

MATTHEW GWINNE'S *NERO* (1603):
SENECA, ACADEMIC DRAMA, AND
THE POLITICS OF POLITY

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Broadly speaking, J.W. Cunliffe's narrative of the role of Senecan influence in the early modern period still holds good today, positing as it does a reception history moving from performance, to the influential 1550s translations, to a final phase of Senecan contact in the mature vernacular dramaturgy of the Elizabethan age, where Senecan drama plays an important (but more limited role) in inspiring the Renaissance revenge-tragedy model. Though it may be difficult to isolate 'Seneca' in the melting-pot of other literary influences, from the medieval *de casibus* tradition to tragedies being produced on the continent, it is clear that Senecan tragedy makes a special contribution to the bloodthirsty, spectacular and rhetorically-daring theatre of the late Tudor age.¹ In its movement from production, through translation, to creative reconfiguration, and working from dependency to independence, from Latin to English, and from private to public, such a reception-model for 'Seneca in English' offers a satisfying arc of progression that fits with the broader story of a Renaissance literary culture, challenging and surpassing norms of what had previously been considered Classical 'perfection'.

In such a narrative, it is easy for the so-called 'academic drama' of the late sixteenth century—a form of theatre displaying conspicuous and deep-set engagement with Seneca, and with its roots in the earlier phases of Senecan reception—to be overlooked, left behind by the dazzling spectacle and challenging, sophisticated explorative drama of the popular stage.² Furthermore, the drama put on by stu-

dents and academics at Oxford and Cambridge in Latin and Greek ostentatiously differentiated itself from the popular theatre, consistently stressing the educative, character-forming role of dramatic performance for its elite participants, who were destined after university for service to crown or church. The authors of university drama explicitly appeal to the didactic potential of the Neronian tragedies, implicitly differentiating their own use of Seneca for homiletic purpose from the dark energy of a Medea or Atreus, figures whose charismatic villainy inhabits the dangerous explorative drama of the vernacular theatre.³

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the late Elizabethan university plays are less creative than their counterparts in the popular theatre. Academic drama did not only serve as an important creative precursor to the work of the great vernacular playwrights, but also continued to offer innovative, engaging, and quintessentially 'Elizabethan' theatrical responses to contemporary issues.⁴ Its self-avowed interest in the construction of elite identity and privileged relationship with crown and court meant that its social and political impact could, and did, extend far beyond the ivory tower.⁵ And in the creation of such provocative drama, 'Seneca' and Senecan influence could still play an important part. In this essay I analyse the role of Seneca in Matthew Gwinne's *Nero: A New Tragedy*, arguing that this hybrid historical tragedy exhibits a sophisticated 'Senecan' reception in its depiction of a tyrant whose power is rooted not only in historical 'fact' but also in the nefarious poetics of Senecan tragedy. From there, I suggest that an examination of the character of Seneca himself in *Nero* complicates classification of this play as straightforwardly 'homiletic', and propose that this text offers a complex response to a hot contemporary issue, the question of Divine Right and the limits of obedience—in a way that puts academic drama at the centre, rather than the periphery, of contemporary historiography and drama.

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SENECA AND MATTHEW GWINNE'S *NERO: TRAGAEDIA NOVA* (1603)

Not many people would consider Matthew Gwinne's 1603 *Nero: A New Tragedy* 'dangerous' drama. Gwinne, Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, had a history of involvement with the university plays and in 1605 would put on his comedy *Vertumnus, sive Annus Recurrens* for James I.⁶ The earlier *Nero* had no such luck. At more than 5000 lines and offering nearly 80 different speaking parts, it may come as no surprise that this piece attracted the epithets 'monstrous' and 'sprawling' from later critics, and was rejected for performance at the time.⁷ In five unequal acts that ignore the unities of action, place and time, the drama is a conglomeration of the historical texts of Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio, tracing Nero's career from its very beginning, through its tyrannical hotspots (the kin-murders, Great Fire, Pisonian conspiracy), and to

its eventual end in suicide. Married to this historiographical synthesis is a distinctly tragic Senecan structural framework. Nemesis, accompanied by Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone, serve as a chorus bookending the play; revenge-seeking ghosts modelled on *Thyestes*, *Agamemnon* and *Octavia* abound (Gwinne, ed. Leidig 7-8; Binns, *Seneca and Neo-Latin Tragedy*; Sutton, *Nero* 25 and *passim*; Braund 440). And the material these Senecan spirits watch over is familiar too: Nemesis promises from the outset the quintessential stuff of Senecan tragedy, ‘*caedem, ultionem, lachrymas, cladem, nefas*’ (*Prolog.* 3) (‘slaughter, revenge, weeping, calamity, unspeakable crime’).⁸ There is, however, a final twist. Seneca’s ‘Tragedy of Evil’ does not triumph in this history-play.⁹ Instead, this hellish chorus draws a distinctly Christian moral. Both prince and *populus* should trust in God, who will defend, free and support the righteous (V.4, 4975-4992); the audience should applaud their own good fortune for living under Elizabeth, not Nero (*Epil.* 5011). Ultimately, for Gwinne’s first modern editor Hans-Dieter Leidig, this is academic exercise, not theatre (Gwinne, ed. Leidig 9).

- 18 A more sympathetic critic, Dana F. Sutton, recognises that this sells *Nero* short. He argues that Gwinne’s work belongs to the same category as Shakespeare’s history plays and even perhaps the ‘historical romance’ of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, pointing out that *Nero* is not so much failed Aristotelian tragedy as the distinctly on-trend Elizabethan staged chronicle history, sharing immediate DNA with Thomas Legge’s ground-breaking *Richardus Tertius* (itself of mammoth ambition and scope, and successfully staged in 1562) (Gwinne, ed. Sutton 7-9, 25).¹⁰ Nor, in Sutton’s revisionary re-reading, is Gwinne’s contact with ‘Senecan’ stylistic influence derivative. Gwinne’s obsession with quick-fire, punning dialogue presses quintessentially ‘Senecan’ sententious *stichomythia* to the very limit: yet the ‘points of wit’, ‘affected jingle’, and ‘scraps of sentences detached from old authors’ we see all over *Nero* are not the mark of derivative dependence, but evidence of the attempt to offer in Latin the ‘novel poetics’ of Euphuism, the kind of artificial dialogue that looks so like the verbal dexterity and punning tricks of contemporary vernacular theatre.¹¹ Such rhetoricity is, paradoxically enough, an innovative form of ‘Seneca in English’.

The same point holds for Senecan influence at the level of stage action, as the blood-thirstiness of vernacular Elizabethan theatre combines with the programmatic role of the supernatural in the Neronian tragedies. Onstage we see suicide by strangulation (Epicharis, heroically killing herself with her own brassiere, ‘to die a free woman’, V.4, 3815-6); vein-opening (Seneca, Petronius, Lucan, Thræsea Paetus), deaths by poison (Claudius, Britannicus), stabbing (Agrippina) and trampling (Poppaea); to say nothing of the burning of Christians and Nero’s own drawn-out death (cf. Gwinne, ed. Sutton 29). And as Gwinne hyperbolically exceeds the violence of Senecan tragedy, so the supernatural paraphernalia—the vengeful shades desperate for retribution—are also multiplied, as characters who have died return repeatedly to inspire and comment upon the next phase of the story. Gwinne thus translates a pattern of cyclical *nefas* within the Senecan plays—an obsession with creating patterns of iteration and excess in which change is always the same, but worse—into a super-Senecan drama.

Within the span of a single life, Nero's reign is now re-presented as a succession of ever-worsening descents into *scelus*.¹²

SENECA IN GWINNE'S *NERO*: *TRAGAEDIA NOVA*

Gwinne, in other words, is not aiming merely to imitate Seneca, but to out-do him. Even so, it has been assumed that Seneca's influence is peripheral: Senecan ghosts and Furies bookend acts and frame the play, serving as effective props to shape *Nero*'s sprawling range, but they do not get in the way of the history-play 'proper'. Instead, as Gwinne himself defines it, the real achievement of *Nero* is the versification of history: 'Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio, Seneca—they say nearly everything. I've simply transformed their prose into verse' (*nam et loquuntur ipsi [sc. Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion, Seneca] fere omnia: ego tantummodo modos feci*, Pref. to Act I). Gwinne's scholarly habit of using the margin to 'footnote' his sources adds weight to the didactic role of the play as history plain and simple, allowing readers to trace the original in the same way in which, for example, Sir Henry Savile—one of Gwinne's sources—had annotated his own ground-breaking prose history of the period, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba. Fower Bookes of the Histories* (1591) (cf. Gwinne, ed. Sutton 23).¹³

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The last name on Gwinne's checklist of sources, however, suggests a slightly different precedent for Gwinne's own history play: an already explicitly theatricalized historical source at his disposal, the (pseudo)-Senecan *Octavia*. This drama, set in AD 62 and belonging to the Roman history-play tradition (*fabula praetexta*), offers an account of Nero's attempts to get rid of his first wife Claudia Octavia, the fruitless efforts of his tutor Seneca to change his tyrannical ways, and the ominous appearance at the centre of the play of his mother Agrippina (figured as infuriate ghost come to predict eventual doom for her son). Gwinne twice directs the reader explicitly to *Octavia* in his marginal notes: first, when Poppaea and Nero discuss and attempt to interpret troubling dreams; secondly in Poppaea's description of pro-Octavia rioting by the people of Rome (*Nero* IV.2, 2298 with *Oct.* 721-37, *Oct.* 740-55; IV.7, 3100 with *Oct.* 792-803). Yet while Gwinne only explicitly 'sidenotes' *Octavia* here, the influence of this play clearly works at a much more deep-rooted allusive level. The influence of *Octavia* operates extensively through Acts 3 and 4, which cover Nero's matricide and banishment of Octavia: *Octavia*'s ghost of Agrippina is strongly re-embodied in the *umbra Agrippinae* with which Act IV begins (cf. esp. IV.1, 2228-30 with *Oct.* 1665f., 598-600). Indeed, *Octavia* even provides infuriate impetus for the *Nero* itself, as the *fabula praetexta*'s Agrippina contributes to the characterisation of Messalina, whose ghostly curse prompts Gwinne's play.¹⁴

Octavia, then, offers more to Gwinne than merely raw 'history' to be reshaped within his tragedy. It also offers an explicit and obvious model for the synthesis of a Senecan tragic poetics with a historical treatment of the age of Nero.¹⁵ For *Octavia*'s obvious strategy throughout is to transform Senecan mythological tragedy into the

stuff of real-life tyranny, with an Octavia whose sufferings exceed those of the classic Greek mythological heroines Electra and Iphigenia, and a Nero who behaves like *Thyestes'* Atreus, electing to rule through brute force (*vis*), arrogance (*superbia*), lust (*libido*) and cruelty (*crudelitas*) (see *Octavia*, ed. Boyle vv. 437-592).¹⁶ The author of *Octavia* draws the moral openly as the play concludes—Rome's savagery is worse than anything conceived of in Greek tragedy:

urbe est nostra mitior Aulis
et Taurorum barbara tellus.
hospitis illic caede litatur
numen superum.
cuius gaudet Roma cruore.

(*Oct.* 977-982)

'Aulis and the savage land of the Taurians are gentler than our city. There the gods' divinity is satisfied by the blood of foreigners. Rome delights in citizen blood.'¹⁷

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Gwinne, then, has in *Octavia* the template not only for Nero as ready-made tragic tyrant, but also for the fusion of history with Senecan tragedy. And, as a close reading of the third act of *Nero* will show, Gwinne in turn re-frames Nero's reign to make Senecan influence exceed structural trope. For the *furor* that possesses Seneca's mythological tyrants and the nefarious poetics driving the Neronian dramaturgy will also seep into the dramatic drive of Gwinne's history play.

The third act of *Nero* begins with the ghost of Britannicus begging for revenge, culminates in the death of Agrippina, and is created largely from Tacitus' *Annals* 13 and 14 (according to Gwinne's own marginal sidenotes). At the opening of the third scene of Act III, the actor Paris enters to announce a conspiracy being hatched by Agrippina against her son.¹⁸ Here is Tacitus' episode alongside *Nero*:

Provecta nox erat et Neroni per vinolentiam trahebatur, cum ingreditur Paris, solutus alioquin id temporis luxus principis intendere, sed tunc compositus ad maestitiam, expositoque indicii ordine ita audientem exterret, ut non tantum matrem Plautumque interficere, sed Burrum etiam demovere praefectura destinaret, tamquam Agrippinae gratia provectum et vicem reddentem. (*Ann.* 13.20.1)

'It was now the dead of night and Nero was drawing it out further in drink, when Paris entered. Accustomed on other occasions to entertain the *princeps* at this time, his face now bore a tragic cast. After he had gone through the evidence step by step, he terrified his audience so much that Nero determined not only to kill his mother and Plautus, but also to remove Burrus from his role as Praetorian Prefect: for Burrus was a man who owed his promotion to Agrippina, and was now repaying the favour.'

NERO. sed quid hoc? moestus Paris
ingreditur, animo saepe iucundus meo.
an tragica nobis fabula paratur, Pari?
Hecubamne recitas? an refers Helenam mihi? 1480
neutram habitus, illam vultus, hanc animus refert.

quid est quod horres? quicquid est, effer, Pari.

PAR. est tragica, at ut sit fabula optandum: nec est

Hecuba vel Helena, quae sua queratur mala:

sed est Agave, Althaea, Medoea aut magis 1485

mala, si sit ulla, qua suis quaerat mala.

o monstra matrum: o quae feras vincant feras.

(*Nero* III.3, 1477-87)

'NERO. But what's this? Sad Paris enters, who so often cheers me up. Is a tragedy being prepared for me, Paris? Are you reciting Hecuba? Or are you playing Helen for me? The expression suggests that one, the mood this: your costume, neither. What is it you shudder at? Whatever it is, do tell, Paris.

PAR. It's a tragedy: but how I wish it were a play. Nor is it a Hecuba or Helen, the type of woman who complains of her own troubles: it's Agave, Althaea, Medea, or—if there be any—a woman worse still, who seeks trouble for her own kin. Monstrous mothers! Women more bestial than the beasts!

This comparison gives a good sense both of how closely Gwinne models his text on Tacitus, and of his own dramatic contribution. As Gwinne's Paris explicitly ranges Agrippina's behaviour against a selection of tragic heroines, before concluding that her wickedness exceeds any stage-horror, he does not just display an 'Elizabethan' penchant for metatheatrical comment. He also amplifies the sense of the dramatic already lurking in the ancient historical text, for Tacitus' Nero-narrative is not only saturated with theatrical atmosphere: it has, as Gwinne seems only too aware, *already* been written as a tragic and comedy-inflected form of theatre.¹⁹

Yet this metatheatrical framing of the beginning of Agrippina's downfall does not merely outdo Tacitus, or respond to the contemporary obsession with metatheatre. It also self-consciously adopts *Octavia's* model of play between 'myth' and 'reality', and imports the *nefas*-driven teleology of Senecan tragedy. For as the conversation between Nero and Paris continues, it becomes apparent that Gwinne's conspiracy-plot is *both* a faithful imitation of Tacitus' historical account *and* closely modelled on Seneca's *Thyestes*:

NERO. Odrysia Romae mensa num struitur? quid est?

PAR. scelus paratur Thracio maius. NERO. quid est?

PAR. quod lingua refugit, animus horrescit. NERO. quid est? 1490

plus dubia torquent, brevia dubitantem levant.

proloquere. PAR. mater...NERO. quae? quid? PAR. heu mater tua...

NERO. quid illa? caesum forte flet fratrem. PAR. parum est.

NERO. quid ergo? laesam Claudiam evulgat.²⁰ PAR. parum est.

NERO. quid tandem? avara est, arrogans, meretrix. PAR. parum est. 1495

audita, vetera non refrico. NERO. maius quid est?

PAR. illa, illa Plautum destinat thalamo suo

tuoque solio. NERO. quem mihi Plautum refers?

Rubelliumne? PAR. dicere rebellem potes.

cui mater affert partilem ab Augusto gradum. 1500

NERO. quis sceleris index, ede. PAR. Calvisio scelus

prodit socia Syllana, Calvisius statim
narrat Atimeto, narrat Atimetus mihi:
ego conticere nolui infandum nefas.

(*Nero* III.3, 1488-1504)

‘NERO You don’t mean to say an Odrysian feast is being set at Rome? What is it?

PAR. A crime greater than the Thracian one is being prepared. NERO. What is it?

PAR. That which the tongue flees from, the mind shudders at. NERO. What is it?

Indecision is torture: to say a few words comforts the one in doubt.

Speak. PAR. The mother... NERO. Who? What? PAR. Alas, your mother...

NERO. What of her? Perhaps she weeps for my slain brother. PAR. That’s nothing.

NERO. What, then? She’s making the wrong done to Octavia known. PAR. That’s nothing.

NERO. What then indeed? She’s a grasping, overbearing whore. PAR. That’s nothing.

I’m not one to fret at old, oft-heard charges. NERO. So—what’s bigger than this?

PAR. That one, your mother, has determined upon Plautus for her bed,

and your throne. NERO. To which Plautus do you refer?

22 Rubellius? PAR. You can call him ‘Rebellious’, whose mother gives the same degree of descent from Augustus as you.

NERO. Announce the informer of this crime. PAR. Her friend Silana

betrayed the crime to Calvisius, Calvisius at once

told Atimetus; Atimetus told me.

I didn’t want to keep quiet about this unspeakable evil.’

Gwinne here recasts, in wonderfully energetic and punning dialogue, the conspiracy-plot of *Annals* 13, where Tacitus had depicted the accusations of conspiracy against Agrippina as motivated by the hostility of Junia Silana, who had recently quarrelled with Nero’s mother:²¹

illa spe ultionis oblata parat accusatores ex clientibus suis, Iturium et Calvisium, non vetera et saepius iam audita deferens, quod Britannici mortem lugeret aut Octaviae iniurias evulgaret, sed destinavisse eam Rubellium Plautum, per maternam originem pari ac Nero gradu a divo Augusto, ad res novas extollere coniugioque eius et imperio rem publicam rursus invadere. (*Ann.* 13.19.3)

‘Silana, now the opportunity for revenge had arisen, prepared from her clients the accusers Iturius and Calvisius. She did not bring forward the old, oft-heard charges, that Agrippina lamented the death of Britannicus, nor that she was making public the wrongs done to Octavia: but rather the charge that Agrippina had determined to incite Rubellius Plautus (on his mother’s side of equal degree descended from Augustus) to rebellion, and by marriage to this man and through his *imperium*, once again to make her assault upon affairs of state.’

Gwinne’s recasting of Tacitus’ complex rumour-mill conspiracy is deftly done. But Nero’s first question has nothing to do with Tacitus. Instead, it recalls a programmatic episode in Seneca’s *Thyestes*, in which Seneca’s anti-hero Atreus reflects on the tragedy he himself is about to create. Finessing his plan by brainstorming with an appalled servant-figure, Atreus’ discussion obviously inhabits *Nero*’s dialogue between emperor and Paris:

ATREVS. non satis magno meum
ardet furore pectus, impleri iuvat
maiore monstro. SATELLES. Quid novi rabidus struis?
ATREVS. Nil quod doloris capiat assueti modum;
nullum relinquam facinus et nullum est satis.
SATELLES. Ferrum? ATREVS. Parum est.
SATELLES. Quid ignis? ATREVS. Etiam nunc parum est.
SATELLES. Quonam ergo telo tantus utetur dolor?
ATREVS. Ipso Thyeste. SATELLES. Maius hoc ira est malum.
ATREVS. Fateor.

(*Thy.* 250-260)

‘ATREUS....My breast does not burn with *furore* great enough: it delights me to be possessed by a greater evil. SATELLES. What new thing do you contrive in your frenzy? ATREUS. Nothing that accepts the customary limits of suffering: I shall leave undone no crime, and no crime is enough. SATELLES. The sword? ATREUS. That’s nothing. SATELLES. What about fire? ATREUS. Still that’s nothing. SATELLES. Then what weapon will such enormous grief deploy? ATREUS. Thyestes himself. SATELLES. This wickedness is worse than the wrath provoking it. ATREUS. I admit it.’

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Nor is Nero’s mention of the ‘Odryisian feast’—an oblique reference to the notorious story of the matricide Procne—simply another metatheatrical gag. It is instead a pointed nod to Atreus’ desire to find an unprecedented crime to use against his brother:

SATELLES. Facere quid tandem paras?
ATREVS. Nescio quid animus maius et solito amplius
supraque fines moris humani tumet
instatque pigris manibus; haud quid sit scio,
sed grande quiddam est. ita sit. hoc, anime, occupa. 270
dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo;
uterque faciat. vidit infandas domus
Odrysia mensas—fateor, immane est scelus,
sed occupatum; maius hoc aliquid dolor
inveniat.

(*Thy.* 266-75)

‘SATELLES. What, then, are you preparing to do? ATREUS. My mind swells with something greater, bigger than usual, something beyond the bounds of human custom, and it urges on my slothful hands: what it is, I don’t yet know, but it’s something great. Seize upon it, mind of mine: an evil deed fit for Thyestes and worthy of Atreus, that both shall commit. The Odryisian house saw an unspeakable feast: I confess that crime is awful, but it’s been done before. This pain must find something greater than that.’

In *Thyestes*, Atreus’ attempt to create a ‘greater-than-Odryisian feast’ is not just evidence of an obsession with exceeding the boundaries of evil that is the mark of many

Senecan anti-heroes. It is also, much more specifically, a moment of emulous literary imitation: an attempt to outdo the Tereus story of Ovid's epic *Metamorphoses* (6.412ff.; cf. *Thyestes*, ed. Tarrant 129-130). The Fury who sets Seneca's tragedy in motion lobbies for a greater version of 'the Thracian crime', (*Thracium nefas*, 56), and Atreus' re-echo of the theme here stresses the metaliterary creative antagonism underpinning Thyestes' iteration and amplification of *nefas* (cf. *Thyestes*, ed. Tarrant vv.103f., 257ff., 269ff.; 704, 707-14, 765ff.).²²

When Gwinne in turn appropriates the motif here, in a context that he has already explicitly tagged as metatheatrical, he invites his audience to interpret his own history play as the next step in a chain of literary tradition determined to outdo the nefarious evil of its predecessors. If we still have not got the point, the final declaration of Paris—'I didn't want to keep quiet about this unspeakable evil'—secures Gwinne's attachment to a 'Senecan' poetics. For Seneca's plays depend upon not only the creation of ever worse crimes, but also the scripting and voicing of *nefas*: not simply 'evil', but etymologically, from *ne-fari*, 'not to speak of'. Paris' willingness to voice *infandum nefas*, 'unspeakable evil not to be spoken of', suggests that Gwinne too has recognised the creative possibilities in making 'Senecan' evil heard.²³

In sum, Nero's response to the rebellion anticipated from Agrippina—an episode closely modelled on *Annals* 13—has been reframed within the claustrophobic cyclicality of a Senecan poetics: the rhetoric of amplification in the quest for revenge, the obsession with iteration and excess, the voicing of what should be kept quiet. This in turn exaggerates the latent paranoia already within Tacitus' narrative, reconditioning the deteriorating mother-son relationship to be found there as now the mutually driven, quasi-fratricidal power struggle of *Thyestes* in which Nero can picture his mother's lust for power as a 'Tantalid thirst' (III.3, 1516-7).²⁴

As Act III plays out, *Thyestes* continues by means of allusion to structure Nero's counter-conspiracy against his mother. Nero-as-Atreus attempts to outmanoeuvre Agrippina-as-Thyestes by feigning affection and simultaneously plotting destruction; as in *Thyestes*, Nero's offer to share power with his mother—the means by which Atreus had enticed his brother back to Mycenae in the Senecan text—ends with Agrippina, like Thyestes, giving in to 'credulous hope' and agreeing to join Nero in rule. A lyric ode, commenting happily on the reunion of emperor and mother, replicates the ironically celebratory ode of the third chorus of *Thyestes*, which welcomes the return of fraternal harmony to Argos.²⁵ And the final scenes of this Act continue to combine the story familiar from *Annals* 14.3ff. with the tragic psychology of Senecan tragedy. Amidst the failed death-ship plot engineered by Anicetus, Agrippina curses her son with words closely modelled on *Octavia* (in contrast to the canny silence she displays in Tacitus to avoid destruction by oar).²⁶ Yet Nero, for all his bombastic villainy, is, in the end, no Atreus. Constantly in fear of counter-attack from his mother, the revenge he achieves over Agrippina, expressed in the language of Thyestean triumph, is achieved by proxy. For while it is Atreus himself who both entices his brother back and celebrates his revenge with an address to his murderous

hands, in *Nero* it is Anicetus who plays Atreus, as Nero acknowledges both at the outset of the plot and its completion:

Festum diem, germane, consensu pari
celebremus; hic est, scepra qui firmet mea

...

Nunc meas laudo manus,
nunc parta vera est palma.

(*Thy.* 970-1, 1096-7)

[Atreus, to Thyestes after he has consumed the boy-feast, but before he is aware of it] Let's celebrate this festive day with equal harmony, brother: here he is, the brother who secures my sceptre.... [after Atreus has revealed his revenge] Now I praise my handiwork, now the true victory-palm has been won!

nunc imperare incipio, nunc vere impero:
hic scepra firmat, hic dat imperium dies.

...

Laudo manum,
Exosculatorque

(*Nero* III.6, 1991-3, III.8, 2184-5)

[Nero, to Anicetus after he has promised to kill Agrippina] Now I begin to rule, now I truly command! This day secures my sceptre, this day gives me *imperium*... [after Anicetus has confirmed Agrippina's death] I praise your hand, and kiss it!

Gwinne is not, then, merely trying to 'out-Seneca' Seneca. His sophisticated use of *Octavia* and *Thyestes* re-constitutes history as contemporary revenge tragedy, recognising the creative possibilities unleashed by Senecan tyranny. Or, as John SandSBury puts it more pithily: 'Gwinne is as Seneca was' (*talīs Seneca qui Gwinus fuit*. Pref., *Ad Iustum Lipsium de hoc Nerone* 11).

GWINNE'S SENECA IN *NERO*: THE POLITICS OF POLITY

Gwinne, then, is not just interested in up-dating Senecan reception to reflect the innovations of popular vernacular theatre; he also displays, in his complex re-casting of Nero's relationship with his mother as revenge tragedy, a recognition of the ways in which the charismatic villainy of the Senecan mythological tyrant may map on to the historical reign of Nero. This section will explore what the consequences of Gwinne's sophisticated Senecan reception might be for the broader interpretation of *Nero*.

In the 'Momus controversy', William Gager, Gwinne's contemporary at Oxford and the most famous neo-Latin playwright of the day, had famously defended the educational and ethical functions of university drama. Gwinne, too, offers in his preface tart words against an unnamed 'carper' and 'absent Momus', claiming a firmly moral purpose for his play.²⁷ Indeed, the story of Nero's downfall was precisely the kind of moralizing exemplary tale familiar from the medieval *de casibus* tradition and

its popular Renaissance incarnation, the 1559 *Mirror for Magistrates*. Furthermore, previous dramatic and translation reception of Seneca also showed clear signs of ‘Christianizing’ intent.²⁸ It is unsurprising, then, that Gwinne’s final chorus offers its own didactic *sphragis*, asserting that Nero fell because he was deserted by God, and that princes will be cherished, so long as they worship God, while their subjects will be free, so long as they pray to God for help (Chorus 5, 4977-805, 4983-6). This message is reiterated in the epilogue with contemporary force. Nemesis’ final words, in a panegyric address to Elizabeth which was retained in editions of the play after her death, explicitly contrast her virtuous governance with its antithesis, Nero’s tyranny (*Epil.* 5010-4).

When *Nero* baldly asserts that it is the duty of princes to keep faith with God, and if they do not, it is the duty of subjects to look to God for deliverance from tyranny, Gwinne goes beyond moralizing generalities to situate his play amidst a larger contemporary discourse about the behaviour of monarchs and the duties of citizens.²⁹

- 26** The attitudes expressed both in epilogue and chorus suggest, in fact, that Gwinne is making a topical point, providing a firm rebuttal to the monarchomachical theory circulating on the continent. And within *Nero* there is further reflection on the question of the limits of loyalty to a monarch. Seneca, indeed, articulates his refusal to join the Pisonian Conspiracy in the terms of absolute obedience: though Nero is a monstrous evil, Seneca says, he is an evil that must be tolerated (*malus, at ferendus*, V.3, 3501).³⁰ We might read *Nero*, then, as offering a resolutely conservative position on the question of tyrannicide, an interpretation that coheres with the academic play’s function to inculcate obedience, and echoes the position taken in particular by Gwinne’s future patron, James VI/I, on the question of absolute monarchy.³¹

But if we consider the ‘Senecan’ context of *Nero*, the picture begins to look more complicated. The chorus that provides the commentary on *Thyestes* is both morally exemplary and utterly ineffectual: in *Nero* too, a just God frames the drama, but the play ‘proper’ is remarkably free of the overtly Christianizing adaptation other Senecan translations and plays display, and there is of course no room for a Christianizing *deus ex machina*. In replicating a Senecan strategy that disconnects the chorus from the play ‘proper’, Gwinne does not so much make sense of Nero’s reign from a providential perspective as challenge the audience to construct that perspective for themselves. And while *Nero* is a classic example in the *de casibus* genre, Gwinne’s Tacitean depiction of Neronian Rome, showcasing the ways in which tyranny works through dissimulation, conspiracy, and the practicalities of military power bases, has more in common with Jonson’s *Sejanus* and the darker precepts of Tacitism than the classic ‘turn of Fortune’ narrative.³²

With this in mind, it is worth taking a closer look at the example of Seneca himself, a key figure in the consensus that *Nero* is a text with an absolutist message. When Seneca dies, proudly bequeathing the example of his life to his friends (V.6, 3994-5), drinking hemlock in the tradition of Socrates, and associating himself with Cato and Canus, he shows that to kill oneself is one way to evade the tyrant’s grasp.³³ This

portrayal of Seneca's death bears a strong resemblance to the other 'philosophical' suicide of *Nero*, Thrasea Paetus, who kills himself before Nero's execution-order can be carried out against him. Detachedly musing on the experience of death, Thrasea had also, like Seneca, died making a libation to Jove 'the Liberator' (V.3, 4496), before going on to predict Nero's downfall: 'There will come some 'Vindex'/avenger of this public evil (*Erit, erit aliquis publici vindex mali*, V.3, 4504).³⁴ Seneca, like Thrasea Paetus, then, offers a Stoic-heroic *imago vitae* that exemplifies the extremes of absolute obedience demanded by adherence to the principles of Divine Right.³⁵

Once again, however, Gwinne's manipulation of the ancient sources problematizes this simple picture of complementary exemplarity. For while Seneca dies well in this play, perishing in a blitz of intertextual reference to his consolatory philosophical works (see Ker 8-10, 216-7), *before* his withdrawal from court he is actively implicated in Nero's tyranny. And in Gwinne's innovative synthesis of the sources, it is now Thrasea Paetus himself who points this out. In the *Annals*, Thrasea makes a fateful and fatal decision to draw attention to himself in response to the Senate's supine 'celebration' of the murder of Agrippina, after Nero has presented his action against his mother as the only option available to him after her 'rebellion':

Thrasea Paetus silentio vel brevi adsensu priores adulationes transmitters solitus exitum senatu, ac sibi causam periculi fecit, ceteris libertatis initium non praebuit.

(*Ann.* 14.12.2)

'Thrasea Paetus, accustomed previously to bypass previous sychophancies in silence or with brief assent, on that day departed from the Senate and put himself in jeopardy: nor did he offer to the other senators the beginnings of liberty.'

Gwinne, however, adds a telling detail in his dramatic recreation of the moment Thrasea becomes a marked man. For as he walks out Thrasea insinuates that, actually, *Seneca* is really to blame: 'Though of good repute, Seneca can scarcely be tolerated, who has done such things to this Senate: but I depart without a word' (*Rumore Seneca vix bono ferri potest, / Huic ordini qui talia: sed abeo silens*, IV.4, 2644-5).³⁶ Typically, after this declaration to keep silent, Thrasea cannot resist speaking again, and now he makes his problem with Seneca clear:

Nec ego Neronem culpo, sed Senecam magis;
Confessionem Seneca sic scribit ream?
Immanitate Nero superat omnem fidem,
Questumque.

(IV.4, 2676-70)

'Nor do I blame Nero, but rather Seneca: does Seneca really write this confession of his own involvement? Nero in his monstrosity outdoes all belief, every complaint.'

Here, Gwinne has supplanted the telling departure in silence of Tacitus' Thrasea with a speech—in *his* own mouth—that reminds us allusively instead of Seneca's infamous role in ghost-writing Nero's self-exculpatory letter to the Senate after Agrippina's

death: *ergo non iam Nero, cuius immanitas omnium questus anteibat, sed Seneca adverso rumore erat, quod oratione tali confessionem scripsisset* ('Therefore it was not now Nero, whose monstrosity exceeded all complaint, who was the subject of adverse rumour, but Seneca: for he had written a confession by such speech-writing', *Ann.* 14.11.4).³⁷ Gwinne has already dramatized the moment at which Nero had ordered Seneca to do this (IV.3, 2451-5)—in an exchange that never happens in the ancient sources—and there, Seneca's response to the demand that he participate in the cover-up of Agrippina's death (*Facile patrari, haud facile purgari potest, / Materna caedes: pareo Neroni tamen*; 'It's easy to commit matricide: not so easy to remove the stain of it. However, I obey Nero', IV.3, 2456-7) makes absolute obedience look much less attractive. Reframed now in Thrasea's critical words, Seneca's forbearance of tyranny—*malus, at ferendus; vix ferri potest*—starts to look in fact like active participation in tyranny.

- 28 Gwinne's juxtaposition of Seneca and Thrasea as two *exempla virtutis* is no unthinking conglomeration of ancient sources, then. And Gwinne piles on the pressure in Seneca's retirement scene. Here Octavia takes him to task in a manner that goes beyond personal condemnation to criticise the role of courtier-philosopher *tout court*:

Nequiter uterque; uterque nequitiam luat.
 Monstrum est philosophicus aulicus: neutrum puto,
 Uterque qui vult esse: conveniunt male.

(IV.5, 2718-20)

'Both you and Nero are vile, and both should pay the penalty for your vileness. A courtier-philosopher is a monstrous thing. I think the one who wants to be both is neither: the two roles have nothing in common.'

Octavia's words here once again supplement Tacitus: she is in fact notoriously silent in the *Annals*. Instead, as Gwinne's marginal note directs, she has turned to political theory to condemn Seneca's failed balancing act as servant and philosopher. For it is John of Salisbury's (1159) *Policraticus*—the subtitle of which is 'on the frivolities of courtiers and the footsteps of philosophers'—that lies behind Octavia's blast, as Gwinne's own margin directs:

He who has put on the fripperies of the court, and still promises the duty of the philosopher and good man, is Hermaphroditus: the man who shames womanly charm with a hard and bristly face, and whose womanly ways have polluted and defiled man. A courtier-philosopher is a monstrous thing. While he affects the appearance of both, he is neither (*Res siquidem monstruosa est, Philosophus curialis: et dum utrumque esse affectat, neutrum est*): since there is no place for philosophy at court, and the philosopher has no truck whatsoever with court follies. (*Polic.* V.x.)³⁸

Seneca is stunned into submission by Octavia's words—and makes the immediate decision to retire (IV.5, 2728ff.). And when it is time to die, Seneca perishes in exemplary fashion. But Gwinne's intertextual strategy—one which focuses on the

cost of obedience, the potential even for collusion with tyranny—invites a much less straightforward response to the question of absolute obedience. While the framing narrative of Gwinne's *Nero* suggests that Christian providence makes the question of absolute obedience easy, the grubby reality depicted by the life-choices of Seneca himself within the play opens up a much more destabilizing perspective.

CONCLUSION

Gwinne's reception of Seneca is neither superficial nor insensitive. His adoption of a Senecan poetics has a crucial part to play in reconsideration of the university play as contemporary, innovative and relevant. Within the play itself, character-Seneca serves as foil for complex reflections on the role of those subject to tyranny. And when Gwinne directly points his audience to *Policraticus*, he positively invites the audience to consider his text as susceptible to contemporary political interpretation. Indeed, just as the Chorus bookends *Nero*, so, in a sense, does *Policraticus*, for Gwinne refers to the work in both the introduction and final lines of the play, with another rant from Nero against the inadequacies of courtiers.³⁹

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It is worth considering briefly, then, the broader impact of this medieval work of political theory on this play. *Policraticus* is arranged in an evolving tripartite structure. Books 1-3 offer a picture of the uneducated and 'ordinary' courtier and king; books 4-6 introduce John's idea of the 'polycratic' nature of the just society, in which individuals, kings and the church work together; books 7 and 8 round off the treatise with reflections on the importance of wisdom, and its relevance for the establishment of individual happiness and a just society.⁴⁰ John advises moderation in all as the key to a happy life and wise rule. And in his final book, in a chapter dedicated to explaining 'what a tyrant is', John offers his final words on the role of courtiers and flattery. Offering an exception to the rule for those serving in the court of a tyrant, John admits 'it has always been lawful to flatter tyrants and to deceive them, and...it has always been an honourable thing to slay them if they can be curbed in no other way' (*Polic.* VIII. 20).⁴¹ The first clause of this sentence seems offer some exoneration for *Nero*'s Seneca: but what is more striking in these lines is the casual reference to tyrannicide, and indeed *Policraticus*' chief claim to fame is its advocacy of tyrannicide in certain circumstances.⁴² As long as his vices are not 'absolutely ruinous', John argues that the tyrant must be obeyed absolutely (VIII. 20). But when a ruler is 'absolutely ruinous', tyrannicide is both justified and just. And to secure his argument, John goes on to offer extended discussion of one particular disastrous reign: the infamous misrule of Nero (VIII. 18-20).

When Gwinne asserts in the voice of Seneca that Nero is a 'monstrous evil that must be tolerated', even as he draws upon *Policraticus* to depict a Nero 'absolutely ruinous', this university drama at least obliquely invites its audience to wander imaginatively further down the path to resistance. We might now wonder at the import of

Gwinne's directions not only to *Policraticus* but also to the *Ende of Nero* of Sir Henry Savile, who was not only the instigator of 'Tacitism' in England, and a friend of the less-than-obedient Earl of Essex, but also the author of a translation which praises Vindex, rebel against Nero.⁴³ Gwinne's own proximity to the Essex circle might in turn invite interpretation of a more 'resistant' Nero than previously supposed, and it may be no accident that when the country descended into civil war, *Nero*, like Savile's *Ende of Nero*, was in demand enough to require a 1638 reprint.⁴⁴ Since his final Chorus re-echoes John of Salisbury's own preferred method of disposing of tyrants—refuge in God's mercy and devout prayer (*Polic.* VIII. 20)—we may conclude, in the end, that Nero flirts with departure from absolutist doctrine only to come back to it. Nevertheless, Gwinne's 'Senecan' *Nero* deserves billing as a sophisticated, and even 'explorative', negotiation of the complexities of monarchical rule, one that should be considered alongside other contemporary English and continental texts using the figure of 'Nero' and Roman history more generally to explore tyranny and kingship.⁴⁵

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NOTES

1. See Cunliffe; the most recent survey is Braund. Though Hunter attacks the notion of attributing Senecan tragedy especial influence on Elizabethan drama, others have persuasively defended Senecan influence: see e.g. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca* 141-166; on other antecedents for English Renaissance drama, see Pincombe.
2. Overlooked, too, since until relatively recently the vast store of extant academic drama (nearly 150 Latin plays from the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, mostly written and acted by members of the universities) has remained unpublished. See now, however the REED (Records of Early English Drama) project; for Cambridge, ed. Nelson; for Oxford, Johnston, et al. Sutton, 'Analytic Bibliography' lists neo-Latin drama online. For a list of classical plays performed from 1550 on, see Norland, *Drama* 295-341.
3. I am using Altman's distinctions between 'homiletic' and 'explorative': on the homiletic purposes of both academic drama and Elizabethan translations of Senecan tragedy, see Norland, *Neoclassical Tragedy*, esp. 19-45, 46-68, and below.
4. Cf. esp. Tucker Brooke on the university and Inns of Court plays as 'the cradles of modern English drama' (234); Binns, *Intellectual Culture*; Gwinne, ed. Sutton. This essay focuses on the university plays: for more on the Inns of Court plays see Norland, *Neoclassical Tragedy* 69-123; on translations of Seneca and Inns of Court drama, see Winston.
5. Most famously, Fulke Greville burnt his closet drama on the subject of Antony and Cleopatra (c.1600-1) because of its potential to be construed as critique of the vices of the present government: cf. Kewes, 'Fit Memorial' 19-20. On academic drama's provocative political and religious themes, see Walker; Shenk 22-25; on its capacity to provoke rioting, Knapp 262.
6. Gwinne served on the entertainment committee for the royal visit of Elizabeth in 1592, edited (in partnership with Fulke Greville) Sir Philip Sidney's *New Arcadia* (1590) and provided assistance with John Florio's translation of Montaigne. For a more detailed biography see Gwinne, ed. Sutton 12-18.
7. Gwinne remarks on this rejection in the preface: he admits the difficulties it poses for performance and, quoting from Pliny, hopes that it will at least find favour among the learned (cf. Sutton, *Nero*, *ad loc.*). *Vertumnus* may have offered a similar challenge to stamina, for it sent James I to sleep: see Nelson II. 605.

8. All quotations from *Nero* are from Sutton's edition; translations are my own.
9. Cf. Opelt; for recent survey of Senecan tragedy with bibliography, see Buckley, 'Senecan Tragedy'.
10. On the connections between the neo-Latin plays and vernacular history plays/heroic tragedies, see Knapp 262-3; Pincombe 12.
11. These criticisms were made by Gwinne's early biographer John Ward (1740) 260-5; see in contrast Gwinne, ed. Sutton 32-42.
12. *Nero* begins with the vengeful ghost of Messalina; Act 2 with the ghost of Claudius; Act 3 with the ghost of Britannicus; Act 4 with the ghost of Agrippina; Act 5 with the ghost of Octavia. Each of these ghosts offers a 'prologue' to the action which bears a close resemblance to the Fury-prologues of Senecan tragedy. See Braund 440; for Seneca's obsession with cycles of ever-worsening *nefas*, see Buckley 211-6.
13. The notion that this play is a para-scholarly text is reinforced by John Sandbury's dedicatory poem drawing *Nero* to the attention of Justus Lipsius (editor of Tacitus (1574), who also produced a work on the authorship of the 'Senecan' tragedies (1588) (attributing only *Medea* to the Neronian Seneca); in 1605 he would publish the complete philosophical works of Seneca, itself in turn translated by Thomas Lodge into English in 1614).
14. As Gwinne (ed. Sutton) points out at I.1, 74ff. with *Oct.* 593-7, 615ff. On Octavia's ghost of Agrippina as important model for Renaissance revenge tragedy, see Braund.
15. Sandbury's dedication to Lipsius makes this interpretational drive explicit: alluding to Lipsius' attribution of the authorship of *Octavia* to an unknown youth, he urges his dedicatee to replace *Octavia* with *Nero*: 'and you, Justus, because you think that *Octavia*, which the unlettered world judges to be attributed to Seneca, is childish, put Gwinne's *Nero* in its place' *quique puerilem putas / Octaviam illam, quam rudis mundus iubet / Senecae imputari, Iuste, praestentem loco / Substitue; Ad Iustum Lipsium de hoc Nerone* 2-5).
16. On Octavia's likeness to and self-identification with tragic heroines, see Harrison; on *Nero-Atreus*, see esp. Manuwald.
17. Here and in the sections that follow, I use *Octavia*, ed. Boyle; *Thyestes*, ed. Tarrant; Tacitus, ed. Pitman (and Furneaux). All translations are my own.
18. Gwinne also points to Suetonius' *Nero* 34 and *Claudius* 29 in III. 3.
19. On the *Annals*' theatrical *Nero* narrative see esp. Woodman; also Santoro l'Hoir. Elsewhere in Act III Gwinne puns metatheatrically at III.4, 1636; III.3, 1605; III.6, 1905-6. On Renaissance metatheatre more generally, see Pollard 68-72 with bibliography.
20. Sutton, worrying that *laesam Claudiam* is nonsensical, emends to *laesum Claudium*: but I retain the original text, which has been inspired by the wrongs done to Octavia (*Octaviae iniurias evulgaret, Ann.* 13.19.3).
21. Rubellius Plautus' mother was Julia, granddaughter of Tiberius and Livia, and therefore, like *Nero*, Plautus was a great grand-son of Augustus: Landfester et al., s.v. 'Rubellius [3]'; 'Julia [8]'.
 22. On appetite in *Thyestes* see Davis 33-79; rhetoric of amplification, see Boyle, *Tragic Seneca*.
23. On *nefas-nefari*, see Schiesaro, *Passions* 16-19, 43.
24. Cf. *Thy.* 4ff., 99f., 149f., 169ff., and *Oct.* 621, in which the shade of Agrippina promises a punishment for *Nero* that will outdo the thirst of Tantalus (*poenasque quis et Tantali uincat sitim*). The proem to Act III, a conversation between the ghost of Britannicus and his ferryman Charon, also pointedly recycles the language of *Thyestes*: cf. Gwinne, ed. Sutton *ad loc.*
25. Cf. III.4, 1719, 1728-9 with *Thy.* 521ff.; III.5. Cf. III.5, 1732ff. and *Thy.* 546ff.: on the 'deluded opti-

mism' of Seneca's ode, *Thyestes*, ed. Tarrant 168-9.

26. Cf. esp. III.6, 1911-3 with *Oct.* 332-7. Agrippina's death for real is, as Gwinne, ed. Sutton notes *ad loc.*, also closely modelled on *Octavia*.
27. On the controversy, which began when a fellow Oxford, anti-theatre scholar, John Rainolds, took offence at the character of 'Momus', a figure in a provocative epilogue added by Gager to the Senecan *Hippolytus* staged in 1592 for the Queen's visit, see Shenk 33-8. Gwinne, ed. Sutton (46-55) persuasively links Gwinne's Momus directly to Gager: cf. Binns, *Seneca and Neo-Latin Tragedy*. Norland (*Neoclassical Tragedy* 19-45) provides summary of Elizabethan responses to Puritan polemic against acting.
28. Cf. Norland, *Neoclassical Tragedy* 155-67, on Gager's exaggeration of didactic elements in the 1582 *Meleager* (based largely on Ovid and Seneca). On 'Christianizing' translators, see Winston; Norland, *Neoclassical Tragedy* 46-65. On the didactic purpose of Elizabethan history-plays and historiography, see Gwinne, ed. Sutton 10.
29. Cf. the resistance theory texts of Hotman, Beza, and esp. Du Plessis Mornay's *Vindiciae, contra Tyrannos* (1579) with Skinner; on quasi- or proto-republican ideology in late Elizabethan England see Paleit; for its exploration in Shakespeare and Marlowe, see Hadfield; Lemon; Ward; Cheney. More generally on English political-philosophical theory on monarchy in this period, see Tuck 202-278.
- 32** 30. Cf. Alecto's assertion of Divine Right in the second Chorus (2, 1241-8) with Gwinne, ed. Leidig 8.
31. Cf. James' 1598 *The True Lawe of free Monarchies*. The 1599 (reprinted 1603) *Basilikon Doron* also espouses the doctrine of Divine Right: see Sommerville; *King James* xvi-xviii and *passim*; *Royalists* 9-53; Fischlin and Fortier. In a new dedication to James printed after Elizabeth's death, Gwinne contrasts Nero with the new King: cf. Gwinne, ed. Leidig, *Augustae Iacobi Regis Maiestati*, A3 (lines 72-6).
32. See Cheney 149-54 on 'Tacitism' and contemporary drama: on the impact of 'Tacitism' more generally in England, see Burke and esp. as a result of Savile's 1591 translation, see Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile', Kewes, and below.
33. Cato the Younger committed suicide at Utica in 46 BC; Julius Canus showed exemplary serenity after being ordered to commit suicide by Caligula (Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi* 14).
34. On Thræsea in Tacitus see Turpin; Edwards 134-6.
35. On Nero as crunch-test for absolute obedience in other Tudor works, see Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile' 319-20.
36. In his edition Sutton translates these lines in a more positive sense, implying Seneca has been acting for the good of the Senate: 'Despite his good reputation, Seneca is insupportable, since for the benefit of this Senate he—but I shall leave in silence': but see below.
37. On Seneca's part in Agrippina's death and the subsequent cover-up see Rudich 35-39, 291; though *Nero* does not display the full-blooded contempt for Seneca of Dio, who labelled Nero's tutor 'tyrant-teacher' (*tyrannodidaskalos*, 61.10.2), Gwinne does explore (in the voice of the malicious Tigellinus) Seneca's paradoxical position as billionaire philosopher of austerity at IV.3, 2564-2581.
38. The edition is Parker et al. *Policraticus* may have been in vogue at this time: his influence can also be seen in Jonson's 1601 *Poetaster* and 1640 *Timber*: cf. Clayton.
39. Cf. Gwinne's replication of *Policratus'* prefatory appeal (itself based on the Saturnalia imagery of Horace, *Sat.* II.7.4-5) to allow 'slaves to criticize their masters', with Gwinne, ed. Sutton *ad loc.*, who also notes further reference to *Policraticus* in *Nero*.
40. I follow Forhan 400 here: see too Nederman esp. xi-xii.
41. Here I use Pike's translation.

42. See esp. Nederman, Forhan.
43. See Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile': on Savile and Essex, see Gajda 226-236, 242-3.
44. Gajda's study of the Earl of Essex and literary culture does not mention Gwinne: but his collaborations with Fulke Greville and John Florio suggest some connection, and in 1603 (under his pseudonym 'Il Candido') he dedicated a sonnet to Lady Rich, Essex's sister and participant in the 1601 rebellion: cf. Garrett 169-70.
45. For Nero, see Bartsch; Roman history, esp. Kewes. On the humanist interest in Nero more broadly in the Reformation context, see Maier 395-6.