Rhetoric and Early Modern Latin Drama.
The Two Tragedies by the ‘Polish Pindar’
Simon Simonides (1558–1629): Castus Ioseph and Pentesilea

Introduction

During the Early Modern Age, every piece of literature was rhetorical—as had been the literature of the Classical period. Many Classical authors were trained in rhetoric at school, when attending the lessons of the grammaticus and the rhetor. These Classical authors were familiar with the rhetorical system, and the five steps to be taken in composing and delivering an oration—or giving a paper. They knew the rules for an effective structure of a speech from exordium to peroratio. They were also aware of the several stylistic levels they could use, and applied the appropriate one for the purpose at hand, for the kind of speech they were delivering—in the political, juridical, or the laudatory and castigating spheres. Moreover, they were aware of the several arguments one could use—which referred to ethos (the characteristics of the speaker), to pathos (the emotions), and to logos (the rational arguments); and they knew the stylistic tricks that could and should be used.

Among the common exercises was the declamatio, a rhetorical drill that could be useful, but perhaps not for anyone—and so made Seneca exclaim: “scholae, non vitae discimus” (“we learn for the school, not for life”). The exercises, distinguished as suasoriae and controversiae, trained the pupils: in the case of suasoriae, in giving advice, for instance, to Agamemnon, as to whether he should kill his daughter Iphigeneia or not (something they did not really need in daily life); or, in the case of controversiae, to speak for one side or the other in a famous legal case. In Antiquity, another exercise existed, as well: the

1 See e.g. Fuhrmann (Die antike Rhetorik passim); Kennedy (The Art of Persuasion in Greece passim); Leeman (Orationis ratio passim); Volkmann (Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer passim).
2 Seneca (Epistulæ 106, 12).
prosopopoeia (‘impersonation’), in which the author imagined himself as being someone else, and spoke or wrote like him or her. Among the most famous examples are Ovid’s Heroides (Heroines)—fictional letters of mythological women to their husbands. Naturally, this touches upon drama, where the author also speaks or writes with a view to ‘impersonating’ each of the respective characters.

Theory and practice of rhetoric and oratory were closely connected (both in Antiquity and in Early Modern times). Orators were trained in the theory of rhetoric and in the rhetorical system of inventio, distributio (dispositio), elocutio, memoria and actio (pronuntiatio); in the three genera dicendi and the appropriate styles, the genus grande, medium, and humile. Many Christian preachers were also trained in rhetoric, even though only part of them wrote and spoke (what was considered) ‘beautiful’ Latin, whereas most of them wished to be clear and, above all, convincing. During the Middle Ages, rhetoric continued to play a part in the teaching of the artes liberales. The amount of textbooks, however, was limited: only the Rhetorica ad Herennium, Cicero’s De inventione, and parts of Quintilian’s Institutio oratoria were known.

During the Early Modern period, the attention paid to rhetoric was as important as in Antiquity. Italian Humanists built on the liberal arts tradition, as re-established on the basis of newly disclosed texts. Humanists rediscovered Ancient treatises on rhetoric in monasteries, such as Cicero’s Topica and De oratore, and Seneca the Elder’s Controversiae et suasoriae. In addition, rhetorical handbooks were being produced continually, systematizing rhetorical knowledge and teaching people how to compose and write orations and works of literature.\(^3\) Rhetoric also prevailed in letter-writing manuals, and thus in the actual letters written—and many letters must have been exchanged between Humanists, who wrote and read Latin. The rhetorical means they used for writing letters ‘invaded’ their minds, and affected their other writings too. At the schools, rhetoric was taught, both in theory and in practice. Moreover, preachers had to learn to speak eloquently and convincingly; it was for them that Erasmus wrote a teaching manual, the Ecclesiastes (The Preacher of 1535), as well as a practical aid, the Paraphrases on the New Testament. So rhetoric was ubiquitous, and every piece of Early Modern literature—certainly the Latin part thereof, but also most of the works in the vernacular—was thoroughly rhetorical, both in its aiming at persuasion, and in its means. This is what made Vossius write that “literature is

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\(^3\) See e.g. Fumaroli (L’âge de l’éloquence passim); Mack (A History of Renaissance Rhetoric passim; “Neo-Latin Rhetoric” passim); Monfasani (“Humanism and Rhetoric” passim); Plett (Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture passim); Mack (“Neo-Latin Rhetoric 1380–1620” passim).
a second sort of eloquence”; for they have the same basis in the *loci communes*, the *ornatus* and the *genera dicendi*.

The common language (Latin), and the shared rhetorical techniques facilitated that texts, themes, and literary structures traveled throughout Europe, and across denominational divides. Both Protestant authors—such as Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) in the Low Countries, and Jacob Locher (1471–1528) in Germany—and Roman Catholic writers, such as the German Jacob Balde (1604–1668) and Nicolas Caussin (1583–1651) in France, wrote tragedies with analogous elements and related themes, using the same Latin language, and similar rhetorical techniques.

**Early Modern Latin Tragedy**

Vossius’ dictum of literature being ‘a second sort of eloquence’ applies to Early Modern Latin tragedy, written by learned authors, to an even greater extent. Moreover, many of the plays were written in (sometimes relatively close) imitation of the ten tragedies written by (or attributed to) Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE to 65 CE). A few were modeled after Greek tragedies, often by referring to their Latin versions, such as the translations of Euripides by Erasmus, Buchanan, and others. Yet most of the Neo-Latin tragedies were written in the Senecan tradition. Neo-Latin drama began right with the rediscovery of these tragedies in the thirteenth century, after which Alberto Mussato wrote and staged his *Ecerinis* (1315). At the end of the sixteenth century, Latin tragedy found its place in the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum* as an exercise in rhetoric with a view to speaking in public. These tragedies are considered to be highly rhetorical (in terms of *elocutio*), with

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5 Such rhetorical techniques were also used in, for instance, the fields of architecture and theatrical events, such as orations and Joyous Entries (which, however, cannot be discussed here). Regarding ‘set pieces’ and ‘theatergrams’, see below.

6 George Buchanan translated Euripides’ *Medea* and *Alcestis* (*Tragedies* 165–244; 295–331); for Erasmus’ translations of Euripides’ *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia* (*ASD* I.1. 193–359).

7 Chevalier (“Neo-Latin Theatre in Italy” 74).
their magniloquent style (the *genus grande*) suited for princes and kings. As a result, a rhetorical analysis of Seneca’s dramas is very fruitful—and one was offered by Howard Canter as early as 1925.\(^8\) Seneca often aimed at a short, pointed phraseology. One of the dramatic conventions, the stichomythia, also aims at such a pointed style.\(^9\) In these rapid altercations, the interlocutors often taken over one of the words of the other and react on it. On the other hand, there is amplification: an accumulation of words, phrases, and thoughts. This, however, aims at *copia verborum* (an abundance of words) and *varietas rerum* (variety in things presented). Moreover, such devices enhance *pathos*, which is one of the main characteristics of Senecan tragedy.

Another rhetorical feature is the use of *sententiae* (short aphorisms), which help to persuade, move, and delight the audience—the télea of effective oratory. It is a question, then, whether the *sententiae* are used to characterize a speaker, or to express ideas he could express; or whether they are uttered almost independently of the situation. Another feature of Senecan drama is the display of erudition. Astronomical, geographical, and anatomical knowledge is frequently brought up. All this will have to be seen with regard to the first-century rhetorical ideal of Asianic style—featuring *figurae mentis* (figures of thought), and *figurae verborum* (figures of speech), referring to ideas and verbal expression. The distinction is made by authors such as Quintilian, but is hard to maintain, although one can say that the figures of thought comprise the *interrogatio*, the rhetorical question, the apostrophe (a figure signifying a turning to someone else), the *exclamatio*, the *gradatio*, climax, and the like. Figures of speech comprise *anaphora*, *chiasmus*, and *paronomasia* (a play on words). Tropes are used, as well—such as metaphor, synecdoche, and metonymy.

Neo-Latin tragedy also features the stylistic, rhetorical characteristics of Senecan tragedy, with, of course, differences as regards the individual authors. Some of them have a very intricate style, others are more plain. Seneca’s tragedies contained chorus songs, and so did many Neo-Latin tragedies, which, in some instances, were even lengthier than the other parts.\(^10\)

Moreover, Neo-Latin poetics dealt with tragedy, which was considered to be one of the most important literary genres.\(^11\) The question is, then, whether such

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\(^8\) Canter (*Rhetorical Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca* passim). See also Seeck (“Senecas Tragödien” 393–402).
\(^9\) See also Wesche’s ch. on Gryphius in this volume.
\(^10\) On the chorus, see Janning (*Der Chor im neulateinischen Drama* passim).
\(^11\) See e.g. Vossius’ 1647 *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres* (passim); Heinsius’ 1611/1642 *De tragoediae constitutione* (passim).
Early Modern poetical treatises can be used as hermeneutical tools, and if some specific ‘rhetoric of drama’ can be discerned. The latter question is likely to be difficult to answer, since the orator is a ‘protean’ character, and rhetoric in itself is manifold and changeable. Above, some rhetorical means used in drama were listed, but these techniques are not exclusive to drama—on the contrary.

The Playwright: Simon Simonides

One of the famous authors of Latin dramas was Simon Simonides. Of Armenian descent, he was born the son of the rector of the cathedral school and city council, Szymon of Brzezin, and his wife Catharina of Śmieszków Gajzlerowej, on October 24, 1558 in Lviv (Lemberg), in Poland, as Szymon Szymonowic; he died on May 5, 1629 in Czerniecin. From 1570 to 1575, he was a pupil of the Lemberg cathedral school, and then studied the artes at the university of Kraków, where he received his Bachelor’s degree in 1577, at 19 years of age. He continued his studies abroad (probably in France and the Low Countries), and returned to Kraków before 1584. Together with Jan Zamoyski, he founded and arranged the Akademia Zamojska in Zamość (1593–1605); it opened in 1595. 1590 was an important year: he was appointed poeta Sacrae Maiestatis regiae (that is, royal poet), was knighted and awarded with a poets’ laurel by Pope Clement VIII. He received the laurel for his Latin works, and particularly for his drama, Castus Ioseph (Chaste Joseph of 1587), later followed by Pentesilea (1618). In return, Simonides dedicated his 1593 poem Ioel propheta to the Pope. Szymonowic earned great fame as a poet in the vernacular with his poem Sielanki (Pastorals, published in Zamość by M. Łęski in 1614), which was composed in the tradition of Greek poetry. Partly because of this poem, he was called the Polish Pindar, although it mainly contains reminiscences to the idyllic poetry of Theocritus and Virgil.

Among his learned relations were Isaacus Casaubonus (1559–1614), Janus Dousa (1545–1604), and Justus Lipsius (1547–1606). This brief sketch already

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12 See Bloemendal (“The Epigram in Early Modern Literary History” passim).
13 In this respect, see Głębicka (Szymon Zymonowic: Poeta Latinus passim) and Winniczuk (“Die lateinische Dichtung des S. Simonides” passim).
14 Simon Simonides, Castus Joseph (Kraków: Łazarzowa, 1587); trans. into Polish by Stanisław Gosławski (Kraków, 1597) as Castus Jozeph; trans. by R. Zawiliński (Kraków, 1889), BPP nr 5; Pentesilea (Zamość: K. Wolbramczyk, 1618); Polish trans. by Ksawier Żubkowski (Warsaw, 1778). A modern ed. of the plays with an English trans. is being prepared by the present author.
15 See also Ijsewijn (Companion I: 234) and Bloemendal (“Central and Eastern European
demonstrates the ‘international’—or rather ‘supranational’—character of Humanism and the ‘supranational’ character of the Republic of Letters, within which Neo-Latin drama functioned and moved by processes of transfer and integration.\textsuperscript{16}

\section*{A Martyr Play: \textit{Castus Ioseph}}

Simonides’ first drama, \textit{Castus Ioseph} (1587)—concerning the attempted seduction of the Hebrew patriarch Joseph by Potiphar’s wife—is an extraordinary play. Until then, the plays on the theme taken from \textit{Genesis} 38 and 39 were \textit{fabulae}—meaning, comedies—both in the sense of having a happy ending, and of being written in the style of Terence’s comedies.\textsuperscript{17} Even though the choice of the theme may have been inspired by such a \textit{fabula} written and performed in Amsterdam and printed in Antwerp—Cornelius Crocus’ \textit{Ioseph} (1535), or by its Polish paraphrase, entitled \textit{Żywot Józefa}, by the important Polish poet and prose author Mikołaj Rej (1505–1569)—Simonides actually wrote a Senecan tragedy with a length of 1757 lines, and a lofty style. It is rather Senecan—except for its Greek (Pindaric) chorus structure of strophe, antistrophe, and epode, instead of a Senecan stichic chorus structure. It may have been written for the Akademia Zamojska.

\textit{Castus Ioseph} is exceptional for other reasons, as well. One is that the woman is given the name of Iempsar. For this name, there is a precedent in Girolamo Fracastoro’s poem \textit{Ioseph} (published posthumously in 1555), but the name is rather rare in Early Modern drama. A second reason is that the play focuses heavily on Iempsar’s emotions. In spite of its Senecan tone, the story of \textit{Castus Ioseph} has the same style and structure as Euripides’ \textit{Hippolytos}, except for the last 300 lines. For instance, the prolog by the \textit{Malus Demon} (the Evil Demon,

\textsuperscript{16} See Bloemendal (“Transfer and Integration” 274–288). The term ‘supranational’ is used, while being aware that European nation states proper had not yet been established.

\textsuperscript{17} The story itself was also known from Flavius Josephus’ \textit{Antiquitates Judaicae} II, 4, the \textit{Testamentum duodecim patriarcharum}, and \textit{Joseph et Asenath}. See Lebeau (\textit{Salvator mundi} 26–28). One of the possible sources of inspiration for Simonides may have been the \textit{‘fabula’ Ioseph} (1535) by the Amsterdam headmaster Cornelius Crocus (ca. 1500–1550), which was paraphrased by the Polish author Mikołaj Rej (1505–1596), and was well-known in Poland; see Borowski (\textit{Iter Polono-Belgo-Ollandicum} 158–159); a modern edition of Crocus’ \textit{Ioseph} was prepared by the present author.
meaning, the Devil) closely resembles Aphrodite’s opening monolog in \textit{Hippolytus}; the scene of Joseph and his \textit{famuli} (\textit{Castus Ioseph} v.94–236) matches that of Hippolytus and his \textit{therapeuontes} (Euripides \textit{Hippolytus} v.88–120); and the first choral ode (\textit{Castus Ioseph} v.237–92) bears close resemblance to Euripides’ first choral ode (\textit{Hippolytus} v.121–75). The intermediary text was the translation by Gasparus Stiblinus (1526–1562?), published by the Basel printer Joannes Oporinus in 1559. The first lines of the first chorus may serve as an example:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Simonides (\textit{Castus Ioseph} B2\textsuperscript{o}–B3\textsuperscript{o}) & Euripides (Stiblinus \textit{Hippolytus} 177) \\
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Petra celebris est hic & Petra quaedam dicitur esse, \\
quaedam, vitrea dis aqua & quae marinas extillet aquas, \\
fontem expositum urnis saxo & effundens ex abrupto vertice \\
iaculans supremo. & fontem replendis urnis uberem. \\
Apud hanc amica quae-

dam est mea, flumineis & Ubi quaedam mea amica \\
pepla liquoribus & purpureas vestes \\
tinguens superque ardua dorsa rupis & fluvialibus undis \\
in sole aprico expoliens; ea atrum & lavit et super apricae \\
nuntium mihi insusuravit. & terga rupis deposuit: a qua \\
\hline
Antistrophe & \\
& ad me fama pervenit \\
tabido & \\
reginam decumbere morbo.\textsuperscript{18} \\
\end{tabular}

For referring to Hippolytus and Joseph as chaste boys seduced by wicked women, one might already compare the preface to Stiblinus’ translation of \textit{Hippolytus}:

Hippolytus innocentiae et castitatis praebet exemplum, quae aliquoties malorum hominum libidine in discrimen vocantur, ita tamen, ut fatigentur, non exstinguantur. Sic Josephus castus in Aegypto impudicae mulieris calumnia valde quidem periclitatus est, sed tandem post afflictiones et carceres eo clarior emicuit. (Stiblinus \textit{Hippolytus} 203)

Hippolytus gives an example of innocence and chastity, which are regularly brought into danger by the lust of wicked people, but to such an extent that they are fatigued, while never fully destroyed. In the same way, chaste Joseph is endangered by the calumny of an unchaste woman in Egypt, but finally, after afflictions and imprisonment, he shone the more brightly. (trans. jb)\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} As qtd. in Bloemendal (“Central and Eastern European Countries” 647).
\textsuperscript{19} As qtd. in Bloemendal (“Central and Eastern European Countries” 647). In this, as well as the following trans., I have aimed for (idiomatic) readability, rather than a word-for-word version.
This equation is in line with the exegetical tradition. For instance, St. Ambrose wrote: “Sit igitur nobis propositus sanctus Ioseph tamquam speculum castitatis” (“Thus, saint Joseph should be proposed to us as a mirror of chastity”). A typological explanation was given by, among others, St. Isidore in his Allegoriae: “Ioseph [...], qui venditus est a fratibus et in Aegypto sublimatus, Redemptorem nostrum significat a populo Iudaeorum in manus persequentium traditum et nunc in gentibus exaltatum” (“Joseph, who was sold by his brothers and exalted in Egypt, signifies our Saviour, delivered into the hands of the prosecutors by the Jewish people, and now exalted among the gentiles”).

Głębicka points to another possible interpretation of the play. Simonides had dedicated the play to his teacher Stanisław Sokolowski, Canon of Kraków. The latter was a representative of the Polish Counter-Reformation. This information—combined with the representation of lempsar as a woman who looks upon Joseph (a prefiguration of Christ) as a beautiful man, and denying his divine nature—may lead to the interpretation of the play as a critique on Arian heretics and other anti-Trinitarians, who denied Christ’s divinity and considered him to be merely a human being.

The play is also a plethora of rhetorical devices and techniques. There are all kinds of ‘standard elements’, such as those which Griffiths called ‘set pieces’—meaning: monologs, tirades, stichomythia, messenger speeches (récit), and chorus songs, as well as other ones which Louise Clubb labeled ‘theatergrams’, structural units comparable to set pieces, but also generic elements, sources, plots, and characters like the pastor—features we would call ‘dramatic conventions’. In any case these ‘set pieces’ or ‘theatergrams’ moved from one cultural and literary field or literary system to another. It might be stated that the omnipresence of rhetoric decidedly advanced the mobility of literature, and also of drama. The choice of the Latin language also contributed to it, since Latin was written and read all over Europe, as well as in the colonies, although differences in pronunciation may have sometimes hindered the communication.

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20 Ambrose of Milan (De Ioseph Patriarcha liber unus 1.2. 642 A), as qtd. in Bloemendal (“Central and Eastern European Countries” 648).
21 Isidorus (Allegoriae 107 A), as qtd. in Bloemendal (“Central and Eastern European Countries” 648).
22 See Griffiths (The Dramatic Technique of Antoine de Montchrestien passim). See Clubb (Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time passim); also Henke/Nicholson (Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theater passim).
23 On cultural fields or literary fields, see Bourdieu (The Field of Cultural Production, passim; Les Règles de l’art passim); Even Zohar (“Polysystem Theory” 287–310; “Factors and Dependencies in Culture” 15–34).
somewhat. Even so, the common language, the rhetorical character, and the
dramatic conventions contributed to the spreading of Latin tragedy.
Within the parts of the tragedy, rhetoric plays an important role. A short
rhetorical analysis of the first lines of the opening monolog by the *Malus Demon*
(the Devil) will illustrate the function of rhetorical techniques as enabling formal
and linguistic mobility and flexibility. The *Malus Demon* emerges from hell—just
like the Ghost of Tantalus in Seneca’s *Thyestes*, and the Ghost of Thyestis in his
*Agamemnon*, and many spirits in Neo-Latin tragedies. This dramatic convention
of opening a play with the appearance of a ghost, an evil spirit, or a devil ‘frames’
the play as a tragedy, and so steers the audience’s expectations, seeing that they
were used to *fabulae* on this particular theme.

> Venio, inferûm domos et umbrarum specum
> Linquens, ubi telluris in penetralibus,
> Superis seôrum, habemus infimi dii;
> Vocare si par infimos, qui maximam
> Rerumque honorûmque occupamus gloriam;
> Saeclaque hominum universa et hic viventia
> Nostro usu et olim functa capimus mancipui,
> Esto creatos esse nos ab altero;
> Esto illo ab ipso conditam orbis fabricam,
> Caeloque nos pulsos ab ipso eodem et his
> Datos locis, ubi horror et squalor vigent;
> Esto omnia haec creator et rerum parens
> Superbiat scilicet alatque nominis
> Vmbram; penes nos interim, solida Imperi
> Maneat potestas: templo nobis, victimae
> Nobis, sacri nobis dies trophaeaque
> Donariaque struantur; ad pericula
> Nos invocemur; nos bonarum praesides
> Rerum feramur; denique ipsi numina
> Celebremur et noscamur; ille incognitus
> Agas loci, at agas qualis, id verô interest.  

(Simonides *Castus Ioseph A2*°)

Here I come, leaving the dwellings of the nether world and the caves of the shades, where
we live deep in the earth, away from the gods above [or: the upper world], we, infernal gods,
if it is right to call us infernal, since we claim the highest glory of power and honour; here
we capture as slaves for our own use all generations of men, both those who live, and those
who have died earlier.
Be it that we are created by someone else; be it that the structure of the world is made by
the same [God] and that we were expelled by him too (10), and sent to this region where
horror and squalor reign; be it, that the Creator, and Father of all, boasts of all these things,
and feeds the pretention of his name; yet, in the meantime, we must keep our ruling power
fixed: for us there must be temples, for us there must be victims, sacred days, and for us
monuments and altars must be built; we must be invoked in perils; we must be called protectors of prosperity; and finally, (20) we ourselves must be glorified and known as deities; and He must live an obscure life in heaven.

It does not matter where you live, but how you live, that is what matters. (trans. jb)

The entire passage of 22 lines expresses that the Evil Spirit comes from hell, an infernal god who nevertheless has power. While it might be that God created him, he too wants to be worshipped as a deity. The passage consists of three sentences: the initial, longer one (covering v.1–7); the second, even lengthier one (v.8–21a); and the third, short one (v.21b–22). In the first sentence, synonymic rhetorical expressions stress the Demon’s awful place of departure. The Devil reckons himself among the “infernal gods”, but corrects himself rhetorically (correctio): ‘if we can be called infernal gods, since we have so much power on earth’.

The second sentence receives part of its persuasive power from the anaphora of “esto” and the repetition of “nos” and “nobis”, with variatio in “ipsi” (v.19)—and all that in opposition to “ille”, God. Here, variation and accumulation is used, as well—such as “creator et rerum pater” (“the Creator and Father of the world”), and “tropaea” and “donaria”. Furthermore, the Evil Spirit uses an antithesis to emphasize his wish to be omnipresent (and omnipotent) like God: in peril, we—pluralis maiestatis—should be “invoked” and “called protectors of prosperity”.

The third sentence—which is very short, most probably for reasons of variation—is a sententia, which serves as a kind of conclusion: it does not matter where someone lives, whether in heaven or (as the devil) in hell, but how one lives. Simonides formulates this thought by recourse to an intricate chiasmus:

Parum interest, ubi | agas loci,
at agas qualis, id verò interest. (Castus Ioseph A2°)

This opening monolog is highly rhetorical (in terms of elocutio), persuasive by its emotionality. It foreshadows imminent evil: the Devil is leaving his territory, and is aiming at God’s position. Immediately after having spoken these words, the Devil asserts that he will show his power by bringing a Jewish boy—Joseph, of course—to ruins.25

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24 A ‘trópaion’ (Greek: τρόπαιον, Latin: tropaeum), from which the English ‘trophy’ is derived, is an Ancient monument set up to commemorate a victory over one’s foes. A donarium is the part of a temple where votive offerings were made.

25 This resembles the Scriptural story of Job, in which there is a temptation on earth, while the actual ‘agón’ (see spec. Job 1:6–12) is taking place in heaven (thanks to DS Mayfield, who suggested this to me).
The other main character, Potiphar’s wife Iempsar, is passionately in love with Joseph. She introduces her state of mind in the following manner:

Suscipite humeris, suscipite aegram,
Tollite fessam, solvor nervis
Omnibus; omnia lapsant membra;
Fulcite caput, fulcite aegra
Colla, rotatur mundus, currit
Terra; cado, cado, pereo, date mâ
Date vestram manum;
Suscipite meam, suscipite manum;
Ventum facite, demite taeniam
Capiti; gravis est, gravis est, solvite
Crinem; ach me, ach me. (325)

(330) (Simonides Castus Ioseph Cn)26

Take me on your shoulders, [girls] take me, an ill woman, lift me, a tired woman; I am dissolved in all my nerves; all my limbs are collapsing; support my head, support my ill neck, the world is rotating, the earth moving; I fall, I fall, I perish, give me, please give me your hand; and hold mine, please hold my hand; fan me [literally: ‘make wind’], take the bandeau (330) from my head; it is heavy, it is heavy, loosen my hair; woe, woe is me. (trans. jb)

Here we hear the emotionality of Iempsar’s simple message that she is ill. Although the audience does not know the cause yet, this emotionality is stirred up and increased by repetition and variation: “suscipite”, “suscipite”, “tollite”; “fulcite”, “fulcite”, “gravis est, gravis est”; “aegra”, “aegram”; as well as the exlaimations “cado, cado”, “pereo”, and “ach me, ach me”. All this is rather usual in Neo-Latin tragedy—meaning, as works in which the reception of Seneca is typically visible, and to a far lesser degree the reception of Plautus and Terence. Still, we can speak of intertextuality in these matters, in the sense that a stock of phrases and ways of dealing with things was extant; from these, an author could choose expressions, common situations, and stock characters—such as the nutrix, the old woman, who had nursed one of the main characters; the soldier, who is reporting from the battlefield; or other messengers. Rhetorical means also belonged to that general stock, that common intertext.

These passages reveal the tragic concept of this play, which is more concerned with emotions and passions than drama in the sense of doing and action. In addition, it is more of a martyr drama, since Joseph does not make a mistake, nor does he have a hamartía, a wrong conception of the situation. If one of the main characters has such a hamartía, it is Iempsar. Still, the opening lines

26 Plautus (“Curculio” 314).
evince that the characters are like puppets with whom the Devil is playing his
tricks—also merely for showing off his power. That may be part of the didactic
aim of the tragedy: to warn the students to beware of the devil’s wiles. However,
it also poses a question about the relation between the Devil’s power and God’s
rule; and, even more so, about the influence of supernatural powers and a human
being’s accountability with regard to his or her own deeds.

The play ends with a messenger’s speech, relating how well Joseph behaved
when taken to prison, and that he even preferred to die innocently for someone
else’s guilt, rather than commit any wrong—here, a prefiguration of Christ may
be seen to shine through. Then, the chorus grieves over Joseph’s fate, but is
determined to go to the master and declare his innocence. Here the tragedy
ends.27

Rhetorical devices and techniques play an important part, by raising the
pathos of the tragedy in order to stress Joseph’s innocence and undeserved fate,
and underlining the evil powers that oppose him. By highlighting this very
contrast with the respective rhetorical means, Simonides makes readers and
spectators receptive to horror and awe, and to the interpretation of Joseph as a
prefiguration of Christ.

A Classical Tragedy: *Pentesilea*

Simonides’ second tragedy, named after its protagonist *Pentesilea* (1618), deals
with the story of the Amazon queen Pentesilea (usually spelled Penthesilea). To
some extent, it is inspired by Quintus Smyrnaeus’ *Posthomerica*, Servius’
commentary on Virgil’s *Aenid* I, and Dictys Cretensis’ *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* (all
of which from the fourth century CE).28 After Pentesilea has killed an allied
Amazon queen, she goes to king Priam of Troy with the purpose of being purified

27 Everyone in the audience and every reader knows, or is expected to know, that this ‘Joseph’
will not suffer Christ’s fate to the end; to that extent, Christ is still the ‘fulfillment’, also of the
agony. *Castus Ioseph* is thus a tragedy, which the audience knows will not remain a tragedy. The
reason it can be staged as a tragedy is precisely this ‘cutting off’ at the dramatic climax; the ‘being
thrown into prison’, with the dire consequences only being potential, is the tragic action and
climax. It is precisely because of this that the play can and must focus on the language to such
an extent, and on the passions of the female protagonist (like in many Senecan dramas),
because, without this ‘clipping’ of the *Scriptural* ‘happy ending’, there would (arguably) be no
tragic tendency (with thanks to DS Mayfield).
28 See Gärtner (“Die Tragödie *Pentesilea*” passim).
from her crime. In return for Priam’s help, Penthesilea—during the final year, and after the death of Hector—enters the Trojan War on the side of the Trojans, together with her Amazons. She is ultimately slain by Achilles. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas sees this episode depicted on the wall of a temple:

   Ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis
   Penthesilea furens, mediisque in milibus ardet,
   aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae
   bellatrix, audetque viris concurrerere virgo. (*Aeneid* I, v.490–494)

   Raging Penthesilea leads her band of Amazons with moon-shaped shields, and she radiates in the middle of thousands, while she, a warrior-virgin, fastens a belt of gold around her bare breasts, and it is she, who dares to fight with men. (trans. jb)

The highly rhetorical opening lines of Simonides’ second play also ‘frame’ it as a Senecan tragedy of pathos:

   Te, magne Mavors, sanguinis Sator mei,
   Primum invoco, ut me robore invicto iuves
   Dignamque te parente natam comprobes.
   Fallorne? Num pavoris haec vestigia
   In me emicant signumque dant diri ominis?  (5)
   Virtutis an sunt talia haec praeludia,
   Vt vim suam ordiatur a metu ancipe?
   Ne defetisce, anime, nec augurio malo
   Te frange. Non est in manu tua situm,
   Quid fata poscunt. Hoc situm est, ut strenuum
   Te praebas, vel numinum usque ingratiis.
   Caedemne vitas? Quam per arma quaeritas?
   Colo accubandum cum hac fuit sententia.
   Belli aleam belli frequenta moribus.
   Aut perdere aut perdi duelli lex iubet.
   Sed vos sodalitii mei pars unica,
   Adeste, amicae, et consulite quid facto opus.
   Solus sapit. Nil caeterorum desides
   Diserta lingua futiles volvit sonos.  (Simonides “Pentesilea” 178)

You, great Mars, father of my blood, first I invoke you, to help me with your invincible strength and prove me a daughter worthy of you, my father. Am I deceived? Hopefully there are no traces of fear to be seen in me that give a sign of a dire omen? Or are these signs

29 See also Bloemendal (“Latin Drama in Central and East-European Countries” 645–649).
preludes of virtue that it takes its strength from dangerous fright? Do not become weak, my mind, and do not be broken by a bad omen. It is not in your hands (10) what fate demands. This is in your hands, to strain yourself, even to the point that you are ungrateful to the deities. Do you shun death? [The very death] which you are looking for with your weapons? It is my opinion that you have to face your destiny together with death. You should meet [more literally: frequent] the hazards of war with the customs of war. The law of war commands either to kill or to be killed. Yet you, the only part of my company, come here, my [female] friends, and advise me what to do. In great peril, only he who shares the peril is wise. I am not longing (20) for the lazy shrewdness of others, whose loquacious tongue speaks useless sounds without deeds. (trans. jb)

As a warrior and a daughter of Mars, she invokes this particular god. Such an invocation—often to Jove or God—was also not unusual in Early Modern Latin tragedy. Pentesilea continues her speech with some rhetorical questions: are there no traces of fear to be seen? She addresses her mind (“anime”) not to become despondent due to a bad omen. The audience now has an indication that the amazon has experienced precisely such a sign. Even these lines already foreshadow the sad ending. Here, *sententiae* are employed as well: “The law of war commands either to kill or to be killed”; “In great peril, only he who shares the peril is wise”. This is not the emotionality of someone who is sick on account of love, or who is in great distress; rather, it is the *pathos* of someone, who wishes to enter the war, and who is used to acting as a leader. When compared to the above passage from the *Castus Ioseph* play, there are far less rhetorical elements (such as repetition, exclamation, *anaphora*, and the like). As the contrast demonstrates, rhetorical devices are being used to characterize a character.

Another character accustomed to acting as a leader is Aeneas. A messenger is looking for the Trojan prince, so that he may turn the tide; a stichomythia between Aeneas and the messenger occurs:

_AEN_. Quis est requirens híc meam praesentiam?  
Num in acie aliquid anceps repentinum accidit, (760)
Multa evenire qualia hoc ludo assolent?  
Is tu es? Loquere; venisne pugnae ex turbine?  
_NVN_. Ipsissimis densissimisque ex caedibus.  
_AEN_. Fugae potitus et neci te subtrahens?  
_NVN_. Haec probra desertoribus sint congrua. (765)  
_AEN_. Quae causa te ergo, huc ut venires, perpulit?  
_NVN_. Feliciter gestae rei essem ut nuntius.  
_AEN_. Vt tempus est, vix praelium occeptum autumo.  
_NVN_. Quin tota profligata iam res est prope.  
_AEN_. Multa inchoantur faustiter, fini occidunt. (770)  
(Simonides “Pentesilea” 204)
AENEAS: Who is requiring my presence here? (760) Has something dangerous unexpectedly happened in the battle line, like many things usually happen in this game? Is that you? Speak, do you come from the turmoil of the fight?
MESS: From the midst of the most intense slaughter.
AEN: Did you flee and evade death?
MESS: Let such reproaches be more fitting for deserters.
AEN: What reason, then, impelled you to come here?
MESS: To be the messenger of a successful war.
AEN: At this hour, I assert that the fight has [just] begun.
MESS: Even the whole business is almost decided.
AEN: Many things start well, but are ruined in the end. (trans. jb)

This passage demonstrates the keyword technique of stichomythia. One of the interlocutors uses a word, and the other resumes it in his or her reaction. This is a very usual dramatic convention. In this stichomythia, the rhetorical style is used to characterize a person—here, Aeneas—or rather, to define his ethos. He opens up this dialog in a lofty way: “Quis est requirens?” People have been slaughtered, and Aeneas shows dignity—even in a last sententia, which is a kind of pragmatic variation on the sentence ‘All’s well, that ends well’. The story has a sad ending, since Pentesilea is killed, and Troy is taken. The last lines of utter grief and distress are assigned to the chorus.

**European Drama**

These rhetorical techniques are featured in many Latin dramas in Early Modern Europe, and also in the New World. Protestant playwrights such as Daniel Heinsius and Hugo Grotius, the Jesuit authors Nicolas Caussin and Jacob Balde, the Benedictine monk Jacobus Cornelius Lumenæaus àMarca, the Scottish playwright in France, George Buchanan—they all wrote highly rhetorical (in terms of elocutio), almost always Senecan tragedies in the common language Latin, and used the same storehouse (copia) for rhetorical heuristics (inventio). Protestant authors also used the pointed style, even though the respective movements often wished to return to the genus humile of Biblical language. They used that ‘humble style’ on the pulpit; but their dramatic works were meant for students, who had to learn all styles of Latin; moreover, they may have wished to show off their skills in writing Latin in the genus grande. Often the dramas of both Roman Catholic and Protestant playwrights had the same formal, Senecan, five act structure—with stichic chorus songs between the acts, and not ending with an exodus of the chorus, as in Greek drama. They also used the ‘set pieces’ of monolog, récit or messenger speech, chorus, stichomythia, and the like in terms
of rhetorical dispositio. This formal standardization, the lingua franca, and the shared rhetorical techniques facilitated the ‘traveling’ of various materials. Books and other artifacts moved throughout Europe, were present on a shared European market; they moved with churchmen, traders, and diplomats, who traveled from one country to another; with companies such as those performing the Italian commedia dell’arte, itinerant actors from England and other countries traveled throughout the European continent and staged all kinds of plays; rectores gymnasii and professores at the universities exchanged materials for the performances they produced with, and for, their students. All these kinds of movements were enabled and furthered by the aforesaid common ground (comprising the Latin language, the system of rhetoric, etc.). They even facilitated an (if temporary) bridging of the denominational divide: Protestant gymnasia could perform Roman Catholic tragedies—with the obvious exception of Saint plays—and vice versa.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, a rhetorical analysis of selected passages from a Polish playwright were offered. Such an analysis could be given of thousands of Neo-Latin tragedies, composed by Humanists, who stressed the values of Classical Antiquity, and written by both Protestant and Roman Catholic authors—the Jesuits were of particular import in the production of Latin tragedies. Of course, there are many different approaches to the concept of tragedy, also in Latin drama, and the differences might appear so great, that the playwrights could be seen to have been divided even by a common language; but they had that common language indeed, as well as a universal rhetorical ‘toolkit’—serving as a huge literary, virtual network, a shared intertext. Research into the cultural web of Latin drama is well underway. One of the pia vota is to have an electronic database of as many Latin dramas as possible, including vernacular dramas, so as to investigate, for instance, the mobility of certain phrases, ideas, themes, and to trace them as closely as possible. One might wonder what the exact place of rhetoric is. Two metaphors could be used to characterize its function. The first is that of Neo-Latin drama as a kind of ‘salad bar’, from which each playwright may choose (inventio) his ingredients—some lettuce, nuts, meat or fish, and dressing (that is, rhetorical devices)—in order to craft and to arrange (dispositio) his or her

30 Cf. Ijsewijn (“The Coming of Humanism” passim). See also Küpper’s ch. in this volume.
own salad (for instance, the respective play). In this image, rhetoric qua *elocutio* would be the dressing that pervades and seasons everything; accordingly, the function of rhetoric as embellishing every piece of literature—including drama—would be highlighted. This embellishment could well be a collective knowledge allying the literatures of several (European) countries—including the respective dramatic works, both in Latin and in the vernacular languages. A second metaphor could be Neo-Latin drama as a ‘universal web’, with rhetoric being the ‘glue’ keeping all of the threads together. This image would stress the social and literary function of rhetoric qua making and maintaining relationships between authors, countries, and (various vernacular) languages. Thus, Simonides may well have been inspired by a Latin play by a Dutch author, Crocus’ *Ioseph*, through the familiar language and the stimulating theme, and by other Neo-Latin Senecan tragedies, through that same language, and the similar rhetorical techniques being employed.
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