbulence of the sea: ubi se iste fluctus franget? Exundat furor... (where will that wave break itself? Her madness is overflowing... 392). This metaphor recalls how the chorus of Hercules Furens describes an assault of maddened waves on Hercules’ mind (insanos fluctus animi, 1092). Later in Medea, the sea is even more explicitly connected with madness when Medea

\(^{235}\) I return to this passage later in the chapter.
refers to it as *insanum* (*tumuit insanum mare*, 765). These examples emphasize the unpredictability and volatility of the sea, and in turn aspects of each character’s madness.\(^{236}\)

As Medea’s *furor* continues to build, her condition is once again compared with the experience of a maenad during the chorus which follows the fourth act of the play:

> Quonam cruenta maenas
> praeceps amore saevo
> rapitur? Quod impotenti
> facinus parat furore?
> Vultus citatus ira
> riget, et caput feroci
> quatiens superba motu
> regi minatur ultro.

By what savage love
is the bloody maenad suddenly
being snatched up? What crime
is she planning in unbridled madness?
Stirred up by anger, her expression
is firm, and, tossing her head
with a fierce motion,
she haughtily threatens the king himself. (849-856)

Whereas the nurse compares Medea to a maenad possessed by divine influence, the chorus portrays Medea as a maenad who is overcome by *amore saevo* (cruel love). The chorus also refers to Medea’s condition as unbridled *furor*, and states that she is stirred up by *ira* (anger).

Once again, *ira* and *furor* are closely connected, and now these two words are also aligned with *amor*. As we will see, the word *amor* appears repeatedly throughout the play, occurring eight times in total, and given this, one can see why scholars sometimes describe her condition as

\(^{236}\) According to Hine, Lucretius is the first extant Latin author to use waves as a metaphor for emotion, while Seneca is the first to use waves as a metaphor for emotions overflowing and becoming out of control.
“lovesickness”\textsuperscript{237}, or “folle d’amore”\textsuperscript{238}. This is in contrast with Hercules Furens, where amor occurs only once (588), and not in connection with furor. This once again demonstrates how Seneca uses furor in a highly diverse way, connecting it with various conditions.\textsuperscript{239} Medea is not the only play in which Seneca builds a connection between amor and furor; in Phaedra, there is also a strong connection between amor and furor (cf. 112-114; 195-917; 645-646), as well as amor and ira (cf. 354-355).\textsuperscript{240} Celsus, by contrast, never once uses the word amor, nor does he describe any condition that could be considered “lovesickness”. This is in contrast with other writers of medical prose (most famously Galen) who discuss “love” as a cause of illness.\textsuperscript{241} Later in this choral ode, the chorus draws an even more explicit connection between ira and amor:

\begin{verbatim}
Frenare nescit iras
Medea, non amores;
nunc ira amorque causam
iunxere: quid sequitur?
\end{verbatim}

Medea does not know how to rein in her anger, nor her love—now her anger and love are joined in purpose: what will follow? (866-869)

\textsuperscript{237} Toohey 1992: 281. On the tradition of lovesickness in classical literature, see Cyrino 1995.
\textsuperscript{238} Migliorini 1997: 84.
\textsuperscript{239} Migliorini similarly observes that there are different types of furor in Seneca’s plays. (Migliorini 1997: 84)
\textsuperscript{240} Toohey discusses connections between Phaedra’s furor and amor (Toohey 1992: 281-282), but he does not discuss the role of these words in Medea.
\textsuperscript{241} Galen provides an account in which he notices that an ill woman’s pulse suddenly changes every time the name “Pylades” is mentioned. From this he eventually concludes that the woman is sick with love for a famous person named Pylades. (On Prognosis 6.2)
Here the chorus conflates *ira* and *amor*, describing them as a united force which is driving Medea to seek vengeance against Jason.\(^{242}\) The chorus relates that they are joined as a single *causa*\(^{243}\), an ambiguous word which could refer either to Medea’s pursuit of vengeance (i.e. her present “purpose”), or to the cause of Medea’s present condition.\(^{244}\) In chapter 3, we observed that Celsus uses the word *causa* in reference to the cause of an illness; these connotations are also apparent here in the sense that *ira* and *amor* are jointly the cause of Medea’s madness (as well as being the very form of her madness). This medicalized sense of the word *causa* becomes even more apparent when one notes that the following section of the choral ode describes some of the physical symptoms Medea has been exhibiting (e.g. *genae rubentes*, *pallor*, *huc fert pedes et illuc*; see 858-862). This sense of *causa*, and the list of symptoms that follows, emphasizes that Medea is mired in a state of illness shortly before her violent acts of revenge are reported by the messenger. The chorus also states that Medea cannot rein in her *ira*, using the verb *frenare* (866), which is often associated with restraining or bridling animals.\(^{245}\) The use of this verb, along with the chorus’ comparison of Medea to a “tigress deprived of her children” (*tigris orba natis*, 863), recall the idea presented in *De Ira* that *ira* is

\(^{242}\) Costa comments: “her feelings of love drive her to action as irresistibly as her angry thoughts (*iras*), and now they act in concert.” (Costa 1973: 149)

\(^{243}\) Boyle also comments on the adjoinment of Medea’s *ira* and *amor* here, pointing out that this connection is highlighted through the elision which “melts *ira* into *amor*”. (Boyle 2014: 342)

\(^{244}\) See Glare 2012: s.v. *causa*. Boyle also suggests that *causa* is used “in its legal sense” here, suggesting that Medea is pursuing a warped form of justice. (Boyle 2014: 342) Boyle’s comments do not discuss possibility that this use of *causa* may also allude to the cause of Medea’s present condition.

\(^{245}\) Glare 2012: s.v. *frenare*. 
like a wild animal which must be restrained. Medea, however, does not know how to restrain her *ira*, perhaps *because* it is joined with *amor*, and as a result she is overcome by madness and lashes out against Jason. This is another way in which this passage recalls *De Ira*: both suggest that *ira* is a desire for revenge.

In the final scene of the play, immediately before Medea commits her first act of infanticide, she relates that the Furies have suddenly appeared and that they are pursuing her (958-971). She also states that the shade of her brother is approaching with *dispersis...membris* (scattered limbs), an obvious allusion to her treatment of his body after she murdered him. She describes this scene in vivid detail, but it is not clear whether these ghastly figures are objectively real and observable to others, or whether they are visions that can only be seen by Medea (and thus *imaginab*). In Hercules’ situation, Amphitryon offers confirmation that Hercules is perceiving a *falsum caelum* (954), but no other character comments on Medea’s perceptions and their nature ultimately remains unclear. As Gill observes, Medea “seems to have gone mad, and to be the victim of hallucinations of the Furies and of her dead, dismembered brother [italics added].”

Even Medea appears to acknowledge the uncertainty of her perceptions, as she refers to the image of her brother as an *incerta umbra* (964). In acknowledging that the shade

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246 Romm also notes that *ira* is a major theme in both *De Ira* and *Medea*, and while he acknowledges that the two works deal with *ira* in rather different ways, he speculates they are similar enough in this interest that they “might well have been composed concurrently.” (Romm 2014: 76)

247 Cf. *Aristotelis finitio non multum a nostra abest; ait enim iram esse cupiditatem doloris reponendi*. (*De Ira* 2.3.5.1-6) The passage in which this sentence occurs is discussed earlier in this chapter.

248 Hine comments on this problem from a dramaturgical perspective: “in a stage performance, would the Furies and ghost be played by mute actors, or just described by M.’s words, as a private hallucination or vision?” (Hine 2000: 204, see also 205)

is *incerta*, Medea demonstrates *some* degree of self-awareness, unlike Hercules when he perceives his visions. The use of the word *incerta* also invokes the uncertainty which Medea exhibits throughout the play in her mental state and physical condition, and which now manifests itself in her sensory perceptions. Thus, Medea’s level of self-awareness is highly problematized at a crucial moment in the play, when we see her *furor/ira/amor* in full effect.

Medea’s perception that she is being pursued by the Furies and her dead brother seems to be influenced by other things that are going on around her in this scene, namely the fact that she is being pursued by Jason. There is no doubt about the reality of Jason’s pursuit, as he calls out to others for help with his pursuit: “Here, bring your weapons, here, brave company of warriors, overturn the house from its foundations” (*huc, huc fortis armiferi cohors / conferte tela, vertite ex imo domum*. 980-981). In this way, there is some correspondence between the two kinds of perceptions Medea is experiencing—one kind which may not be completely objectively real, and the other kind which is more objectively grounded in objective reality. This is similar to how Hercules’ visions are depicted: although they are deeply distorted versions of reality, they still reflect important elements of reality, such as the violence and disorder present in the scene. It is apparent that the pursuit of the Furies and the pursuit of Jason become conflated in Medea’s mind when she becomes alarmed by a sudden noise after killing of one her sons:

> Quid repens affert *sonus*?
> Parantur arma meque in exitium petunt.

> What sudden noise is coming forth?
> They are preparing arms and seeking to kill me. (972-973)
The subject of *petunt* is not specified, and this reflects the ambiguity of Medea’s perceptions. It is unclear whom she is referring to when she states that “they are preparing arms and seeking to kill me”—“they” could be either the Furies or Jason and his supporters. Jason begins to speak shortly after this (978), which raises further questions about the source of the *sonus* Medea hears. It is possible that she is experiencing an auditory hallucination on top of her possible visual hallucinations.\(^{250}\) There are very few references to auditory hallucinations in Greek and Latin literature—they are rare in both poetic tragedies and writings on medicine.\(^{251}\) Celsus, for one, does not discuss any kind of hallucination other than those which are visual in nature (i.e. *imagines*). Nor does Celsus discuss the possibility, suggested here and in *Hercules Furens*, that the content of a person’s hallucinations might reflect some aspect of reality and/or have some relationship to a person’s psychological experience. Celsus cites Ajax and Orestes as examples of individuals known to have experienced *imagines*, but he does not offer any insight into the content of their *imagines*, nor how their *imagines* might relate to their psychological experience or identity. These are the kinds of things that Seneca is interested in exploring with Medea and Hercules. With both characters, he suggests that heightened states of madness distort the sensory experience and thus blur the lines between reality and illusion, self-awareness and ignorance, and what is and what is not sane.

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\(^{250}\) Boyle’s commentary only states that Medea is responding to “noises offstage”, which does not offer any clarification about whether we should understand these sounds as actually audible, or whether they might be auditory hallucinations because they are not part of drama on stage. (Boyle 2014: 370)

\(^{251}\) Harris 2013: 302-306, with 304 n. 89. Harris notes that auditory hallucinations are described by Aretaeus, an author who wrote on medicine in Greek most likely in the first century CE. Aretaeus described a symptom of mania involving the experience of “ringings and rumblings in the ears which can even sound like trumpets and flutes”. (*On the Causes and Signs of Chronic Diseases* 1.6)
Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has explored nuances of usage through close reading of specific passages, and in doing so has uncovered some recurring themes. In Celsus’ *De Medicina*, the noun *insania* refers to the most general category of what I have been calling “madness”, and it is divided into three specific forms: *phrenesis*, an acute form of madness associated with fever; a longer-lasting form of madness characterized by *tristitia* which is not given its own name; and an even longer-lasting, also unnamed form of madness which is divided into two groups—those who perceive *imagines*, and those who are said to be deceived by their own minds (*animo desipiunt*). Within *phrenesis* and his third form of *insania*, Celsus describes further sub-types based largely upon whether a person is *tristis* or *hilaris*. Celsus’ tripartite scheme is probably not meant to account for each and every instance of this kind of “madness”; this is suggested by his reference to other conditions that do not neatly fit into the scheme, such as *delirium* and *lethargus*.

While Celsus is interested in cataloguing, in taxonomy, in labels, Seneca’s prose is deeply suspicious of passionate extremes and interested in controlling them. For their part, Seneca’s prose texts *Epistulae* 29, 59, 83, and 94, *De Ira*, *Naturales Quaestiones*, and *De Tranquillitate Animi* describe various kinds of *insania*, using a range of adjectives (*brevis, voluntaria, hilaris, publica*), while also considering *ebrietas* to be a form of *insania*. These categories are applied rather loosely, and do not closely correspond to Celsus’ tripartite schematization. In both his prose works and his tragedies, Seneca closely associates *insania* with the terms *ira* and *furor*. I have argued that to describe the three terms as simply synonymous or interchangeable is to be
insufficiently attentive to nuance, and at the same time to miss valuable interpretive opportunities. For example: Seneca’s preoccupation with ira as a type of insania or ‘dis-ease’ is characteristic of his Stoically-colored views of the emotions and passions, while furor has a long poetic pedigree. Other nuances are apparent with the various other terms recurring in Senecan prose and poetry, such as the adjectives demens, amens, and vesanus. Attention to these nuances is important, especially since Naturales Quaestiones and other works of Senecan prose present a subtle continuum between “sanity” and “madness”, as is reflected in the usage of terms such as sanitas and insania.

In the final part of this chapter I discuss two Senecan tragedies in which the theme of “madness” plays a central role: Hercules Furens and Medea. A key term in both plays is furor, which has a poetic pedigree and appears only three times in De Medicina. The title characters of both Senecan tragedies are said to be afflicted by furor. Hercules’s furor is portrayed as an irresistible force that puts him out of his mind, as is conveyed by the usage of words such as amens and demens), rendering him blind (caecus) to his own actions. This sort of furor is characterized by the perception of false visions (imaginies) and by violence. Hercules’ furor bears a complex relationship to his own characterization as a mythic hero, and this is reflected in paradoxical uses of language describing his madness. Medea’s furor is driven by, and identified with, ira and amor – a destructive combination which fits well with Stoic and other kinds of philosophical responses to the emotions and passions. Initially, Medea is more self-aware in her furor/ira/amor than Hercules, but this self-awareness becomes more problematized as the play goes on. At times, the relative madness or sanity of both Medea and
Hercules is presented in an ambiguous way through the use of *furor* and other terms, suggesting that a continuum between the categories of *insania* and *sanitas*, as in works of Senecan prose. At the same time, however, I have suggested that Senecan poetry, in its evocation of *furor* and *insania*, uses some of the language and imagery for disorders, illnesses, and symptoms that we find in Celsus and elsewhere. In particular, I have observed some overlaps in descriptions of *morbus comitialis* or epilepsy across Seneca’s *De Ira*, *Hercules Furens*, and Celsus’ *De Medicina*, as well as other overlaps between Hercules’ condition in *Hercules Furens* and various forms of *insania* in *De Medicina*. There is no exact correspondence, however, between the description of Hercules’ condition in *Hercules Furens* and any condition described by Celsus. Nor does Celsus’ presentation of madness feature the paradoxical uses of language and imagery that we repeatedly see in Seneca’s tragedies, and this is in keeping with Celsus’ attempt to establish a clear taxonomy of *insania*. In Celsus’ general categories of madness, there is little concern with individual cases and particular experiences, whereas Seneca’s plays deeply explore the relationship between characters’ illnesses and their personal psychological experiences.
Chapter V
Conclusions

Illness, in its various forms and manifestations, is an important but underexplored theme in Senecan tragedy. It is found both in connection with individual characters who experience illness, such as Thyestes, Phaedra, Hercules, and Medea, and in situations in which illness affects society en masse and even the natural environment, as in Oedipus. Reading Seneca’s tragedies in tandem with Celsus’ De Medicina—something which has not previously been done in any systematic way—makes the plays’ themes, imagery, and language of illness leap out and come into focus in a way not previously observed. Although Celsus is a major source for medical thought in the Roman Empire, he is an author who has not been given enough attention, especially in English-language scholarship. While Celsus is more interested than Seneca in exploring medical history, theory, diagnosis, treatment, and practice, the two authors employ a shared language of illness, often using vocabulary in comparable ways and in similar contexts. By comparing differences in perspective and vocabulary usage, we can also arrive at a better understanding of each author’s goals, strategies, and various rhetorical uses (and, in the case of Seneca, poetic uses) of the language of illness. These texts can therefore be productively read alongside one another and analyzed in a manner similar to how the Greek tragedies and Hippocratic treatises have been compared in previous studies by scholars such as Holmes and Kosak. As Kosak has noted, “Greek tragedy and Greek medical literature both treat
forms of human suffering”\(^1\); my study has demonstrated that such a connection also exists between Seneca’s Roman tragedies and Celsus’ contemporaneous medical prose.

In each of the three thematic chapters that comprise the body of this study, we find fascinating connections and divergences between the writings of Seneca and Celsus. In Chapter 2, we see that both authors use various words in reference to the phenomenon of “illness”, including terms often specifically connected with illness (e.g. *pestis*, *pestilentia*, *morbus*, *aeger*), words with a more generic semantic core (e.g. *lues*, *macies*, *tabes*, *virus*), and finally words broad enough to carry moral connotations (e.g. *malum*, *vitium*). Although each of these words can be used in the sense of “illness”, they are certainly not “interchangeable”, as some scholars have suggested. With each word, we find subtle semantic differences, and the significance of these subtleties becomes increasingly evident through close reading, attention to context, and textual comparison. These differences remind us that Latin, like English, possesses no “synonyms” in the absolute sense, making it all the more important to pay attention to nuances of usage, especially when dealing with closely-related vocabulary items such as these.

Seneca meaningfully exploits these subtleties in *Oedipus*, a play in which various words are used to characterize both the illness of the character Oedipus and the ill condition of the city of Thebes. The different words that are used call attention to specific aspects of Oedipus’ condition, specific aspects of the Theban plague, and the complex and frequently metaphorical interplay between the two. Through Seneca’s use of vocabulary, Oedipus is portrayed as a personification of illness, while the very society and environment of Thebes are shown to be suffering in a medicalized state of illness. Nevertheless, no specific illness can be diagnosed for

\(^1\) Kosak 2004: 1.
either Oedipus or Thebes, and this is suggested by the variety of words used in reference to their conditions. Stricken by a *pestis*, *lues*, *macies*, *tabes*, *vitium*, and *malum* all at once, Oedipus and Thebes both suffer from conditions that defy categorization and comprehension, which frustrate attempts at treatment. Seneca’s complex and multifaceted portrayal of these conditions becomes all the more apparent when we look at vocabulary usage in Celsus. These comparisons supply a better understanding of the semantic range and possible connotations for each piece of vocabulary. In her investigations of the Hippocratic Corpus, Kosak has observed that “the idea that one must be able to classify disease and distinguish it from other diseases in order to treat it is an important aspect of fifth century medicine.”\(^2\) This idea carries over into the work of Celsus, while in Senecan tragedies such as *Oedipus* illness becomes a perplexing and intractable problem in the absence of clear-cut definitions and identifications of illness.

In Chapter 3, I examined the language and imagery of concealment and revelation in connection with illness. Both Seneca and Celsus explore the role that symptoms play in concealing or revealing illness and its causes, sometimes using highly similar language; these connections have parallels in the corresponding genres of Greek literature: as Kosak has observed, “Greek tragedy and Greek medical literature...[both] consider causes, seen and unseen, diagnoses, and cures.”\(^3\) In Celsus’ medical encyclopedia, when symptoms are said to be clearly observable, it generally indicates that there is a high potential for understanding causes of illness, making a correct diagnosis, and administering treatment. Seneca’s tragedies,

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\(^2\) Kosak 2004: 56, with n. 28.
\(^3\) Kosak 2004: 1.
on the other hand, are less optimistic about illness, presenting situations in which a cure or healing still seems impossible even when causes are known and correct diagnoses are made. Both authors also explore situations in which symptoms are unclear, hidden, or difficult to interpret, and in such situations both authors suggest that the illness at hand is particularly dangerous, sometimes because it is thought to occur without a cause.

In the Proemium to Book 1, Celsus provides an invaluable history of medicine in which he discusses the empiricist and rationalist schools, explaining how each school understood symptoms, causes of illness, the human body, and the interrelationship of these factors. He discusses each school’s views on human dissection and human vivisection, and in doing so he points out some important differences between these two practices, which were controversial and rarely performed in antiquity. In Seneca’s tragic play Thyestes, we are offered a scene in which these practices are depicted and the lines between them are blurred, particularly through the complex characterization of Atreus, who assumes the role of medical doctor, sacrificial priest, and vengeful brother all at once. Thyestes also complicates the relationship between causes of illness, symptoms, and sensation—all process which are described more straightforwardly in Celsus. Atreus is paradoxically able to describe symptoms of Thyestes’ illness before they even occur, while Thyestes is left to puzzle over why he is becoming ill seemingly sine causa.

The situation is in many ways reversed in Phaedra, where Phaedra is painfully aware of the passion she has for her step-son Hippolytus, and suffers in anguish as she struggles to keep her feelings hidden. These efforts are betrayed by various obvious symptoms, but she is initially able to conceal the nature of her condition from Hippolytus. Phaedra’s nurse, on the other
hand, recognizes that Phaedra is quite ill, but she remains unable to offer any therapy or relief, even after Phaedra reveals the nature of her illness. In this respect, the nurse’s experience is comparable to the situation of Thyestes: each character begins to understand causes of illness only through information confessed by another person, and not through readily observable symptoms; moreover, in both cases, the understanding comes all too late. Even after Phaedra makes her revelation to Hippolytus, the language and imagery of concealment continues, suggesting that her condition ultimately remains incompletely understood. Rather than facilitating diagnosis and treatment, as we would expect from Celsus’ discussion of evidentes causae, Phaedra’s revelation results in both her own death and the death of Hippolytus. Both Thyestes and Phaedra, then, portray the workings of illness both openly and in concealment, the fruitless exploration of inexplicable causes, and the paradoxical potential of such exploration to exacerbate, rather than relieve suffering.

In Chapter 4, we examine the Latin vocabulary of “madness”, which includes a broad range of words associated with “mental” disorder, but often without excluding physical components. Celsus uses various words in this semantic sphere, including the rather general insania. Celsus’ usage of this term in Book 3 serves as a very prominent example of his interest in categorizing forms of illness, as he identifies three forms of insania, which are distinguished on the basis of duration and other key differences. Another such example is Celsus’ interest in differentiating between types of causae, as seen in Chapter 3. Celsus gives a specific name to only his first category of insania (phrenesis), while also identifying various sub-types of the first and third categories. In other sections of De Medicina, Celsus describes conditions which do not fit within this tripartite scheme, but which can also be considered forms of madness (e.g. delirium,
lthargus, “hysteria”). Despite his interest in categorizing, Celsus is not always clear or consistent in his use of terminology. To a certain extent, these inconsistencies of usage and sometimes vague descriptions detract from Celsus’ attempts to establish structured classifications of *insania*. In part, these ambiguities speak to the complexities and difficulties inherent to understanding and describing madness/mental illness. These complexities are no less vexing even today, as mental illness remains a relatively poorly understood phenomenon, with constantly changing terminology and little consensus concerning matters of usage among psychologists, physicians, and theorists (to say nothing of popular usage).

Seneca’s letters and philosophical essays also show a significant interest in madness. In passages of these prose works, Seneca uses vocabulary that appears in Celsus, most notably *insania*, but he also uses words that Celsus rarely (e.g. furor, *ira*) or never (e.g. *ira*) uses in the sense of “madness”. Unlike Celsus, Seneca is not much interested in categorizing forms of madness, and he does not prioritize consistency of usage; this is seen not only when looking across texts, but sometimes even within a single specific text. In certain texts, such as *De Ira* and some of his *Epistulae*, Seneca uses the words such as *furor* and *insania* without a strong differentiation in sense.

In his tragedies, Seneca uses vocabulary of madness in an even more open-ended way, reflecting an interest in exploring the complexities and ambiguities of characters’ experiences, rather than offering specific diagnoses or pigeonholing their experiences into specific conditions. One word that Seneca uses in a particularly open-ended fashion is *ira*, which is closely linked with *insania* and *furor* in Seneca’s tragedies as well as his philosophical prose, making the lines between these conditions often quite blurry. Seneca’s tragedies, and to a
lesser extent some of his prose works, also suggest that these conditions are not absolute states, but rather points on a continuum which does not always have clear and distinct lines between sanity and madness.

These ambiguities are particularly apparent in Hercules Furens, where Seneca’s vocabulary usage highlights the often ill-defined boundaries between madness and sanity in the heroic psyche. Although I identify some similarities between Seneca’s characterization of Hercules and descriptions of morbus comitialis in both Senecan prose and in Celsus, as well as similarities with Celsus’ description of phrenesis, none of these descriptions are similar enough to be used to “diagnose” Hercules with those conditions. Nor does Hercules’ experience closely correspond to any other condition identified by Celsus. One interesting similarity, however, relates to Hercules’ perception of “visions”—an important component of his madness, and the sort of experience that Celsus terms imagines and associates with two different forms of insania. Despite this resonance, Seneca’s portrayal of Hercules’ condition ultimately consists of an assemblage of various symptoms, all of which are mentioned by Celsus, but are not filed under any single condition. This observation about Celsus’ usage allows us see that even though Seneca’s representation of Hercules draws upon traditional depictions of heroic furor/insania, Seneca also depicts Hercules’ madness as an elusive, unclassifiable form of madness.

In Medea, the eponymous protagonist experiences a form of madness which initially seems to be a manifestation of traditional love-sickness (amor). The word amor appears frequently throughout the play, and it is repeatedly used in conjunction with ira, not unlike in Senecan prose works such as De Ira. As the play moves forward, the complexity of Medea’s mental state
becomes more and more apparent, especially with respect to her vacillating and sometimes ambiguous state of self-awareness. For example, even while acknowledging her own furor, Medea shows signs that she is losing control of her mental faculties. Ultimately, Medea’s madness, like that of Hercules, cannot be classified or encapsulated by any single term, much less identified with a single condition described by Celsus.

In each of these thematic chapters, we find that Seneca’s tragedies use language and imagery which repeatedly present illness in a paradoxical and ironic light, while also calling attention to matters of self-awareness. In these respects, a focus on illness reveals some of the fundamental characteristics of these plays (and also, in fact, of much Senecan prose). In Oedipus, for instance, the pestis that ravages the Theban people and environment seems to spare Oedipus even though he himself is closely identified with the pestis. In Phaedra, the titular character attempts to conceal her unspeakable passion, but she must contend with the symptoms so vehemently erupting from her. In Hercules Furens, Hercules returns home after completing a series of grueling labors meant to pacify the world, only to enter into a state of blind furor and unknowingly wreak carnage upon his own family. The paradoxicality of these situations is further underscored by paradoxical uses of language and imagery, producing the impression that illness is larger-than-life, a source of unexpected and confounding experiences, and beyond the realm of medical treatment and understanding. These elements of paradox and surprise are in keeping with techniques and effects of Senecan poetics more generally.

In refusing to pin illness down semantically and conceptually, and in highlighting the complex nature of the human experience of illness, Seneca’s plays differ from Celsus’ encyclopedic prose in important ways. Unlike Seneca, Celsus generally seeks to delimit and close off semantic and
conceptual possibilities, striving to present clear and straightforward ideas about how to identify, classify, and treat various forms of illness. These key differences mirror some of the differences that Kosak and Holmes have identified in their comparisons of Greek tragedy and Greek prose texts on medicine. Much as I have observed with Seneca’s tragedies, Kosak observes that the “stylized metaphorical language of [Greek] tragedy avoids mentioning the mundane diseases from which members of its audience surely suffered.”⁴ Similarly, Holmes remarks that Greek tragedy, more than any other genre she explores—including Hippocratic treatises on medicine—explores the symptom as a locus of psychological and existential significance, moving far beyond its capacity simply to reveal “facts” about the body.⁵ Whereas Holmes focuses primarily on the symptom as a generator of meaning in Greek tragedy, my study takes into account how meaning and ambiguity is generated in Roman tragedy not only through the phenomenon of the symptom, but also through characters’ experiences of suffering and their attempts at diagnosis and treatment. Not least of all, my study has also explored how meaning is generated in Senecan tragedy through the use of language itself⁶—particularly instances in which medicalized language is used in paradoxical, ironic, and polysemic ways. Another difference is that Holmes’ study concentrates upon the symptom as a way of exploring the emergence of concepts of the physical body and concepts of the self in ancient Greece⁷, looking to a large variety of literary sources while attempting to situate these

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⁴ Kosak 2004: 1.
⁵ see Holmes 2010: 229; 230-231.
⁶ This is, of course, not to say that Holmes completely eschews close analysis of language usage. She is also interested in the uses of certain words (e.g. σῶμα [body]).
⁷ see Holmes 2010: 5.
ideas about the body in a broader “history of ideas and practices”.\(^8\) My project, on the other hand, has sought to illuminate the approaches, goals, and rhetorical strategies employed by two contemporary authors, and this specific focus has allowed me to perform close readings of extended passages that engage with matters of illness. In doing so, I have at times delved into the “history of ideas and practices”, for example in Chapter 4, where I discuss the history of dissection and vivisection as these practices relate to the depiction of Atreus’ mutilation of the bodies of the children in *Thyestes*, and in Chapter 5, where I draw attention to perceptions of mental health and mental illness across cultures and through history.

Despite their difference in approach, Seneca and Celsus demonstrate a shared interest in a striking number of significant topics, including causes of illness, symptoms, dissection/vivisection, plague/mass illness, and madness. Also striking are the similar ways in which Seneca and Celsus use certain pieces of vocabulary, despite their differences in genre and perspective. To be sure, we do find some significant differences in vocabulary usage, and these differences sometimes speak to significant differences in rhetorical strategies and approach, but this does not diminish the similarities and resonances uncovered in this study. Seneca’s works provide many reminders that tragedies, works of philosophical prose, and indeed writings in any other genre of Latin literature can be rich sources for language and thought germane to the world of medicine. This may not be too surprising, given the universality of illness in the human experience. But in view of the widespread nature of the phenomenon of illness, and in view of this study’s observations about vocabulary usage in

\(^8\) See Holmes 2010: 8.
different genres of Latin literature, we should continue to question the distinctions which are still often drawn between “literary” texts and “medical”/“technical” forms of writing.

Although this study has identified numerous resonances between Seneca and Celsus in both subject matter and language usage, it bears repeating that it has not been this study’s mission to show that there was any personal relationship or correspondence between the two authors. This seems rather unlikely, but remains impossible to refute or confirm on the basis of our current knowledge. Nor has this study endeavored to ascertain whether, as Stok and others have speculated, Seneca may have read the works of Celsus\(^9\), or whether the opposite might be true. Despite the approximate contemporaneity of their works, our ability to trace any influence between the two authors seems beyond the limits of the available evidence. Nevertheless, we can certainly say that an interest in illness and the usage of relevant vocabulary deeply informs the writings of both Seneca and Celsus. In these respects, we have found fertile grounds for comparison, similar to the inviting comparisons Kosak, Holmes, and other have found in looking at Greek tragedy and the Hippocratic Corpus. The scholarship comparing those corpora of Greek literature has generally focused on comparing language, imagery, and ideas, rather than suggesting a direction of influence between authors or bodies of literature, and my own study has taken a similar approach. Indeed, Kosak has observed a “cross-fertilization in the terminology of illness between the two very different genres [of Greek tragedy and the Hippocratic writings on medicine].”\(^{10}\) My study, which focuses even more closely on language usage than Kosak’s (whose comparisons are focalized more through “the

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lens of ancient medical theory”¹¹), has identified a similar intermingling of terminology in the corresponding genres of Latin literature. And, although this study has not traversed far into the realm Greek tragedy, I would even go a step further and state there are some respects in which Celsus’ medical prose and Seneca’s tragedies bear an even stronger affinity than their Greek counterparts. Most strikingly, both Celsus’ De Medicina and Seneca’s tragedies show a deep interest in insania and other forms of madness. While madness is a prominent theme in the Greek tragedies, it is not explored to a great extent in extant Hippocratic writings, as has been noted by scholars such as Jouanna and Kosak.¹²

**Future Research Directions**

This dissertation opens the door both for a continuation of this study, expanded in scope, and for further research in a variety of related areas. I hope to produce a larger and broader version of this study not only by including other Senecan tragedies but also by connecting my discussion of Seneca and Celsus with the work that has been done on the Hippocratic Corpus and Greek tragedy, asking, for example, how doing so might inform our understanding of the literary reception of Greek tragedies in imperial Rome. In Chapter 2, I make some brief comparisons between Sophoclean and Senecan versions of Oedipus, and further comparisons between these specific plays could make for an accessible article to acquaint a wider audience with my interests. Inquiry into the literary reception of the language and imagery of illness could also incorporate the fragmentary tragedies of the 3rd to early 1st centuries BCE Latin authors Naevius, Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius.

¹¹ Kosak 2004: 11.
In the realm of Senecan tragedy, there remains room for further inquiry into the representation of Hercules’ illness in *Hercules Oetaeus*. Because Seneca’s authorship of this play has often been called into question, it would be interesting to investigate more closely how this play’s language and imagery of illness fits with representations in other Senecan tragedies. Another Senecan tragedy that could be examined in more depth is *Agamemnon*, particularly concerning the language and imagery associated with the characterization of Cassandra in her maddened, prophetic state.\(^{13}\) Although Cassandra’s prophecies turn out to be entirely accurate, other characters view her as “mad” and it would be interesting to examine how this gap between the perception of Cassandra and the reality of her foresight is reflected in language use. Such analysis could further round out the discussion of madness seen in Chapter 4 of this study, while also providing an opportunity to examine how gender might figure into representations of madness—another issue which deserves further attention.\(^{14}\)

Although Celsus’ comments on madness rarely inspire questions about gender issues, Seneca’s tragedies depict madness in both male and female characters and would thus lend themselves to such analysis. As a yet broader and more ambitious goal, future studies could also look at representations of madness in other works by Seneca which are not discussed in Chapter 4 (both poetry and prose) in order to obtain an even more comprehensive understanding of madness in the Senecan oeuvre. This in turn could invite comparisons with representations of madness in other texts, whether in Latin or Greek, thus deepening our understanding of

\(^{13}\) See esp. *Agamemnon* 710-807.

\(^{14}\) Mitchell-Boyask and Padel have performed some analysis of the relationship language associated with madness and gender in Greek literature (Mitchell-Boyask 2012: 323-328; Padel 1995: 20; see also Padel 1992: 116-31, 157-61), but little attention has been given to the matter in Latin literature.
madness in the classical tradition more generally. Although madness and mental disorders have been subjects of growing scholarly interest in recent years, these remain areas where there is much room for new contributions.

This dissertation has delved into representations the human body: its interior, exterior, and the sometimes nebulous boundaries in between. In this area, the work of scholars such as Holmes and Kosak has provided some valuable cues, but there remains room for further discussion, particularly in the realm of Latin literature. Indeed, the present study has not even exhausted this subject with respect to Senecan tragedy (let alone his massive body of prose works) or with respect to Celsus. Along these lines, I am interested in further examining the various surgical procedures described in Books 7 and 8 of De Medicina. The present study discusses some examples of vocabulary usage from those sections, but there is room for further analysis, and I am especially interested in comparing Celsus’ descriptions of surgery and his comments on dissection and vivisection in the Proemium from a linguistic, rhetorical, conceptual, and ideological standpoint. More generally, I hope to further the discussion started with Lloyd’s seminal article about dissection and vivisection in Greek and Latin literature (1975) and von Staden’s article about the cultural context of dissection in ancient Greece (1992) by performing close readings of poetic texts that represent comparable procedures and/or mutilations of the body, human and otherwise. In this regard, one passage from Senecan tragedy that offers rich potential for further analysis is the extispicium scene in Seneca’s Oedipus (303-383), where Tiresias and Manto attempt to interpret the disordered organs of a heifer. I briefly touch upon this scene in the present study, but I would like to explore in further depth comparisons of the language and imagery in the extispicium scene and language and
imagery in the scene from *Thyestes* where Atreus “investigates” the bodies of Thyestes’ children, since the latter scene invokes elements of both dissection/vivisection and extispicium.

I am also interested in studying representations of the human body in various other authors, including some who influenced Seneca, such as Virgil and Ovid, and some whom Seneca influenced, such as Lucan. The present study has briefly touched upon these authors, comparing instances of language usage with language used by Seneca, but there remains room for further discussion and for new contributions concerning the representation of the human body in each author. It would be especially interesting to consider representations of non-human bodies, such as those of animals, satyrs and other hybrid creatures, gods, etc.—a subject which has not been given a great deal of attention in either Greek or Latin literature. For this topic, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* would be particularly relevant, not only because it is a work with many parallels to language usage in Senecan tragedy, but also because it portrays the bodies of many different kinds of beings in various states of transformation. In addition, it would be fascinating to explore the ways in which authors such as Ovid attribute vocabulary of madness to animals and other non-human beings; this, I believe, offers much potential to deepen our understanding of the usage of Latin vocabulary of madness in general, and more specifically how such vocabulary is applied to human beings.

This dissertation has the advantage of comparing Seneca’s works with a contemporary work on medicine, but future studies could branch out by looking at later Latin prose works that deal with medical topics, such as Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia*, Theodorus Priscianus’ *Rerum Medicarum Libri Quatuor*, and Caelius Aurelianus’ *De Morbis Acutis et Chronicis*. I am also interested in exploring earlier works that deal with medical topics, such as Cicero’s *De Natura
Deorum and De Senectute, and Lucretius’ De Rerum Natura. Comparing terminology used by these authors with terminology in the works of Seneca and Celsus would provide a broader understanding of how the terminology is used across various periods of Latin literature. One specific piece of terminology that has been largely left out of this study, mainly because of its semantic breadth, is dolor (one could no doubt write a book on this word alone). Because it is a word with both mental and physical senses and connotations, dolor and other words in the semantic sphere of “pain” would be particularly interesting to examine. Scholars such as Rey and Allen have surveyed the usage of dolor and representations of pain in Greek and Latin literature, but there remains room for more in-depth discussion of these topics in Seneca and Celsus.

**Reflections on the Medical Humanities**

It is my hope that this study makes a contribution not only to our understanding of Seneca, Celsus, ancient medicine, and Latin literature more generally, but also to the developing field of the medical humanities. This interdisciplinary field embraces the study of medicine through the lenses of literature, history, philosophy, the social sciences, and the arts as a means to new insights and perspectives on illness, health, medical practice, and the like. Studying medical issues through these lenses can also foster cultural awareness and sensitivity to various aspects of contemporary medical practice and ethics. The present study comes at a time when the field of the medical humanities is both inspiring and drawing increased inspiration from various humanistic fields, including Greek and Roman Studies. The spirit of the medical humanities is very much alive in the present study’s close readings and analyses of Seneca and Celsus, and I
hope my study will in turn encourage readers to reflect upon the practices, perceptions, preconceptions, and ideologies that are entrenched in modern medicine. Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to be aware of cultural differences, and I have tried not to impose modern views, frameworks, and sensibilities upon the ancient texts. I hope that this can help motivate readers to reexamine aspects of modern medicine that are often taken for granted or too readily accepted. In view of the ideas and ancient texts I have examined, we might re-examine certain aspects of modern medicine, such as the dichotomy between “mental” and “physical” illness; the idea that illness and health are diametrically opposed states; the nature and dynamics of the doctor-patient relationship; perceptions of dissection and vivisection; and other ideas and practices that deserve continued dialogue, critique, and assessment from the medical community and the general public alike. By reflecting upon how ancient authors such as Seneca and Celsus describe, frame, and ruminate upon matters such as these, we can become more equipped to think critically about present-day medical practices, traditions, ideologies, and institutions.
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