Senecan Epigrams and the Genre of Exile Poetry

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ABSTRACT

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by

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In discourses on Roman exile, several names inevitably must be brought up, with Ovid and Seneca the Younger looming large over the discussions. Ovid's exilic poems, far from simply manifesting his situation and personal feelings, were part of a literary tradition that grew over time. Ovid was aware of the previous conventions of writings from exile, and molded those concepts into a genre of exile poetry, with set tropes and guidelines to be followed by later exiles. The well-known philosopher and politician L. Annaeus Seneca was exiled on the island of Corsica by the emperor Claudius from 41 to 48 CE. While he was there he produced two philosophical consolations, several plays, and, some scholars argue, a collection of *nugae,* or trifles, in the form of epigrams. These epigrams demonstrate Seneca's thorough knowledge of the poetic genre of exile, due to the numerous similarities they share with the exile poetry of Ovid. Themes such as negative descriptions of the landscape of exile, exile as a living death, the immortal power of poetry, mythologizing of exile, and linguistic and cultural isolation are all used in both authors' writing and are foundations of the poetic genre of exile. By examining the Senecan epigrams in light of the concept of a literary genre of exile poetry, it is possible to understand in what way Seneca adhered to and contributed to the genre.

Introduction

The concept of exile is one that writers have struggled to depict and explain for centuries. Alternately viewed as the utmost of horrible punishments and as an opportunity to live a simpler life, sometimes even by the same writer, it has been difficult for thinkers to come to a consensus regarding the status of exile. This question was pronounced even in antiquity, and was discussed by a multitude of writers, beginning with Greek oral narratives and continuing on in the writings of those such as Thucydides and Diogenes.[1] The preoccupation with exile persisted in the Roman world, with writings from notable exiles such as Cicero and Ovid still receiving attention today. Some modern scholars take their study of ancient views of exile as far as Boethius, born in the late 5th century CE.[2] While certainly not every person who wrote about exile upheld the view that exile was the worst fate possible, it was true that in the ancient world, one's connection to one's homeland was a very important part of personal identity. Members of ancient Greek and Roman societies valued the connection between people and the cities in which they lived, considering civic and religious participation, identification with the homeland, and relationships to fellow countrymen to be vital aspects of life.[3] Early definitions of exile included removal from one's home due to war or natural disaster, as well as exile forced by political upheaval.[4] The Romans expanded the model of legal citizenship, extending the rights and responsibilities of that designation to ever more people throughout their neighboring areas. With the development of the legal concept of citizenship also came the legal notion of exile, an enforced removal from one's homeland by an authority figure as

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[1] Gaertner 5
[2] Claassen 68
[3] Gorman 6
[4] Gorman 8-9

a form of punishment.[5] It is this form of exile under which Seneca and Ovid lived. To be exiled was considered the most extreme punishment, second only to execution, and one who suffered this penalty lost the rights conferred upon him by his citizenship, in addition to his ties to his ancestral home.[6] He was forced to relocate, often to someplace inhospitable and unaccepting, with no hope of successfully putting down new roots. Being exiled from one's place of origin represented an upheaval, a major life change that often could not be reversed. Dealing with that change and the trials that accompanied it was a task that occupied numerous exiled ancient writers.

Politics of Exile

In Rome, exile was a punishment for various crimes, as well as a political tool employed by the powerful to remove potential threats. There were different levels of exile, with the mildest involving simple relegation from Rome, or Rome and the Italian peninsula. These banishments could last for either a period of time or the rest of the exile's life, and the exile was not commanded to go to a specific place.[7] Harsher punishments included *aquae et ignis interdictio*, which permanently or temporarily removed the exile to a designated place, with the removal of citizenship or confiscation of property, or forcible deportation to an island or other fixed place for life,[8] a punishment introduced under Augustus which gradually replaced *interdictio*.[9] At each stage the exile retained different rights. Those relegated could serve their punishment for

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[5] Gorman 9
[6] Braginton 397
[7] Braginton 392
[8] Cohen 207
[9] Braginton 393

a period or permanently, at an island or a specific place, and they were not forcibly removed, but rather given a date by which to vacate their home.[10] On the other hand, those who suffered *interdictio* or were deported were removed by force, often with armed guards accompanying them. In addition, a *relegatus* retained civil rights and some, if not all of his property, while one interdicted or deported could only keep a limited amount of property and lost his citizenship and rights, such as the right to write a will, *patria potestas*, and the right to wear a toga.[11] All in all, it was far preferable to be punished with relegation than by interdiction or deportation.

Ovid and Seneca's Exiles and Works

Both Ovid and Seneca served sentences of relegation, with Ovid serving a life sentence, while Seneca was eventually recalled to Rome. Ovid was banished by Augustus in 8 CE, and was sent to Tomis, a town on the outskirts of the empire. He retained his civil rights and his citizenship, and was not forcibly removed from Rome, but was given a date by which to leave the city. He describes his departure in *Tristia* I.iii with considerable drama, going so far as to compare the effect his punishment had on him to the sack of Troy. Ovid himself states that the cause of his exile was *"carmen et error"* but it is never explicit as to what his mistake was.[12] Scholars tend to agree that the song to which the poet refers is the *Ars Amatoria*, which must have irritated Augustus, known for his emphasis on morality.[13] [14] During his years in exile, Ovid produced two books of

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[10] Grebe 506-507
[11] Braginton 396-397
[12] Ovid, *Tr*. II.207
[13] Coon 366
[14] Thibault 70-72

poetry, the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, composing the *Tristia* first, beginning even on the journey to Tomis in 9 CE. He composed books I-III of the *Epistulae ex Ponto* in 12-13 CE, and the fourth book between 13-16 CE. During his exile he also wrote the *Ibis*, a poetic work of invective directed toward the pseudonymous Ibis.[15] Although Ovid campaigned for the remission of his punishment throughout his exile, and called upon resources at home and abroad,[16] he was never recalled by Augustus or his successor Tiberius, and died in Tomis in 17 or 18.[17] Ovid's exile in Tomis was an unhappy one, and he fought for his return to Rome consistently. Of his many complaints about his new home on the Black Sea, Ovid especially took offense to the warlike nature of the Tomitans, and their difference in language--Latin was not spoken at Tomis.[18] He did not get along well with the Tomitans, who were composed of a mixture of Mediterannean and non-Mediterranean peoples.[19] He also reviled the weather and the distance from Rome, as it took a very long time for correspondence to travel between the two cities.

Another famous Roman *relegatus* was Lucius Annaeus Seneca, born 4 BCE, exiled under Claudius in 41 CE, and recalled by Claudius in 49. The crime for which Seneca was punished was adultery with Julia Livilla, sister of Agrippina. Initially Seneca was sentenced to death, but the penalty was changed to exile on the island of Corsica.[20] Most historians agree that the charge of adultery cannot be affirmed or denied, but that it was well-known that Seneca and Messalina, Claudius' wife, were political enemies.

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[15] Wheeler xxxiii-xxxvii
[16] Coon 368
[17] Evans 55
[18] Coon 364
[19] Davis 266-267
[20] Burriss 10-11

Seneca had well-known positive relationships with Crispus Passienus,[21][22] who was linked to Agrippina, and with Polybius, Claudius' secretary and the recipient of one of his consolations, who was later executed on Messalina's orders, so it is believable that Messalina played a controlling role in Seneca's punishment. In addition, Seneca's favorable relationship with the minority faction at Rome, controlled by Agrippina, further corroborates this theory, especially when considered in conjunction with his later recall by Claudius, likely influenced by Agrippina herself.[23] Like Ovid, Seneca was able to keep most of his property and he retained his citizenship. However, unlike Ovid, Seneca's place of exile seems to have been fairly hospitable. There was a contingent of other Roman exiles on Corsica, and the island itself was much nearer to major urban centers than Tomis was, with its location far-off at the edge of the empire.[24]

While in exile, Seneca wrote two philosophical consolations, *De Consolatione ad Polybium* and *De Consolatione ad Helviam*, addressed to Polybius, an imperial secretary, and to his mother Helvia.[25] His consolation to Polybius focuses on securing a recall from exile and was most likely written in the early months of 43 CE. Seneca carefully chose his recipient, as Polybius held various offices of power in Claudius' court. The consolation to Polybius is regarded as an open plea for recall from exile, and Seneca targeted a powerful man who might have been able to help him.[26] When Seneca wrote this consolation, Polybius held the office *a libellis*, which meant that he assisted the emperor with literary works, and occasionally served as an official librarian, often

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[21] The subject of epigram 405, *Ad Optimum Amicum*
[22] Burriss 14
[23] Kamp 102
[24] Braginton 400
[25] Fantham 182
[26] Ferrill 255

dealing with petitions to the emperor. Seneca hoped that a plea to a man who was so close to the emperor would help him return to Rome. However, his endeavor was unsuccessful and he was to remain in exile for another 6 years, while Polybius fell out of grace and was executed on Messalina's orders in 48 CE.[27] [28] Seneca's consolation to Helvia, his mother, was written with the goal of consoling her as she grieved over his exile. This consolation is unique, as traditionally a consolation would be written to console a person after the death of a loved one, and in this case it is the missing loved one who is consoling the bereaved. In this consolation he attempts to convince Helvia that he has not suffered any harm while in exile, and he insists that he is spending his time in exile engaged in study,[29] not mourning his loss.

In addition to his more widely read prose works from exile, there is a collection of epigrams attributed to Seneca during his time in Corsica. Of about seventy-five epigrams, three are definitively ascribed to Seneca, and the others have varying degrees of authenticity, contested hotly by various scholars throughout the last few centuries. The theory of Senecan authorship is corroborated by the rhetorical style of the epigrams in addition to the subject-matter, especially the poems that explicitly deal with the island of Corsica, where Seneca lived out his sentence.[30] The epigrams range in subject matter with a few repeated themes: Corsica, the death of Cato, epitaphs of the Pompeys, praise for Caesar, the eternity of poetry, the value of a simpler life, several poems on death, and epigrams dealing with civil war. Harrington has analyzed the metrics and vocabulary of the collection of epigrams, and his recommendation is that we may "ascribe the bulk of

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[27] Burriss 16, 32
[28] Alexander 37
[29] Burriss 20
[30] Harrington 208

the collection to Seneca, with an indeterminate element of contemporary origin, and possibly a small accretion of later imitations."[31] This interpretation of the epigrams is more comprehensive than that of other scholars, who either, like Riese, claim that none of the epigrams are Senecan,[32] or, like Baehrens, believe that the entire collection belongs to Seneca.[33]

Manuscript Tradition

      This collection of seventy-odd Senecan epigrams is a vital contribution to the study of the poetic genre of exile, one that has often not been emphasized enough due to the complicated question of who exactly authored the poems[34]. Scholars such as Baehrens, Degl' Innocenti Pierini, and Harrington state confidently their belief that the epigrams can be attributed mostly, if not wholly, to Seneca,[35] and the biographer Villy Sørenson in his study of Seneca considers it likely that the epigrams may all be dated to the period of Seneca's exile.[36] Claassen agrees with the positive assessment of these scholars, but declines to give an in-depth examination of the poems, preferring to concentrate on Seneca's prose works from exile.[37] Prato, Riese, and Bailey have produced editions of the epigrams, and even more recently Breitenbach and Dingel have published commentaries on the poems. It is evident that this collection of epigrams is of scholarly interest to those in the field, but study of these sources has been limited mainly to

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[31] Harrington 215
[32] Harrington 207
[33] Harrington 207
[34] Höschele 459
[35] Harrington 215
[36] Claassen 241
[37] Claassen 242

discussion on their authorship and validity. I propose to focus instead on the substance of the poems, and to determine their adherence and contribution to the poetic genre of exile. These epigrams are of special value because after Ovid, there are very few examples of Latin literature from exile, and even fewer in verse. As a result of this scarcity, the study of the poetic genre of exile often halts with just one example--Ovid. In order to more fully understand and bolster the argument for a distinct poetic genre of exile, these Senecan epigrams cannot be ignored, and could provide a valuable addition to the field.

The Senecan epigrams were discovered by 16th century French scholars in the form of two 9th century manuscripts.[38] Three epigrams (Riese 232, 236, and 237, or Baehrens 1, 2, and 3) appeared in the Codex Salmasianus and in the Codex Thuanaeus, and they were transcribed under a heading of Seneca's name. Specifically, the name of Seneca appeared before poem 232, and before poem 236, and there was no delineation between poems 236 and 237. In later manuscripts, 236 and 237 continued to appear together with no separation.[39] Because of their appearance directly underneath the name of Seneca, these three epigrams are generally agreed by most who have studied them to be of authentic Senecan authorship. The Codex Salmasianus has been dated to the 7th or 8th century, and in its current state has lost the first 176 pages, while the Codex Thuanaeus was written in the 9th or 10th centuries.[40] In discussions of the manuscript tradition, Riese refers to the Codex Salmasianus as A, and the Codex Thuanaeus as B. The poems in B are believed to derive from an ancestor of A, according to Armstrong.[41] Additionally, epigram 232 is said to have appeared in the lost codex Bellovacensis sive

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[38] Armstrong 9
[39] Holzberg 425
[40] Armstrong 5
[41] Armstrong 5

Binetianus, which was used by Claudius Binetus in his 1579 edition of the Petronian

epigrams.[42]

Poems 236 and 237 then appeared in the Codex Vossianus (designated V,

according to Riese),[43] followed by the sixty-seven pieces that compose the rest of the

collection. The Codex Leidensis Vossianus Latinus Q. 86 was written in Fleury or Tours

around the year 850, and made its way to the monastery at Cluny in the 12th century,

where it stayed until the destruction of the monastery in 1562.[44] Then it was transferred

into the private library of Jacques Cujas (1522-1590) in Valence, where it was discovered

and edited by Joseph Justus Scaliger in 1572.[45] Scaliger's edition, *Appendix Vergiliana*,

presented almost 100 of the poems in the Codex Vossianus. However, since in the Codex

Vossianus there was no authorial indication for any of the poems, and he had not seen

either the Codex Salmasianus or the Codex Thuanaeus, Scaliger presented the poems

without attribution. After Scaliger, Pithoeus released "Epigrammata et Poematia vetera"

in 1590, arranging the epigrams thematically. Pithoeus was familiar with the Codex

Thuanaeus and in his edition he attributed the group entirely to Seneca.[46]

In the 17th century nine epigrams were customarily attributed to Seneca, known

as the "Traditional Nine": 232, 236, 237, 396, 405, 409, 410, 412, and 441 (according to

Riese's numbering system).[47] These nine epigrams remained the only poems agreed to be

of Senecan origin, until the mid-19th century. Riese's *Anthologia Latina* was published

in 1869, and he attempted to arrange the poems from these codices chronologically by

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[42] Armstrong 6-7
[43] Riese xxvii
[44] Armstrong 10
[45] Armstrong 11
[46] Armstrong 11
[47] Armstrong 12

source, and he shied away from liberally assigning Senecan authorship to the poems.[48]

Baehrens chose to arrange the poems chronologically by presumed author in his *Poetae Latini Minores* of 1879, and was much more sweeping in his interpretation, attributing more than seventy epigrams to Seneca.[49] Various other scholars attempted other forms of organization and treatment of the poems, choosing to include or exclude different epigrams based on their personal views of the authenticity of the epigrams. According to Dingel, "the number of accepted Senecan poems was greatest in Baehrens's *Poetae Latini Minores* (1882). Since then, even optimists have become more guarded."[50] The numbering systems of each of these editions also differ due to the opinions of the editor. The result is that the history of the epigrams remains murky and confusing, and different editions have been produced with vastly different organizational structures, making study of the epigrams fairly arduous. Moreover, most study of the poems has remained fixated on the authorship and authenticity of the collection, and has stopped short of analysis of the poetry itself or the role it played in a larger context.

The lack of heading in the Codex Vossianus is the main reason for all of the debate on the authorship of the poetry. Scholars who argue against Senecan authorship mainly cite this lack of attribution, saying that since there is no indication of author, the poems could have been written by anyone and just compiled into the manuscript with the two Senecan poems.[51] The theory of Senecan authorship for all seventy epigrams is argued on the basis of the proximity of the group of sixty-seven epigrams to the two epigrams that are more definitively attributed to Seneca, a line of reasoning which

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[48] Harrington 206
[49] Reeve 175
[50] Dingel 689-690
[51] Holzberg 427

Armstrong refers to as "the argument of propinquity,"[52] as well as the numerous

similarities in content throughout the collection. As discussed above, the collection of

epigrams focuses on a few different themes and subjects, and many of those main ideas,

especially Corsica, death, and the eternity of poetry, make a lot of sense when

considering an author like Seneca.[53] Bruére asserts that "the manner and themes of most

of the poems suggest that if they were not composed by the philosopher, they were the

work of a person or persons of mentality and literary background similar to his."[54]

Further studies have been done on the rhetorical style of the epigrams, the metrics, and

the vocabulary, comparing these attributes to other Senecan works[55] and works by

authors contemporaneous with the philosopher, and according to Harrington, the

epigrams could easily fit within the time that Seneca would have written. He argues that

because of the evidence presented by the word choice and the subject matter, the theory

of Senecan authorship is viable.[56] In 1910 Emil Herfurth argued that the poems should be

dated to Seneca's exile, and he used *loci similes* to draw comparisons between Seneca and

Ovid, with particular emphasis on the imitation of Ovidian exile poetry.[57] Holzberg

argues for a later author impersonating Seneca,[58] and other scholars have opinions

ranging in all directions. Carlo Prato recently stated in his edition of the epigrams that the

question of authorship was ultimately insoluble.[59] However, regardless of the ongoing

debate of absolute authorship, scholars tend to agree that the poems were written in the

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[52] Armstrong 18
[53] Butler 36-37
[54] Bruére 67
[55] Hinds 57
[56] Harrington 215
[57] Armstrong 21-22
[58] Holzberg 442
[59] Armstrong 28

voice of the banished philosopher, and it is precisely due to this agreement that this project does not deal extensively with the authorial debate. Whoever the true author of the epigrams was, whether it was indeed Seneca writing from his place of punishment, or a later author writing in his voice, or, as Holzberg argues, a group of later scholars splicing together bits of Senecan poetry in order to create an elaborate fake--whoever was responsible for these epigrams was participating in the poetic genre of exile.

Although the authorship and authenticity of these epigrams may never be satisfactorily proven, that is not a reason to neglect their study. Discussion of Roman exile poetry often stops after just one example: Ovid. Because the analysis ends so prematurely, it is difficult to argue for the existence of the poetic genre of exile without any evidence. These epigrams are clearly meant to be poetry from exile, whether or not the author was actually the exile himself. By examining these poems in light of the genre, greater strides can be made toward understanding the poetic genre of exile and its importance in the ancient world. For the purpose of this study, and for clarity and practicality, the author of the epigrams will be referenced as Seneca, although the authorial question remains. Additionally, the numbering system used throughout this analysis will be that of Riese, as has been traditional in the history of study of these poems. However, in one or two cases, I work with an epigram that does not appear in Riese's edition of the *Anthologia Latina*, but which has been included in the broader edition by Baehrens. In these instances, the number given will refer to the order in Baehrens's *Poetae Latini Minores*, and the change will be stated. Translations of Latin text will be mine, and the full texts and translations for the epigrams used will be available in the Appendix.

Defining the Genre

The study of Latin literature from exile has focused mainly on what Jan-Felix Gaertner referred to as *trias exulum*: Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca. Gaertner warns that the "unnatural" emphasis on these authors is a result of contemporary interest in literature from exile, not ancient interest, and of the application of a modern understanding of exile to classical literature.[60] Since these authors are the most prolific of the genre that survive, they can give a lot of insight into the study of exilic literature, but scholars must be careful not to give them too much weight, since undoubtedly many other sources of exile literature were lost to us. In addition, an understanding of exile in ancient times is vital when studying these sources, since the concept of exile has changed immeasurably.[61] It is important not to apply modern conceptions of exile to ancient writings about the subject, since ancient and modern exiles share little in common apart from their name.[62] Gaertner reviews the two main approaches that have been used in the study of literature from exile: Doblhofer's psychological analysis and Claassen's narrative and grammatical organization.[63] In this study I build upon Claassen's definition of the literary genre of exile, but focus more specifically on the poetic genre as seen in the works of Ovid and Seneca.

Claassen explains the literary genre of exile as follows: she begins by grouping together all literature about exile into a single essential genre, citing Horatian, Aristotelian, and Alexandrian forms of organization. In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace emphasized the importance both of authorial purpose and the role of the reader in

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[60] Gaertner 14
[61] Gorman 19
[62] Coon 368
[63] Gaertner 87

literature, and he characterized the concept of genre using both meter and content (Claassen calls these "medium" and "object").[64] Claassen uses this Horatian viewpoint to justify the thematic approach she takes throughout her work, and explains that Horace followed Aristotle in his emphasis on the "object", or the content of the work. Alexandrian scholars also honored the object or content of the writing, concentrating on what Claassen calls the "criterion of circumstance", through which she reinforces her decision to combine all literature that discusses exile into a "generic study of the *literature of exile*."[65] After collecting all of her source material into a single defined genre, Claassen is then able to apply generic principles to the works. According to Claassen, Ovid was not only a participant in the literary genre of exile, but he was the creator of the more specific poetic genre of exile, and the first to formalize the *topoi*, or conventions, of the genre.[66] The poetic genre of exile was crystallized into its definite form by Ovid and was the culmination of a collection of traditions used to write about exile in antiquity. Claassen spends a considerable amount of time arguing for the existence of a distinct literary genre from exile. In fewer words, Gaertner corroborates her claim, stating that the treatment of exile in ancient literature depends not so much on personal experience of the exile-writer, but on literary and cultural canons followed by the exile-writer.[67] He states that many typical features, for example, of the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae Ex Ponto* have close precedents in earlier exile literature, and so cannot be attributed to the condition of exile, but they must be recognized as a reworking of the earlier literary tradition.

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[64] Claassen 13
[65] Claassen 14
[66] Claassen 230
[67] Gaertner 19

The earliest treatments of exile in antiquity focused on the oral narratives of return, easily apparent in the *Odyssey*. From there, an inventory of mythic exiles grew and became part of the cultural consciousness, with complaints about exile present in Greek tragedy, oration, and philosophy. The Cynics employed discussions of exile in their treatises, as did the Stoics, and the tradition of philosophical consolations on exile was widespread. According to Gaertner, all of the major motifs present in later discourse on exile had already been introduced by the 4th century CE and in the following centuries these motifs underwent recombination and adaptation.[68] The tradition of exile literature in Rome was a continuation of this recombination and adaptation, not an invention of a new genre. Roman exile literature would have been impossible without the framework of motifs of exile set out earlier by the Greeks: "The indebtedness of Cicero and Ovid to their predecessors becomes most noticeable in their reflection of the Greek philosophical discourse on exile."[69] Cicero and Ovid innovatively adapted the older tradition, changing it to fit the cultural and political context in which they lived.

For example, both Seneca and Ovid showed an adept familiarity with the tradition of philosophical consolations. Seneca's consolations from exile, the *De Consolatione ad Helviam* and *Ad Polybium* are clear interpretations of the consolatory style. In the epigrams, Seneca also often addresses friends as well and references philosophical concepts native to the consolatory tradition. In *Ex Ponto* I.3, Ovid refers back to the same tradition, not only in his descriptions of his surroundings, but also in his repeated comparisons between himself and wanderers like Odysseus and Aeneas and exiles like

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[68] Gaertner 12
[69] Gaertner 17

Themistocles and Aristides[70]. While Gaertner does not agree that exile literature should be considered a genre in itself, he does concede that within the works there are a "stock of literary roles that keep being re-enacted."[71]

Topoi of Exile

The *topoi*, tropes, or modes of exile literature can be defined as those characteristics themes which reoccur throughout and compose the building blocks of the genre. Claassen introduces the concept of *topoi* in the poetic genre of exile as observed in the poetry of Ovid, whom she credits with the invention of the genre. According to Claassen, *topoi* may be simple or complex, and may be employed traditionally or unconventionally, but what they have in common is that they work together to adapt conventional themes and cement a unified genre of exile poetry.[72] This definition reflects back upon the Aristotelian emphasis on the content of the work, or the "object" as a unifying criterion that Claassen cited in the first chapter of her book. She goes on to describe several examples of the *topoi* used by Ovid in the *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*. I propose to take this line of inquiry a step further and apply a study of traditional Ovidian exilic tropes to the epigrams of Seneca.

When studying the exile poetry of Ovid, several distinct themes stand out, some of which have been studied thoroughly, and some of which demand more examination. After these *topoi* have been defined and demonstrated, we can lift them out of the context of Ovidian poetry and search for them in Seneca's poetic works from exile.

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[70] Gaertner 16
[71] Gaertner 172
[72] Claassen 230

In this study, I will apply the following *topoi*:

- The eternity of poetry

- Description of barren or hostile landscapes

- Connection between exile and death

- Linguistic and cultural isolation

- Mythologizing of exile

These characteristic themes are present throughout the exile poetry of Ovid, and also appear in the epigrams attributed to Seneca. This thematic connection between the two authors cannot be attributed simply to their shared condition of exile. In establishing the poetic genre of exile, Ovid was clearly drawing upon a long tradition of writings from exile, and thirty years later, Seneca drew upon those same traditions in his writing, taking cues from Ovid and adhering purposefully to the generic style. The similarities between the two writers' poetry are too numerous to ascribe merely to the circumstances of their exile, especially since the two had such different experiences during the terms of their punishment. In his epigrams, Seneca was following the tenets of the poetic genre of exile as set out by Ovid in his poetry from Tomis, and that fact is clear if the poems are analyzed based on their exilic *topoi*.

The Eternity of Poetry

The epigrams of Seneca share a lot of common themes with the exile poetry of Ovid, but the similarities cannot be considered mere coincidence. Seneca was consciously operating within the stipulations of the poetic genre of exile as solidified by Ovid, and the references to Ovid within the epigrams are more than artistic allusion. By

employing the *topoi* indigenous to the genre, Seneca was deliberately participating and placing his poetry within the scope of a larger tradition.

One of the *topoi* apparent within the tradition of exile poetry is the emphasis on the eternity of poetry, and the power of literature to survive and exert power even when the poet is absent. The power of poetry is especially apparent in exile literature, as the poet often turns to his writing as a remedy for the pains of exile that he cannot physically escape. This significance is a repeated motif in the *Tristia* and the *Ex Ponto*, as Ovid often mentions his intention that his poetry will outlive him, and that his words will continue to influence the world after his death. Ovid directly addresses his works in *Tr.* I, when he instructs his book to fly to Rome and work in his favor. His imaginative personification of the poetry belies his belief in the power of his art, and indeed throughout his exile poetry Ovid writes with an eye on the future, anticipating that audiences will read his works after his death. This concept of the eternity of poetry fits in neatly with another *topos* of exile poetry: the comparison of exile to death, and the tradition of the exile's longing for his own death. Since the poets trust in the immortality of their work, their status as exiles, dead while living, is not as troubling, because the products of their creativity will outlive them and serve their interests.

The motif of immortal poetry is obviously present in several of Seneca's epigrams, and alluded to in many others. In the epigram that appears first in almost every collection, *De Qualitate Temporis,* number 232 in Riese's *Anthologia Latina*, Seneca describes the transient nature of worldly things and the supremacy of death over *omnia*:

7   *Omnia mors poscit. Lex est, non poena, perire:*
        Hic aliquo mundus tempore nullus erit.

7   Death devours all things. It is law, not punishment, to die:
        In time there will be no world here.

Although Seneca does not explicitly discuss the power of his poetry, if this poem is taken in context with the rest of the collection, it becomes apparent that although he states that time will destroy everything, he understands and values the fact that the only thing that will survive such destruction are his words.

In epigram 5 in Baehrens's edition of *Poetae Latini Minores*, *De Quieta Vita*, which does not appear in Riese's *Anthologia Latina,* Seneca requests that he be left in peace, "pauperis arva soli securaque carmina curem (line 9)"[73] living the life of a pauper with only his songs. All the poet needs from life are his poems, and this emphasis on his writings not only swings back to the motif of eternal poetry, but also to the philosophical tradition that was present in consolatory writing of focusing on reading and writing. Ovid and Seneca both address friends and family back home and assure them that they are each spending their time in leisurely pursuit of writing. Ovid states that his songs are his only comfort in exile,[74] and Seneca in his consolation to his mother comforts her by stating that he is using his empty hours fruitfully, in education, and that the recreation of writing is one of the gifts an exile has.

Epigram 242 from Riese's edition, *Unde Supra*, addresses Claudius and emphasizes again the poetry as a participant in the exile's life.

    Et vetuit relegi, si tu patiere, libellos,
        In quibus Aenean condidit ora sacro.

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[73] Baehrens epigram 5, line 9
[74] Ovid, *Tristia* IV.ii

5   *Roma rogat, precibusque isdem tibi supplicat orbis,*

                Ne pereant flammis tot monumenta ducum.

        Anne iterum Troiam, sed maior, flamma cremabit?

                Fac laudes Italum, fac tua gesta legi,

        Aeneidemque suam fac maior Mincius ornet:

        And it is forbidden that the little books, if you will allow it, be re-read

                in which he composed Aeneas with sacred word.

5   Rome asks, with prayers of the whole world she supplicates you,

                lest so many works of the leaders perish in flames.

        Will the flame not burn Troy again, but greater?

                See to it that you praise Italy, that your accomplishments be read,

        And that a greater Mincius[75] adorns your Aeneid.

In this middle portion of the epigram, Seneca discusses the famous works of Vergil, and expresses distress at the thought of his own works being banned or destroyed. If his poetry is the only way he will be remembered or exert influence after he is gone, it is expected that he would be very concerned at the potential destruction of his works. The verbs occur in the second person because the epigram as a whole is cloaked in a direct address to Claudius, with the speaker expressing distress over the absence of Vergil in the modern literary community at Rome. The speaker is concerned at the idea of vital works of literature being lost. Ovid in *Tristia* III describes a very similar situation, when he discusses his dismay at Augustus' choice to ban his works in the libraries of Rome. By referencing Vergil and the *Aeneid* and mirroring sentiments shared by Ovid, Seneca is placing himself within the tradition of Roman literature, as an active participant, to be remembered and read as widely as the two well-known authors. He is well aware, as

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[75] Mincius is the Latin name for the Mincio, a river in northern Italy that feeds into the Po, near Vergil's home region of Mantua, referenced by Vergil in *Aeneid* 10.206 "*Mincius infesta ducebat in aequora pinu*"

Ovid was, that the survival of his works will be key to the survival of his memory after death.

In *Ex Ponto* IV.xvi.1-4, Ovid states his trust in the survival of his works:

Invide, quid laceras Nasonis carmina rapti?
　　Non solet ingeniis summa nocere dies,
famaque post cineres maior venit. Et mihi nomen
　　tum quoque, cum vivis adnumerarer, erat:
Jealous one, why do you slander the songs of destroyed Naso?
　　The last day is not accustomed to harm genius,
and a greater fame comes after the ashes. There also was a name for me
　　even then, when I was counted among the living.

In this section, Ovid is emphasizing the staying power of his poetry. He states that fame is even greater after one is dead, and that his wisdom or genius cannot be destroyed. A mortal body may certainly die, but the works remain, and for Ovid, this is incredibly valuable, since his status in exile has rendered him desolate and powerless. Even with his change in station, his works still have power, and will live on after he has turned to ash. Interestingly, in epigram 418 in Riese's edition, Seneca expresses the same thought using extremely similar vocabulary: in line 5, he writes:

Ingenio *mors nulla* **nocet**, *vacat undique tutum*

No death harms genius, safe on all sides it is free from harm.

Compare this to line 2 of *Ex Ponto* IV.xvi:

Non solet **ingeniis** *summa* **nocere** *dies*

The greatest day is not accustomed to harm genius

Both Seneca and Ovid express the same idea using the same vocabulary. Seneca was familiar with Ovid's works and was purposefully using language that would remind a

reader of Ovid in order to engage his audience and draw attention to the generic

similarities between the authors. Not only was Seneca participating in the poetic genre of

exile, but he was taking it a step further by specifically drawing a parallel between his

poetry and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*.

Upon first reading, *Parcendum Misero*, number 396 in Riese's *Anthologia Latina*,

does not seem to fall under the *topos* of immortal poetry. Indeed, nowhere in the four

lines of this short epigram do any words of writing, literature, or poetry appear. However,

in reading this epigram addressed to an enemy, one can see shades of Seneca's belief in

the enduring power of his work. Holzberg's analysis of this poem is succinct and

compelling: he argues that the last sentence of this epigram, "*Victori vulnus iniquo /*

mortiferum impressit mortua saepe manus." (A dead hand has often pressed a deadly

wound upon an unjust victor), can be taken at more than face value.[76] The deadly wounds

inflicted by dead hands refer to the works of poetry that still sting the poet's enemies even

after his death. This reading is illuminating, especially taken in consideration with others

of Seneca's epigrams addressing an enemy.[77] Those whom the poet is not able to defeat in

life may be cut down later by his words, and they will continue to be punished as long as

his poetry is read.

Epigram 417 from the *Anthologia Latina*, *Memoriam Litteris Permanere*, clearly

states its theme even in the title, obviously adhering to the *topos* of poetic power. In this

epigram, Seneca emphasizes the impermanence of human-made things, in contrast to his

emphasis on nature in epigram 1. All of the mortal monuments will be leveled by the

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[76] Holzberg 433
[77] Epigram 396

passage of time, but "*carmina sola carent fato mortemque repellunt.*"[78] This is an explicit

statement of one of the main themes present in exile poetry, and Seneca's choice to write

on this theme appears to be an obvious reference to the traditions of the genre. Another

interesting facet of this poem is the nature of the monuments that Seneca is describing as

so fleeting. He mentions pyramids and a mausoleum, both of which structures are

tombs:[79]

> *Haec urbem circa stulti monumenta laboris*
>> *quasque vides moles, Appia, marmoreas,*
> *Pyramidasque ausas vicinum attingere caelum,*
>> *Pyramidas, medio quas fugit umbra die,*
>
> 5 et **Mausoleum, miserae solacia mortis**,
>> *intulit externum quo Cleopatra virum,*
> *Concutiet sternetque dies, quoque altius extat*
>> *quodque opus, hoc illud carpet edetque magis.*
>
> **Carmina sola carent fato mortemque repellunt;**
>
> 10 *carminibus vives semper, Homere, tuis.*
>
> You see these monuments of foolish labor around the city,
>> and what marble mountains you see, Appia,
> and pyramids having dared to touch the nearby sky,
>> pyramids, which the shadow flees in the middle of the day,
>
> 5 and a Mausoleum, a comfort of miserable death,
>> into which Cleopatra brought her foreign husband.
> A day will shake and scatter these, and where the work projects higher,
>> and that day will seize the work, and it will devour it more.
>
> **Songs alone lack fate and push death away;**
>
> 10 you live always in your songs, Homer.

---

[78] Epigram 417, line 9
[79] Rozelaar 110

This is yet another example of the connection between exile and death, in contrast to the immortality of poetry, and this point will be discussed further on. Claassen weighs in on this epigram as well, stating "the thought of the poem is Ovidian, although its major metaphor, the impermanence even of the Egyptian pyramids, is a conflation of strains from the tradition of the immortalizing power of poetry, familiar also from Horace."[80] Seneca was building upon a well-documented poetic tradition, and showcasing his education and facility with his poetic predecessors while carving out his own space in the genre.

In *Ex Ponto* III.ii, addressed to Cotta, Ovid praises the loyalty of his friend, and goes on to discuss the immortality of his words in lines 27-36:

> *Tunc igitur meriti morietur gratia vestri,*
>> *cum cinis absumpto corpore factus ero.*
> *fallor, et illa meae superabit tempora vitae,*
30   *si tamen a memori posteritate legar.*
> *Corpora debentur maestis exsanguia* **bustis***:*
>> **effugiunt structos** *nomen honorque* **rogos***.*
> *Occidit et Theseus et qui comitavit Oresten:*
>> *sed tamen in laudes vivit uterque suas.*
35 *Vos etiam seri laudabunt saepe nepotes,*
>> *claraque erit scriptis gloria vestra meis.*

> So then will my gratefulness for your merit die,
>> when my worn-out body will be made into ashes--
> I am decieved: and it will survive the time of my life,
30   if nevertheless I will be read by memory and posterity.
> The bloodless body is owed to the grieving tomb;
>> name and honor flee the constructed pyre.

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[80] Claassen 242

Both Theseus and he who accompanied Orestes died,

but yet each one lives within his own praises.

35   Late descendants will also praise you,

and your fame will be shining through my writings.

In this passage, Ovid is not citing the power of his works to preserve his own memory, but is using the theme of immortal poetry to argue that his praise of his friend will live forever. Seneca directly mirrors the themes presented by Ovid in the section above in epigrams 417 and 418 in the edition by Riese, both titled *Memoriam litteris permanere*. By using the words for tomb, such as *mausoleum* and *bustus*, as well as the words for ashes and pyre, *cineris* and *rogus*, Ovid and Seneca are both creating a very vivid mental image for their readers. Seneca describes funerary monuments to emphasize the visual remnants of death, and compare those visible remains to the undying but invisible works of poetry.

Epigram 418 bears the same name and topic as number 417 and likewise extols the immortality of poetry. Seneca states that nothing is built which is not destroyed and that while men may spend their time building huge monuments, works of literature are always safe from the ravages of time and will serve as a worthier monument than those of stone. It is safer, in Seneca's opinion, to compose lofty works of literature than to build lofty monuments, because one will inevitably fall while the other will survive and carry on its creator's legacy.

The eternity of verse is just one *topos* fundamental to the genre of exile poetry, but examination of this motif is an excellent way to begin understanding how Seneca used the conventions of exile poetry to guide his writing and to add even more to the genre. Seneca shows obvious familiarity not only with Ovid's exile poetry but also with

prose works from the exilic tradition, especially philosophical consolations, not only in his use of philosophical concepts in his epigrams but by virtue of his production of consolations from exile, the *De Consolatione ad Helviam* and *ad Polybium*. Seneca uses that fluency and familiarity with the larger tradition within his epigrams, weaving in various references and allusions among his original thoughts. The exiled poet suffered not only the loss of his home and the comforts that came with it, but he often also suffered a loss of power and influence. Far from Rome, Ovid no longer enjoyed the same wild popularity, and Seneca's words did not resonate as far as they had. Because of this feeling of powerlessness, exiles turned to their writing to regain control and believed and wrote about the lasting power of their verse, perhaps in order to cope with their change in station. The metaphor of immortal poetry was not original to either Ovid or Seneca but came down through a larger literary tradition. However, Ovid's inclusion of this *topos* in his crystallization of the genre of exile poetry changed the meaning and significance of the motif and embedded it in the genre of exile poetry. It is with this understanding that Seneca employed the theme in his epigrams.

Description of Landscapes

In epigrams 236 and 237, Seneca describes the island to which he has been exiled. Corsica, according to Seneca, is barren, hostile, and unwelcoming. The descriptions of the place of exile are very similar to Ovid's descriptions of Tomis, especially in *Tristia* III.x, III.xiii, and V.v, wherein Ovid describes Tomis as completely inhospitable, a land where nothing grows and the earth is savage.

Tristia III.x.70-78

70 *cessat iners rigido terra relicta situ.*

*Non hic **pampinea** dulcis latet **uva** sub umbra,*

  nec cumulant altos fervida musta lacus.

***Poma** negat regio, nec haberet Acontius in quo*

  scriberet hic dominae verba legenda suae.

75 ***Aspiceres nudos sine fronde, sine arbore**, campos:*

  heu loca felici non adeunda viro!

Ergo tam late pateat cum maximus orbis,

  haec est in poenam terra reperta meam!

70 The earth abandoned in a rough site rests, idle.

Not here does the sweet grape hide in the viny shade,

  nor does the boiling young wine overflow the deep tanks!

Fruits are refused in this region, nor here would Acontius have anything

  on which to write the words for his mistress to read.

75 You might look out on naked fields without foliage, without trees--

  a place, alas! not to be visited by a lucky man.

This, then, while the great world lies open so wide,

  this is the land obtained for my punishment!

Arguments have been made that these poetic descriptions of hostile lands were not choices made by the author, but rather true description of the geography of the lands. However, if the places of exile are actually studied, it is found that the descriptions by Ovid and Seneca are highly dramatized and very similar, although the two places are different. Ovid's highly negative descriptions of Tomis are distortions of the actual geographical and social facts, and lack reliability and accuracy, serving to emphasize his own personal negative feelings about his place of exile.[81]

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[81] Grebe 500

While Tomis was very far from Rome and located on the Black Sea, it is unlikely that the winters would have actually been as harsh as Ovid describes so often and so vividly, famously in *Tristia* III.x where, among other descriptions, he states that the winters in Tomis are so cold that wine freezes solid, and guests at dinner parties are served wine in blocks instead of glasses.[82] In fact, the latitude of Tomis is not that much further north than Rome. However, Ovid took facts about his place of exile and expanded upon them to create a poetic *topos* used within the literary genre of exile poetry. Likewise, if Seneca's descriptions of Corsica are compared to other ancient sources describing the island, Seneca's view becomes the outlier. Seneca's harborless, barren, rocky Corsica does not match descriptions by Theophrastus, who stated that the island was full of trees,[83] and by Pliny who also mentions positively Corsica's trees in his *Natural History.*[84]

These sources directly contradict Seneca's claim of a "vasta" Corsica, where "nulla in infausto nascitur herba solo."[85]

Seneca links Corsica and Tomis in his consolation to his mother: as he describes his opinions on the philosophical nature of exile, he discusses Greek cities in barbarian territories, and eventually comes to discuss Miletus and her various colonies, of which Tomis was one. Additionally, in the same consolation, Seneca refers to a severe winter in the Pontic region, a detail which was very vivid in Ovid.[86] Unfortunately, Gahan's comparison stops at the consolations, leaving a gap in our study of the link between Ovid

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[82] *Tristia* III.x.15-16
[83] *Hist. Pl.* 5.8.2
[84] Gahan 146
[85] *Ad Polyb.* III.6
[86] Gahan 145

and Seneca's descriptions of exile. In the consolations written by Seneca from exile, it is clear that he employed several of the *topoi* of exile present in Ovid's exilic works, a similarity that corroborates the argument of Senecan authorship as well as the theory of an exilic genre, if not a poetic genre of exile.

The two epigrams describing Corsica are incredibly valuable because they offer an example of a poetic description of exile that can be compared directly to Ovid's exile poetry.

Riese 236, *De Corsica*

>*Corsica piscosis **pervia** fluminibus,*
>
>5   *Corsica terribilis, cum primum incanduit aestas,*
>
>   *Saevior, ostendit cum ferus ora Canis:*
>
>Corsica, passable through fishy rivers,
>
>5   Terrible Corsica, when first summer heats you,
>
>   more savage, when the wild dog opens its mouths:

Ex Ponto IV.x.31

>*hic agri infrondes, hic spicula tincta venenis,*
>
>   *hic freta vel pediti **pervia** reddit hiems...*
>
>Here there are lands without a leaf, here are darts dyed in poison,
>
>   here the winter makes even the sea a highway for one on foot...

In these two sections, both authors are describing the harsh weather of their places of exile. Ovid complains of the freezing winter at Tomis, so cold that the sea freezes solid. Seneca describes the heat of the summer in Corsica: *terribilis* at the onset of summer and *saevior* as the season progresses. While each author fixates on a different season to describe, both poems have in common a dramatization of the weather. A further link between the two descriptions is the word *pervia*, used by Ovid to describe *freta*, a

narrow strait or sea, and by Seneca to describe Corsica itself and the rivers on the island.

Seneca's choice to use this descriptor in relation to waterways in a passage negatively

describing a season was purposeful, and further links the epigram to Ovid's works.

Riese 237, *De Corsica*

> *Barbara praeruptis inclusa est Corsica saxis,*
>> *horrida; desertis undique vasta locis.*
> *Non **poma** autumnus, **segetes non educat aestas***
>> *canaque **Palladio munere** bruma caret*

5   *Imbriferum nullo ver est laetabile fetu*
>> *nullaque in infausto nascitur herba solo.*
> *Non panis, non haustus aquae, non ultimus ignis;*
>> *Hic sola haec duo sunt: exul et exilium.*

> Barbarian Corsica is enclosed by toppled rocks,
>> Shaggy Corsica; desolate on all sides in deserted places.
> Autumn does not produce fruit, summer does not bring grains
>> and white winter lacks Palladian gifts.

5   Rainy spring is never happy in childbirth
>> and no grass is born in this unfortunate earth,
> No bread, no drawing up of water, no final fire;
>> Here there are only two: the exiled man and his place of exile.

In epigram 237, Corsica is described as rocky (*praeruptis saxis)*, desolate

(*desertis locis, vasta)*, unlucky in harvest (*infausta solo*) hot (*non haustus aquae*), and

barren (*nullaque herba*). This negative, dramatized description of the place of exile is a

direct inheritance from Ovid's exilic verse, and, Claassen argues, from the longer

tradition of writings from exile: "The depiction of his place of exile as uninhabitable may

be traced back to the consolatory *topos* prevalent long before Ovid: choice of a place of

exile, giving preference to the solitude and safe intellectual retreat offered by even the

most inhospitable of rocky islands."[87] Claassen is referring to the tradition of

philosophical consolation which originated with the Greeks, in which a major point of

thought was that exile offered a freedom of time best spent in contemplation, and that

contemplation could best be achieved in an inhospitable place, so that the philosopher

would not be distracted by comforts. Ovid was a student of that consolatory tradition, and

adopted it into his writings, inverting it and transforming it into one of the *topoi* that

makes up the genre of exile poetry. Seneca took that motif and used it not only within his

prose works from exile, but especially in his epigrams and described Corsica not as it

actually was, but poetically so as to recall Ovidian themes and participate in the genre.[88]

Ex Ponto III.viii.13-16

        *Vellera dura ferunt pecudes, et **Palladis** uti*
10   *arte Tomitanae non didicere nurus.*
        *Femina pro lana Cerealia **munera** frangit,*
             suppositoque gravem vertice portat aquam.
        Non hic pampineis amicitur vitibus ulmus,
             *nulla premunt ramos pondere **poma** suo.*
15   *Tristia deformes pariunt absinthia campi,*
             terraque de fructu quam sit amara docet.

        The flocks produce a coarse fleece, and
10   the daughters of Tomis have not learned the craft of Pallas.
        Instead of working the wool they grind Ceres' gifts,
             or carry heavy burdens of water supported on their heads.
        Here no clustering vines cloak the elms,
             no fruits bend the branches with their weight.
15   Harsh wormwood is the product of the unsightly plains,
             and by this fruit the land proclaims its own bitterness.

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[87] Claassen 242
[88] Hinds 64

This section of the *Ex Ponto* shares a lot of similarities with the second epigram *De Corsica* (Anth. Lat. 237), printed above. In both, the poet references Pallas and her skills: Ovid in relation to the practice of weaving, while in the context of the Senecan epigram, the *Palladium munus* probably refers to olives. Both places, according to the poets, lack the crops and fair weather of Italy and are much more inhospitable places of residence for the exiles. The plaintive tones used by both writers, in addition to the specific descriptions of the shortcomings of their surroundings, emphasize the connection between Seneca and Ovid. However, as discussed above, Corsica was not nearly as desolate and unfortunate as Seneca would lead his readers to believe. Instead of accurately describing his place of exile, Seneca was adhering to the *topos* of negative descriptions of places of exile by dramatizing the negative aspects of Corsica, in order to participate in the poetic genre of exile set out by Ovid.

Exile and Death

One theme that appears in the exile poetry of both Seneca and Ovid is the comparison of exile to death. According to Claassen, the relationship between exile and death was due to the use of both as punishment: exile was often a substitution for or a lessening of the death penalty. This could explain why it was so common in exile literature for exile to be presented as a fate equal to death.[89] Philosophical consolations made up a large portion of writings from exile, and they turned the traditional consolation on its head, replacing the cause of the need for consolation, normally the death of a loved one, with the exile of a still-living friend. Cicero's writings from exile are mainly

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[89] Claassen 10-11

comprised of his letters and his consolations, and Seneca wrote two consolations from exile as well. Exile and death were linked not only politically, but conceptually and philosophically, and it is with knowledge of that linkage that Ovid introduced and confirmed the *topos* of exile as death in the poetry of exile.

In *Ex Ponto* IV.xvi, Ovid refers to himself repeatedly as one who is already dead.

Ergo summotum patria proscindere, Livor,

     desine, neu cineres sparge, cruente, meos.

Omnia perdidimus: tantummodo vita relicta est,

50   *praebeat ut sensum materiamque mali.*

Quid iuvat extinctos ferrum demittere in artus?

     Non habet in nobis iam nova plaga locum.

Therefore, Malice, cease to castigate one expelled from his country;

     do not scatter my ashes, evil one!

I have lost all; merely life remains

50   to supply the sense and the substance of sadness.

What does it please you to send the steel into my limbs already dead?

     There is no place in me now for a new wound.

The lines above appear at the end of a relatively long poem in Book IV of the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, believed to have been written between 13 and 16 CE. The poems in this book were the latest ones written by Ovid during his exile, and he died not long after writing them, in 17 or 18 CE. By the time the poems in *Ex Ponto* IV were written, Ovid had finished experimenting with his exilic style and had firmly established the conventions of the genre. His inclusion of references to his death at the end of this poem was a purposeful contribution to the *topos* of exile as death. Ovid refers to his own ashes in line 48, and in line 49 asserts that he has lost everything, that life is the only thing that remains for him. It is understood, though, that a life in exile is considered next to death,

so the poet's remaining life does not mean much. In the final two lines of the poem, Ovid complains at the wounds that continue to be inflicted upon him, stating that his limbs are already dead--he uses the word *extinctos*. He also says that his body is already so full of wounds that there is no room for any more injury.

Similarities abound between this poem, which Ovid addressed to an enemy, and Senecan epigram 396 in the edition by Riese, titled *Parcendum misero* and also addressed to an enemy of the author.

> *Occisum iugulum quisquis scrutaris amici,*
>> *tu miserum necdum me satis esse putas?*
> *Desere confossum! Victori vulnus iniquo*
>> *Mortiferum impressit mortua saepe manus.*
> Whoever searches for the throat of a friend to kill,
>> do you think that I am not wretched enough?
> Leave the fatally wounded! A dead hand has often pressed
>> a deadly wound on an unjust victor.

This epigram was analyzed above in light of the *topos* of immortal poetry, but it also includes the common theme of exile as death. Just as in *Ex Ponto* IV.xvi, the poet characterizes himself as already dead, or on the cusp of death. Seneca depicts himself also as in combat with an enemy, ordering his foe to leave him alone, because he is already so defeated. Ovid does the same thing, when he addresses personified Malice and instructs her to desist her torment, because he has already lost so much. Both poets use the imperative mood to order their tormentors to stop their torture. Like Ovid, Seneca also presents himself as already dead, with his *mortua manus*. Both authors are undergoing persecution in exile, and they both compare their anguish to death.

Ovid characterizes himself as already dead as well in *Tristia* III.xi.25-32,

probably written 9-10 CE. In this passage as well, Ovid uses the imperative mood to

address his tormentor, just as he does later in the *Epistulae Ex Ponto* and as Seneca will

in his epigram.

25   *Non sum ego quod fueram. Quid inanem proteris umbram?*
               Quid cinerem saxis bustaque nostra petis?
       Hector erat tunc cum bello certabat; at idem
               vinctus ad Haemonios non erat Hector equos.
       Me quoque, quem noras olim, non esse memento:
30   *ex illo superant haec simulacra viro.*
       Quid simulacra, ferox, dictis incessis amaris?
               Parce, precor, Manes sollicitare meos!

25   I am not what I was. Why do you tread upon a futile shadow?
               Why do you attack my ashes and my tomb with stones?
       Hector was himself then when he fought in war, but once
               he was bound to the Haemonian steeds he was no longer Hector.
       I, too, whom you once knew, am no longer:
30   remember; of that man only this ghost survives.
       Why, evil man, do you attack a shade with bitter words?
               Cease, I beg you Manes, to harass my shade.

As an exile, Ovid is not only suffering a punishment comparable to death, but

indeed he feels as if he is already dead. He is cut off from his family, his previous life,

and all of the pursuits he had formerly enjoyed. His friends and associates are forgetting

him, and, to him, he might as well already be dead. He certainly is not the same man he

used to be--*non sum ego quod fueram*. Exile changes a man, Ovid would argue, to the

same extent that death does. This practice of characterizing the exile as a dead man is

present in Ovid's poetry and in Seneca's, and there is a purposeful thematic connection

between the condition of exile and death. Both poets often walk the line between life and death and go back and forth in describing themselves: sometimes living, sometimes dead, and sometimes, as in the excerpt above, as a shade. For the exiled poet, the condition of exile is one on the verge: between civilization and desertion, between friendship and abandonment, and between life and death. These issues are all addressed in Ovid's exile poetry, and are brought up again by Seneca in his epigrams as part of the poetic genre of exile.

Seneca and Ovid both also connect death and exile by making reference to their own burials. Ovid, in *Tristia* III.iii, lines 70-77, says:

70   *inque suburbano condita pone solo;*
quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,
        grandibus in tituli marmore caede notis:
HIC EGO QUI IACEO TENERORUM LUSOR AMORUM
        INGENIO PERII NASO POETA MEO
75   *AT TIBI QUI TRANSIS NE SIT GRAVE QUISQUIS AMASTI*
        DICERE NASONIS MOLLITER OSSA CUBENT
Hoc satis in titulo est.

70   Lay him to rest in suburban soil,
and on the marble carve lines which the traveler should read
        with a hastening eye, lines in large letters:
I, WHO LIE HERE, A PLAYER OF TENDER LOVES,
        NASO, THE POET, I DIED BY MY GENIUS.
75   BUT AS YOU GRAVELY PASS BY, WHOEVER YOU, A LOVER, ARE,
        DO NOT NEGLECT TO SAY, 'LET THE BONES OF NASO REST SOFTLY.'
This is enough for the inscription.

Seneca also draws upon the traditional Latin epitaph in his poem *De Corsica*, number 236 in Riese's edition of *Anthologia Latina*:

7   *Parce relegatis; hoc est: iam parce solutis!*
          Vivorum cineri sit tua terra levis!

7   Spare them having been relegated; this is it: spare them set free!
          Let your earth be light with the ashes of the living.

In this epigram the poet is directly addressing Corsica, the island of his exile. The first three quarters of the poem is an unflattering description of Corsica, and this last couplet is a plea for the island to treat the exile gently. In both of these excerpts, the poets are referencing a line that appeared on numerous Roman epitaphs and became part of the formula for Roman funerary inscriptions: *sit tibi terra levis*, which was used so often that it was eventually abbreviated to S.T.T.L.[90] This phrase appeared at the end of funerary inscriptions, just as the similar line appears at the end of the Senecan epigram, and Ovid's reference appears at the end of his fictional epitaph, if not at the end of the entire poem. Both excerpts show that the authors were familiar with this traditional line of an epitaph, and they chose to allude to it in order to emphasize the connection between the exile and death. Both authors subvert the traditional formula: in Ovid's poem, he seeks a gentle rest for his bones, and does not use any of the language from the epitaph directly. However, his use of the present subjunctive form of *cubo* reflects the present subjunctive of *sum* used in epitaphs, and the sense of the line is extremely similar. Seneca, on the other hand, almost directly uses the formula, changing only one word--*tibi* to *tua*. This substitution shifts the meaning of line from the self-contained phrase to emphasize the *vivorum cineris* present at the beginning of the line. Interestingly, Ovid and Seneca both chose to

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[90] Sandys 63

include physical parts of the dead in their pseudo-epitaphs, with Ovid's bones (*ossa*) and

Seneca's ashes (*cinera*). The inclusion of these physical remnants in the poems, as well as

the allusions to tradition of epitaphs, results in a bold connection between the concepts of

exile and death. The poets in exile are composing their own versions of epitaphs as they

suffer a fate comparable to death.

The *topos* of equating exile with death goes along perfectly with the *topos* of the

immortal power of poetry since, if the poet is to suffer from the death of exile, the only

thing that will survive to carry out his legacy will be his writings. Therefore it comes as

no surprise that both of these *topoi* feature heavily in the exile poetry of Ovid and Seneca.

There are direct references to death in both poets' works, as they each style themselves as

characters acting while already dead; and there are more indirect allusions to this idea, as

in the textual connections both authors make to traditional Roman epitaphs. By absorbing

and subverting traditional motifs, Ovid and Seneca are able to draw the reader's attention

to the connection between exile and death, and further emphasize the relationship

between the two concepts, and how that relationship influences not only the exiled poet,

but the meaning and power of the exile poetry.

Linguistic and Cultural Isolation

A typical result of exile was a sense of isolation, as the one enduring the

punishment was removed from all of the comforts of his home life. He lost access to his

family and his normal place of living and had to transplant his life alone to a new place,

one that almost certainly lacked the comforts and benefits of a life at Rome. Ovid's exile

in Tomis was particularly upsetting to him, due to the isolated location of Tomis at the far

edge of the Roman Empire and therefore at the furthest edge of Roman influence.

According to Ovid, the Tomitans were not at all like the Romans he was used to, as they

had different traditions and customs, and did not even speak Latin. Tomis was an ancient

colony of the Greek city-state of Miletus, and was an important port on the Black Sea.

Inhabitants spoke a mix of Getic, Sarmatian, and Greek,[91] and had not been Romanized,

especially not to the extent that Ovid would likely have preferred.[92] Its location as a

border town made Tomis subject to raids from tribes from across the Danube. Ovid's time

in Tomis left him feeling extremely isolated, and one result of that isolation was his

prolific writing while in exile. He desperately wished to keep contact with his old life and

wrote extensively to his acquaintances at Rome, always wishing to return.

      Ovid's experience in Tomis was vastly different from his previous life in Rome.

Whereas in the city he had been surrounded by friends, family, and literary peers, in

Tomis he did not even share a common language with his neighbors. No one in Tomis

read or appreciated his life's work, and this concept of isolation due to language

incompatibility appears repeatedly in his exile poetry. In *Tristia* V.x.35-40, he writes:

35   *Exercent illi sociae commercia linguae:*
        per gestum res est significanda mihi.
    Barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegor ulli,
        et rident stolidi verba Latina Getae;
    meque palam de me tuto mala saepe loquuntur,
40   *forsitan obiciunt exiliumque mihi.*

35   They exercise commerce in their shared tongue;
        my thoughts must be signified through my gesture.
    Here I myself am the barbarian, who is not understood by any of them,

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[91] Grebe 491
[92] Coon 357

and the Getae laugh stupidly at my Latin words,

and openly they often talk badly about me in safety,

40   perhaps upbraiding me with my exile.

The Tomitans speak in their own language around Ovid, assuming that he will not understand, and the tables are turned, forcing Ovid into the role of barbarian. At Tomis, he is the outsider, the one who does not belong, although he repeatedly characterizes the Tomitans as barbarians. His complaints at the barbarity of the inhabitants of Tomis often go hand-in-hand with his negative descriptions of the landscape and environment of the region, always with the remembrance of life at Rome. Whenever he describes Tomis negatively, it is always with the thought of an opposing, positive description of Rome. Similarly, in *Tristia* V.vii.50-54,

50   *oraque sunt longis **horrida** tecta comis.*

In paucis remanent Graecae vestigia linguae.

*Haec quoque iam Getico **barbara** facta sono.*

Unus in hoc nemo est populo, qui forte Latine

quaelibet e medio reddere verba queat.

50   Their shaggy faces are covered with long locks.

In a few there remain remnants of the Greek tongue, but

even this becomes barbarous with a Getic sound.

There is no one among these people who by chance

might be able to return in Latin any common words whatsoever.

Ovid's complaints at the coarse language of the Tomitans directly follow a negative description of their appearance, and Ovid cleverly links the two criticisms with his use of the word *ora* in line 50. In the sentence, *ora* can be taken to mean the visages or countenances of the Tomitans, but when it is considered in light of the lines that follow, it is interesting to remember the alternate definition of *ora,* that is, mouth or

speech. So the *ora horrida* in line 50 could not only be "shaggy faces" but an attentive reader would also consider the meaning "wretched/horrible speech", a thought that is continued a few lines later. Seneca also uses the same vocabulary used by Ovid to describe the speech and appearance of the Tomitans, his fellow inhabitants in his place of exile, to describe the landscape of Corsica, his own place of exile in epigram 237 of Riese's edition.

> **Barbara** *praeruptis inclusa est Corsica saxis,*
> > **Horrida**; *desertis undique vasta locis.*
>
> Barbarian Corsica is enclosed by toppled rocks,
> > Shaggy (horrible) Corsica; desolate on all sides in deserted places.

The choice of these words was purposeful and emphasized the total isolation that came with the punishment of exile. This excerpt from the Senecan epigram also uses the traditional *topos* of landscape imagery in order to negatively describe exile; Seneca's Corsica is rocky and deserted, unwelcoming and empty on all sides. The use of *vasta* could refer both to the landscape of Corsica and to the isolation the exile experienced on the island.

Seneca's descriptions of isolation bear a striking resemblance to Ovid's depiction of his isolation on Tomis, and the argument for mere similarities in their situations would be compelling if the poetry was the only source extant. However, Seneca himself in his consolation to Polybius stated:

> *quae cum ex ipso angulo, in quo ego defixus sum, complures multorum iam annorum ruina obrutos effoderit et in lucem reduxerit, non vereor ne me unum transeat.*
>
> Even from this corner, in which I myself am fixed, already [his mercy] has uncovered and led back into the light many hidden in ruin for many years, and I do not fear that it will pass over me alone. (*Ad Polybium* XIII.3)

By his own admission, there were many exiles in Corsica, and Claudius had even recalled some of them during Seneca's time on the island. According to Braginton regarding this excerpt, "although Seneca may have exaggerated the number of exiles in Corsica to emphasize the clemency of the emperor, it is a safe assumption that there were other exiles there. In fact, many an island must have had its little company of exiles."[93] Besides the population of Roman exiles on Corsica, there were two Roman colonies on the eastern coast of Corsica, founded by Marius and Sulla.[94] In addition, in his consolation to Helvia, Seneca himself mentions the fairly large number of non-native Corsicans living on the island:

> *plures tamen hic peregrini cives consistunt*
> nevertheless, many foreign citizens remain here (*Ad Helviam* VI.5)

So although the Senecan exile epigrams emphasize the solitude and isolation felt by the exile, in actuality the exile was not nearly as isolated as the poetry would suggest. Instead, the dramatized descriptions of loneliness and seclusion were presented purposefully, as a *topos* of exile poetry in an attempt to follow Ovid.

Mythologizing of Exile

Ovid is well known for drawing heavily on mythological themes, not only in his poetry from exile, but in his other works as well. The *Metamorphoses* offer retellings of many of the most famous Greek and Roman myths, while in the *Heroides* females of mythology are given voices. References to mythological characters and situations are common in most Roman poetry and therefore cannot be considered a *topos* of exile

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[93] Braginton 400
[94] Pliny, *N.H.* III.80

poetry specifically. However, Ovid used mythological references in a new way in the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, introducing a conceptual change in the way that mythology in poetry is viewed.

In several sections of his exile poetry, Ovid as the exiled narrator of the poems directly compares himself to mythological characters. Claassen refers to this action as "autobiographical self-mythicizing."[95] By drawing a parallel between the first-person voice of the exile and familiar mythological actors, the poet is universalizing the experience of the exile to make that experience more understandable to his audience, in addition to providing a richer and more detailed context for his experiences in exile. The specific action of mythicizing the self constitutes a *topos* of exile poetry, in contrast to generally referencing mythological characters and topics, which commonly occurs in poetry outside of exile as well. Seneca engaged in this "autobiographical self-mythicizing", among other *topoi,* as part of his observance of the poetic genre of exile. In addition to the direct comparison between the exile himself and myth, there are also vital references to various myths of exile, adding yet another layer to the interpretation of these poems. The main concepts I will be discussing in this section are the comparisons of the exiled poets to Tityos and his punishment, references to Aeneas, and the various connections of both poets to the story of Medea.

Tityos was a son of Zeus whose punishment in the Underworld was to be tied down forever, with his liver being eaten by birds daily. Each night the organ grew back so he suffered a fresh punishment every day. He is often compared to Prometheus, who suffered a very similar punishment. Tityos appears in Book XI of the *Odyssey,* when

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[95] Claassen 132

Odysseus describes his visit to the Underworld, where he saw famous tortured shades including Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Tityos.[96] The comparison between Tityos's punishment and the horrors of exile are obvious, because the exile's lot never changed, and every morning waking up in an unfamiliar place must have seemed a fresh terror. Additionally, the exiled poets had another aspect in common with the punished Tityos: they too were fixed to their place of punishment, unable to move or escape. While Seneca eventually achieved a recall to Rome and an end to his punishment, Ovid remained, like Tityos, fastened to his place of exile, punished continually. In Book I of the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid describes his punishment as being similar to the punishment of Tityos and complains that his status is one of constant death.[97]

> *Vivimus ut numquam sensu careamus amaro,*
>> *et gravior longa fit mea poena mora.*
> *Sic inconsumptum Tityi semperque renascens*
40   *non perit, ut possit saepe perire, iecur.*
> I live that I never lack the bitterness of feeling,
>> and my punishment becomes graver by its long delay.
> Thus the liver of Tityus, unconsumed, and always reborn
40   does not perish, so that it is able to be always perishing.

Like Tityos, Ovid remains living during his punishment, so that he is constantly suffering instead of being allowed the release of death. Ovid's stylization of himself as a modern Tityos emphasizes the torture he felt he endured in exile, and his fatalistic view that his suffering would never come to an end.

While Ovid focused specifically on the physical torture endured by Tityos, Seneca emphasized the imprisoned nature of the character. Like Prometheus, Tityos was fastened

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[96] *Odyssey* XI.576-581
[97] *Ex Ponto* I.ii.37-40

down and unable to defend himself from the birds that daily assaulted him. Twice in Seneca's epigrams he references this state of bondage, using the first person to emphasize the direct connection between himself, the exiled poet, and the mythical recipient of the gods' punishment.

> *Intactae iaceo saxis telluris adhaerens,*
>> *mens tecum est, nulla quae cohibetur humo.*[98]
>
> I lie, clinging to the rocks of the untouched earth,
>> my mind is with you, which is not held back by the land.

Epigram 405 is addressed to a close friend, Crispus, whom scholars such as Burriss and Butler believe to be Crispus Passienus the younger, consul in 44 CE.[99] Throughout the poem, Seneca repeatedly addresses Crispus, showering him with compliments. In the last line, Seneca declares that his mind is always with Crispus, his mind which, unlike his body, is free to roam. The poet is chained to his place of exile, and the only part of him which is free is his mind, and, by extension, his writing. In this epigram Seneca characterizes himself as lying down, clinging to the earth, and being held back by the land. This description is an obvious reference to the fate of Tityos, who was fastened to the earth, unable to escape his punishment. Likewise, Seneca is unable to move from his place of punishment, in this case Corsica.

A similar reference to Tityos occurs in epigram 409, which is an address to Cordova, the birthplace of the poet.

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[98] Anth. Lat. 405.11-12
[99] Burriss, 23; Butler, 37

> *Ille tuus quondam magnus, tua gloria, civis*
>> *Infigor scopulo!*[100]
> I, who was once your great citizen, your glory,
>> am fixed on a boulder!

In this epigram, Seneca addresses his homeland, instructing her to mourn for him, as his fate is more pitiable than any of the struggles so far endured by the town. In penultimate couplet, Seneca pronounces that he was once Corduba's greatest citizen, her pride and glory, but now he is affixed to a boulder, trapped in his place of exile. The use of the first person verb *infigor* in line 14 emphasizes the relationship of the poet himself to the mythological character he is referencing. Tityos and Seneca in this epigram are one and the same, their fates not just similar but the same. Seneca uses *iaceo* in the first person in epigram 405 to the same effect, to create the "autobiographical self-mythicization" Claassen introduced as a *topos* of exile poetry. While Seneca does not directly name Tityos or describe the same aspect of his punishment that Ovid did, he still makes the same generic choice that Ovid did; that is, to directly conflate the mythical character and the mythological punishment with himself and his own punishment.

References to Aeneas are another example of the use of mythology in the genre of exile poetry. Aeneas is often counted as a mythic exile, although he was not removed from his home by law, but rather by circumstance. After the sack of Troy, Aeneas found himself forced to leave his ruined city and search for a new home. This concept of a wandering, homeless exile is one of the earliest, and exile poets such as Ovid and Seneca equated their circumstances as Roman exiles with that of the original Roman exile, Aeneas. Both authors describe their situations as being similar to Aeneas' fate and

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[100] Anth. Lat. 409.13-14

thereby mythicize themselves into the character of the mythic exile. However, Aeneas' status as a product of a Roman poet is equally valuable in this case, as Ovid and Seneca often reference Vergil as well as his *Aeneid*. The role of Rome's great epic poet was a major one, and it is only natural that his shadow would loom large in the works of later poets such as Seneca. In *Tristia* I.iii, Ovid compares his exit from Rome to Aeneas' flight from Troy:

> *Quocumque aspiceres, luctus gemitusque sonabant,*
> > *formaque non taciti funeris intus erat.*
> *Femina virque meo, pueri quoque funere maerent,*
> > *inque domo lacrimas angulus omnis habet.*

25 *Si licet exemplis in parvis grandibus uti,*
> > *haec facies Troiae, cum caperetur, erat.*

> Wherever you looked, mourning and groaning resounded,
> > and inside was the appearance of a funeral, not silent.
> Man and woman, even children, grieved at my funeral,
> > and in the home every corner had tears.

25 If it is right to use such a grand example in such a small case,
> > this was the appearance of Troy, when she was captured.

And later, in the same section, his description of his departure echoes the famous depiction of Aeneas' flight, and Ovid's farewell to his wife mirrors Aeneas' famous goodbye.[101]

55 ***Ter*** *limen tetigi,* ***ter*** *sum revocatus, et ipse*
> > *indulgens animo pes mihi tardus erat.*

55 Three times I touched the threshold, and three times I was called back, and
> > my own feet were slow, indulging my spirit.

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[101] *Tr.* I.iii.55-56

And in the *Aeneid*…[102]

> **Ter** *conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum;*
> **ter** *frustra comprensa manus effugit imago,*
> 795 *par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno.*
> Three times I tried to put my arms around her neck;
> three times her image fled my grasping hands,
> 795 like the light winds, and very similar to a fleeting dream.

Ovid's use of the adverb *ter* was an obvious reference to this famous section of the *Aeneid*, and was meant to connect him to the mythical Aeneas and tie them both together as noble, heroic exiles. It is also interesting to consider the relationship between the two women involved. Creusa was initially involved in the flight from Troy, but she was lost during the confusion. Aeneas' interaction is with her shade in the burning city, surrounded by destruction. They both wish Creusa could go with Aeneas, but she has to let him go alone, as she is incapable of following. Compare this scenario with Ovid's departure from his wife. In *Tristia* I.iii.81-86, she argues that she should accompany Ovid into exile, and offers to leave her life in Rome behind. However, she eventually agrees to stay in Rome to work toward gaining Ovid's recall from exile. Ovid's poetic dramatization of his departure from his wife gains much more gravitas than the farewell actually warranted, and he gained this weight by directly referencing the moving scene from the *Aeneid*, furthering the comparison between himself and Aeneas.

The *Aeneid* is brought up in epigram 242 of Seneca, as well. In this epigram, sometimes known by the title *Unde Supra*, Seneca addresses Claudius in a flattering tone, and discusses the importance of the *Aeneid* and the survival of poetry in general. Although there are several levels of narrative within this short poem, the end result is the

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[102] *Aeneid* II.793-795

comparison of the poet-exile, Seneca, with Vergil, the esteemed author of the *Aeneid*. In

this epigram, Seneca discusses the banishment of the books of Vergil, and compares the

loss of such poetry to the sack of Troy. He urges "Caesar" to make sure that his works are

read and praised, and discusses the fate of a new *Aeneid*. While the ostensible addressee

of the epigram is Claudius, careful reading of the poem leads the reader to believe that

Seneca is actually talking about himself and his own works. Especially in the second half

of the poem, it appears much more likely that the poet is thinking of himself:

5   *Roma rogat, precibusque isdem tibi supplicat orbis,*

     ne pereant flammis tot monumenta ducum.

   Anne iterum Troiam, sed maior, flamma cremabit?

     Fac laudes Italum, fac tua gesta legi,

   Aeneidemque suam fac maior Mincius ornet:

10   *plus fatis possunt Caesaris ora dei.*

5   Rome asks, with prayers of the whole world she supplicates you,

     lest so many works of the leaders perish in flames.

   Will the flame not burn Troy again, but greater?

     See to it that you praise Italy, that your accomplishments be read,

   And that your *Aeneid* adorns a greater Mincius.

10   Through the mouth of Caesar more is possible than through the

     fates of a god.

   Earlier in the poem, Seneca expresses sadness at the absence of Vergil, and

respect for the memory of the poet. In fact, the first couplet of this epigram ends each of

its lines with a proper noun: first Caesar, then Vergil. This introduction sets up the main

theme of the poem: an appeal to Caesar and a constant reminder of the legacy of Vergil.

The reference to Mincius, a river in Northern Italy near Mantua, emphasizes the

connection between Seneca and author of the *Aeneid*. Mantua was nearby to the

birthplace of Vergil, and when Seneca expresses his hope that his own *Aeneid* would adorn an even *maior Mincius*, he is comparing himself and his goals to Vergil. Line 7, referencing an even greater destruction of Troy, is likewise a direct comparison between the author of the epigram, the exiled Seneca, and the exiled Aeneas. However, in this case, it is not the departure of Seneca from Rome that is being compared to the sack of Troy, but the destruction of his works in Rome. It is known that after Ovid's exile, Augustus banned the reading of his works, and his books were removed from the libraries at Rome.[103] It is likely that this event is what inspired Seneca to write this epigram, and draw a comparison not only between Aeneas and himself, but also between himself and Ovid. It is not clear whether Claudius enacted a similar sanction on Seneca's works at Rome, but regardless, Seneca was eager to further strengthen the connection between the three exiles.

Another fascinating connection between Ovid and Seneca is the myth of Medea. Ovid describes the story of the exiled witch in *Metamorphoses* VII, and again in *Heroides* XII, where Medea addresses Jason. It is with this expansive background of work on Medea that Ovid again references her in his exile poetry. First in *Tristia* III.viii.1-4, Ovid expresses his wish that he had a chariot of fire, like Medea, that he could use to flee Tomis. Then in *Tr.* III.ix, Ovid offers his etymology of the place-name of Tomis:[104]

> *Inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo*
> *membra soror fratris consecuisse sui.*
> Thus this place was called Tomis, because it is said that here
> the sister chopped up the limbs of her own brother.

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[103] Johnson 124
[104] *Tr.* III.ix.33-34

According to Ovid, Tomis was the location where Medea, upon seeing the ships of her father approaching as she fled with Jason, dismembered her brother in order to stall and escape. Tomis apparently derives from the Greek τέμνω, meaning "to cut".[105]

Seneca, with all his demonstrated familiarity with Ovid's works, and especially Ovid's exile poetry, must have been accustomed to Ovid's reliance on the Medea myth. Indeed, Seneca wrote a version of the *Medea*, among other tragedies. It is unknown whether Seneca wrote his *Medea* during his period of exile from 41 to 49 CE, or whether he wrote it after his return to Rome, but it is certain that his period in exile influenced his dramatic writings. This is especially clear in his plays that have an exilic theme, such as the *Thyestes* and the *Medea*. It is interesting, therefore, to consider why Seneca might have neglected to reference Medea or her story in his epigrams, where it would have seemed a natural choice. Indeed, the only mythic female mentioned in the epigrams is Penthesilea in 431. Perhaps Seneca shied away from comparing himself to Medea because he wanted to cast himself in a more positive light to his readers, whom he hoped would be able to influence the emperor to recall him to Rome. Equating oneself with a witch, a fratricide, and an infanticide would not have been very flattering, and would not have offered a convincing argument for one's virtue if the goal was to have one's punishment retracted. The Medea connection is just another link between Seneca and Ovid, and the absence of Medea in the Senecan epigrams is an intriguing authorial choice, which shows that even in applying the *topoi* of exile poetry, Seneca did not follow blindly in the footsteps of Ovid, but was careful to use his own judgment and make his own poetic choices, instead of simply copying the works of Ovid.

Ovid and Seneca used mythological references in various ways in order to influence the readers of their poetry and add further meaning to their verse. References to mythic exiles such as Aeneas or Medea, as well as the first-person self-mythicization of the author are both ways that exile poets used the *topos* of the mythology of exile in their contributions to the genre.

Conclusion

The poetic genre of exile is one that has not often been explored, in large part due to a scarcity of sources. Because of this paucity, poetry from exile has often been lumped in with prose and epistolographic works, instead of receiving its own individual study. The parallels between the exile poetry of Ovid and Seneca go far beyond simple similarity of circumstance. On the contrary, Ovid was responsible for the designation of the poetic genre of exile, which can be distinguished by its unique *topoi*. Seneca, in his epigrams, applied these *topoi* in order to create works within that genre. Undoubtedly other exilic poets also followed the guidelines of this genre, but unfortunately their works did not survive. That is why the epigrams attributed to Seneca are so vital to this generic study.

Topoi of exile poetry used by both Ovid and Seneca include musings on the eternal nature of poetry, dramatized negative descriptions of landscapes of the places of exile, connections between exile and death, emphasis on linguistic as well as cultural isolation, and use of mythology both within and about exile. The specific similarities on these accounts between the exile poetry of Ovid and Seneca cannot be attributed to similarities in situation, as it has been accepted that Ovid and Seneca endured quite

different experiences in exile. Likewise, the similarities are not an example of Seneca simply copying Ovid's exile poetry, since the epigrams include many themes not addressed by Ovid, especially having to do with Stoicism. Previous studies linking the two authors have focused largely on Seneca's prose works from exile, specifically his consolations, or have only gone so far as to point out similarities between the poetry without offering an explanation for those similarities. I propose that the numerous thematic similarities between the exile poetry of Ovid and the exilic Senecan epigrams are due to both poets' adherence to the poetic genre of exile.

Appendix

Text and Translation of Selected Epigrams

I have included English translations in addition to the text of the selected

epigrams because while there are some examples of published translations, those are

often partial and imbedded in other scholarship and have not been compiled into one

place (e.g. Claassen 242, Holzberg 430-431, 434, 438-439, all examples of partial

translation of selected epigrams). I believe that an accessible and relatively

comprehensive edition of texts and translations of these seldom-studied epigrams will

provide ease of access for future scholars and encourage further study. Latin text comes

from Riese's *Anthologia Latina*, except in the case of Baehrens 5, *De Quieta Vita,* which

appears only in *Poetae Latini Minores* and thus is from Baehrens's edition.

Riese 232, Baehrens 1

De qualitate temporis

Omnia tempus edax depascitur, Omnia carpit,
  Omnia sede movet, nil sinit esse diu.
Flumina deficiunt, profugum mare litora siccant,
  Subsidunt montes et iuga celsa ruunt.
Quid tam parva loquor? moles pulcherrima caeli
  Ardebit flammis tota repente suis.
Omnia mors poscit. lex est, non poena, perire:
  Hic aliquo mundus tempore nullus erit.

Gluttonous time destroys all things, seizes all things,
  Time moves all things from their place, time allows nothing to last long.
The rivers fail, the shore, up to the fugitive sea, is dry,
  Mountains sink, lofty mountain ridges collapse.
Why do I say so little? The beautiful mound of the sky
  Will burn fully in its own flames suddenly.
Death demands all things. It is law, not punishment, to perish:
  In time there will be no world here.

Riese 236, Baehrens 2

De Corsica

Corsica Phocaico tellus habitata colono,
>*Corsica quae Graio nomine Cyrnos eras,*
Corsica Sardinia brevior, porrectior Ilva,
>*Corsica piscosis pervia fluminibus,*
Corsica terribilis, cum primum incanduit aestas,
>*Saevior, ostendit cum ferus ora Canis:*
Parce relegatis; hoc est: iam parce solutis!
>*Vivorum cineri sit tua terra levis!*

Corsica, the land inhabited by the Phocaian settler,
>Corsica, you who were by name in Greek Cyrnos,
Corsica, narrower than Sardinia, more extensive than Ilva,
>Corsica, passable through fishy rivers,
Terrible Corsica, when first summer heats you,
>More savage, when the wild dog opens its mouths:
Spare them having been relegated; this is it: now spare them set free!
>Let your earth be light with the ashes of the living.

Riese 237, Baehrens 3

De Corsica

Barbara praeruptis inclusa est Corsica saxis,

      Horrida; desertis undique vasta locis.

Non poma autumnus, segetes non educat aestas

      Canaque Palladio munere bruma caret.

Imbriferum nullo ver est laetabile fetu

      Nullaque in infausto nascitur herba solo.

Non panis, non haustus aquae, non ultimus ignis;

      Hic sola haec duo sunt: exul et exilium.

Barbarian Corsica is enclosed by toppled rocks,

      Shaggy Corsica; desolate on all sides in deserted places.

Autumn does not produce fruit, summer does not bring grains

      and white winter lacks Palladian gifts.

Rainy spring is never happy in childbirth

      and no grass is born in this unfortunate earth,

No bread, no drawing up of water, no final of fire;

      Here there are only two: the exiled man and his place of exile.

Baehrens 5
De quieta vita

Phoebe, fave coeptis nil grande petentibus aut quod
   A te transferri turba maligna velit.
Divitias averte; alios praetura sequatur
   Optantes; alios gloria magna iuvet.
Hic praefectus agat classes alienaque castra
   Laetus sollicita sedulitate regat;
Bis senos huius metuat provincia fasces;
   Audiat hic plausus ter geminante manu.
Pauperis arva soli securaque carmina curem,
   Nec sine fratre mihi transeat una dies.
Otia contingant pigrae non sordida vitae,
   Nec timeat quicquam mens mea nec cupiat;
Ignotumque odio solvat non aegra senectus,
   Ossaque conbusti frater uterque legat.

Phoebus, favor beginners seeking nothing great, or what
   the spiteful mob might wish to be translated by you.
Turn away from riches; let the praetorship follow others wanting it;
   let great glory support others.
Here let the commander drive the fleets and let him, happy, rule
   other camps with concerned attention;
Let his province fear the dozen fasces;
   Let him hear applause here three times with a twinned hand.
Let me care for the land of a single pauper and the untroubled songs,
   and let not one day pass without my brother.
Let not filthy leisure be granted to a lazy life,
   and let my mind neither fear anything nor desire anything;
And let not sick old age unbind one unknown to hatred,
   And let each brother collect the bones of the burned up ones.

Riese 242

Unde supra

Temporibus laetis tristamur, maxime Caesar,
       Hoc uno: amissum (quod gemo) Vergilium.
Et vetuit relegi, si tu patiere, libellos,
       In quibus Aenean condidit ore sacro.
Roma rogat, precibusque isdem tibi supplicat orbis,
       Ne pereant flammis tot monumenta ducum.
Anne iterum Troiam, sed maior, flamma cremabit?
       Fac laudes Italum, fac tua gesta legi,
Aeneidemque suam fac maior Mincius ornet:
       Plus fatis possunt Caesaris ora dei.

Greatest Caesar, we are sad in happy times
       by this one: absent Vergil (for which I sigh).
And it is forbidden that the little books, if you will allow it, be re-read,
       In which he composed Aeneas with sacred word.
Rome asks, with prayers of the whole world she supplicates you,
       Lest so many works of the leaders perish in flames.
Will the flame not burn Troy again, but greater?
       See to it that you praise Italy, see to it that your accomplishments be read,
And that a greater Mincius adorns it your Aeneid.
       Through the mouth of Caesar more is possible than through the fates of a god.

Riese 396, Baehrens 6

Parcendum misero

Occisum iugulum quisquis scrutaris amici,
　　Tu miserum necdum me satis esse putas?
Desere confossum! victori vulnus iniquo
　　Mortiferum impressit mortua saepe manus.

Whoever searches for the throat of a friend to kill,
　　Do you think that I am not wretched enough?
Leave the fatally wounded one! A dead hand has often pressed
　　a deadly wound on an unjust victor.

Riese 405, Baehrens 15

Ad amicum optimum

Crispe, mea vires laesarumque ancora rerum,
      Crispe vel antiquo conspiciende foro,
Crispe, potens numquam, nisi cum prodesse volebas,
      Naufragio litus tutaque terra meo,
Solus honor nobis, arx et tutissima nobis
      Et nunc afflicto sola quies animo,
Crispe, fides dulcis placideque acerrima virtus,
      Cuius Cecropio pectora melle madent,
Maxima facundo vel avo vel gloria patri,
      Quo solo careat si quis, in exilio est:
Intactae iaceo saxis telluris adhaerens,
      Mens tecum est, nulla quae cohibetur humo.

Crispus, my strength and anchor of injured things,
      Crispus, even to be seen in the ancient forum,
Crispus, never powerful, unless when you wish to be useful,
      A shore and a safe land for my shipwreck,
Alone an honor for us, and the safest citadel for us
      And now a solitary quiet for the afflicted soul.
Crispus, sweet loyalty and sharpest courage, peacefully,
      Whose chests are wet with Cecropian honey,
The greatest glory in eloquence for either his ancestor or his father,
      Whom alone he misses, if anyone is in exile:
I lie down clinging to the rocks of the untouched earth,
      My mind is with you, which is not held back by the land.

Riese 407, Baehrens 17

De vita humiliori

'Vive et amicitias regum fuge'. Pauca monebas:

> *Maximus hic scopulos, non tamen unus, erat.*

Vive et amicitias nimio splendore nitentes

> *Et quicquid colitur perspicuum, fugito!*

Ingentes dominos et famae nomina clarae

> *Inlustrique graves nobilitate domos*

Devita et longe tenuis cole; contrahe vela

> *Et te litoribus cymba propinqua vehat.*

In plano semper tua sit fortuna paresque

> *Noveris: ex alto magna ruina venit.*

Non bene cum parvis iunguntur grandia rebus:

> *Stantia namque premunt, praecipitata ruunt.*

"Live and flee the friendship of kings." You warned only a few things:

> Here were there crags, however not one was the greatest.

Live and flee the shining friendships with too much brilliance

> and whatever visible thing is honored here!

Avoid the huge masters and the names of well-known fame

> And the weighty homes with shining nobility.

And cherish the far-off slender ones: draw the sails

> And let the nearby skiffs carry you to the shores.

Let your fortune always be on the level

> And you will know similar men: great ruin comes from a height.

Great things do not join well with small things:

> For they overwhelm those standing still, they charge upon those cast down.

Riese 408, Baehrens 18

De vita humiliori

'Vive et amicitias omnes fuge': verius hoc est,
       Quam 'regum' solas 'effuge amicitias'.
Est mea sors testis: maior me afflixit amicus
       Deservitque minor. Turba cavenda simul.
Nam quicumque pares fuerant, fugere fragorem
       Necdum conlapsam deservere domum.
[I] nunc et reges tantum fuge! Vivere doctus
       Uni vive tibi; nam moriere tibi.

"Live and flee all friendships": this is truer
       than "flee the friendships of kings" alone.
My fate is a witness: A powerful friend has hurt me
       and an inferior one has abandoned me. The mob must be avoided likewise.
For whoever had been equal, they fled the noise
       and no longer served the collapsed house.
Go now and flee the kings! Having learned to live,
       Live for yourself alone; for you will die for yourself.

Riese 409, Baehrens 19

De se ad patriam

Corduba, solve comas et tristes indue vultus;
        Inlacrimans cineri munera mitte meo.
Nunc longinqua tuum deplora, Corduba, vatem,
        Corduba non alio tempore maesta magis:
Tempore non illo, quo versis viribus orbis
        Incubuit belli tota ruina tibi,
Cum geminis oppressa malis utrimque peribas
        Et tibi Pompeius, Caesar et hostis erat;
Tempore non illo, quo ter tibi funera centum
        Heu nox una dedit, quae tibi summa fuit
Non, Lusitanus quateret cum moenia latro,
        Figeret et portas lancea torta tuas,
Ille tuus quondam magnus, tua gloria, civis
        Infigor scopulo! Corduba, solve comas
Et gratare tibi, quod te natura supremo
        Adluit Oceano, tardius ista doles!

Cordova, loosen your hair and put on your sad faces;
        Weeping, send gifts to my ashes.
Now lament your prophet, far-off Cordova,
        Cordova, more gloomy in no other time:
Not at that time, when, with the strength of the earth having been altered
        the whole ruin of war lay upon you.
When you were perishing on both sides, oppressed by twin evils
        both Pompey and Caesar were enemies to you.
Not at that time, when a single night
        gave you three hundred funerals, which was the most for you,
Not when the Lusitanian robber shook with your walls,

And the hurled spear pierced your gates,
I, who was once your great citizen, your glory,
      am fixed on a boulder! Cordova, loosen your hair
and congratulate yourself, because nature washes you with
      the end of the ocean, you grieve such things too late!

Riese 417, Baehrens 27
Memoriam litteris permanere

Haec urbem circa stulti monumenta laboris
      Quasque vides moles, Appia, marmoreas,
Pyramidasque ausas vicinum attingere caelum,
      Pyramidas, medio quas fugit umbra die,
Et Mausoleum, miserae solacia mortis,
      Intulit externum quo Cleopatra virum,
Concutiet sternetque dies, quoque altius extat
      Quodque opus, hoc illud carpet edetque magis.
Carmina sola carent fato mortemque repellunt;
      Carminibus vives semper, Homere, tuis.

You see these monuments of foolish labor around the city,
      and what marble mountains, you see Appia,
And pyramids having dared to touch the nearby sky,
      Pyramids, which the shadow flees in the middle of the day,
And a Mausoleum, a comfort of miserable death,
      into which Cleopatra brought her foreign husband.
A day will shake and scatter these, and where the work projects higher
      and every work-this one and that-it will pluck and devour more.
Songs alone lack fate and push death away;
      You live always in your songs, Homer.

Riese 418, Baehrens 28

Memoriam litteris permanere

Nullum opus exsurgit, quod non annosa vetustas
      Expugnet, quod non vertat iniqua dies,
Tu licet extollas magnos ad sidera montes
      Et calidas aeques marmore pyramidas.
Ingenio mors nulla nocet, vacat undique tutum;
      Inlaesum semper carmina nomen habent.

No work rises up, which long-lived old age may not conquer,
      Which the unfair day may not overturn,
Although you may raise the great mountains to the stars
      and you may make the eager pyramids equal with marble.
No death harms genius, safe on all sides, it is free from harm;
      Songs always have an uninjured name.

Riese 431, Baehrens 41

Excusatio insanioris materiae

Esse tibi videor demens, quod carmina nolim
        Scribere patricio digna supercilio?
Quod Telamoniaden non aequo iudice victum
        Praeteream et pugnas, Penthesilea, tuas?
Quod non aut magni scribam primordia mundi
        Aut Pelopis currus aut Diomedis equos?
Aut [ut] Achilleis infelix Troia lacertis
        Quassata Hectoreo vulnere conciderit?
Vos mare temptetis, vos detis lintea ventis:
        Me vehat in tuto parva carina lacu.

Do I seem insane to you, because I do not wish
        to write songs worthy of a haughty noble?
Because I neglect the son of Telamon having conquered with not equal judgment,
        and I neglect your battles, Penthesilea?
Because I will not write either the first beginnings of the great earth,
        or the chariots of Pelops or the horses of Diomedes?
Or unlucky Troy, having been shaken by Achilles' strength,
        perished from Hector's wound?
May you test the sea, may you give sails to winds;
        May the small keel bear me on a safe lake.

Riese 433, Baehrens 43

De bono vitae humilioris

Est mihi rus parvum, fenus sine crimine parvum;
>   *Sed facit haec nobis utraque magna quies.*
Pacem animus nulla trepidus formidine servat
>   *Nec timet ignavae crimina desidiae.*
Castra alios operosa vocent sellaeque curules
>   *Et quicquid vana gaudia mente movet.*
Pars ego sim plebis, nullo conspectus honore,
>   *Dum vivam, dominus temporis ipse mei.*

My country is small, my gain is small without crime;
>   but peace makes each of these things great for us.
A frightened spirit protects peace with no fear
>   and does not fear the crimes of lazy sluggishness.
Let the elaborate camps call others and the curule seats,
>   and let whatever moves in the mind call empty joys.
Let me be part of the plebes, conspicuous for no honor,
>   while I live, I myself am the master of my own time.

Riese 438, Baehrens 47

Morte omnes aequari

Iunxit magnorum casus fortuna vivorum:

      Hic parvo, nullo conditus ille loco est.

Ite, novas toto terras conquirite mundo:

      Nempe manet 'magnos' parvula terra duces

The fortune of the living has joined the misfortunes of the great:

      preserved here in a small place there is nothing.

Go, seek out new lands in this whole world:

      Truly, very small earth remains for great leaders.

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