

JOLCEL

JOURNAL OF LATIN COSMOPOLITANISM AND
EUROPEAN LITERATURES.

CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

Lucy C.M.M. Jackson, “*Introite, pueri!* The School-Room Performance of George Buchanan’s Latin *Medea* in Bordeaux,” *JOLCEL* 3 (2020): 43–61. DOI: 10.21825/jolcel.vi3.9256.

NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of *JOLCEL*. The other contributions are “Controversial Topics in Literature and Education: Hrotswitha and Donatus on Terence’s Rapes” by Chrysanthi Demetriou (pp. 2–22) and “The Meaning and Use of *fabula* in the *Dialogus creaturarum moralizatus*” by Brian Møller Jensen (pp. 24–41). The response piece is “Latin Education and Classical Reception: the Minor Genres” by Rita Copeland (pp. 62–66).

Introite, pueri!

The School-Room Performance of George Buchanan's Latin *Medea* in Bordeaux*

LUCY C.M.M. JACKSON

Durham University

ABSTRACT

Performances of Latin drama had become a widespread phenomenon in European schools by the middle of the sixteenth century. The potential for these dramas to have a significant impact on the students who performed or watched these plays was recognised at the time. Memories of participating in these performances would linger in the pupils' minds, as Michel de Montaigne clearly shows in his own reminiscences of his leading roles undertaken at the Collège de Guyenne in Bordeaux. The lessons learnt in performance were thought to be thoroughly complementary to the program of classroom Latin education across Europe. But learning in performance, this article contends, also yielded crucially different lessons as well, not least concerning the manipulation of sentiment through rhetoric and the often violently differing results in action. In this article I examine the 1543 production of George Buchanan's translation of Euripides' *Medea* from four angles: its 'Greekness', the Latinity of the translation, the pedagogical context for the performance, and the medium of performance itself. Using these four angles to create a matrix of meaning, I argue that Latin translations such as Buchanan's warrant greater appreciation than has been awarded them so far, and demonstrate the potential that lies within these understudied texts.

In 1543, a local audience gathered in Bordeaux to witness a school play—a production of Euripides' *Medea*.¹ This production was to be performed in Latin, and the translator responsible for the text was the Scottish humanist George Buchanan, a scholar renowned

* This article was written during a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship and I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Leverhulme Trust.

¹ At the end of the text of the 1544 Paris edition, published by Vascosan, we find printed: "Acta fuit Burdegala an M.D.XLIII."

for his fluency and facility in both Latin and ancient Greek.² The play's cast was made up of students from the Collège de Guyenne and the audience would have included humanist poets and scholars such as Elie Vinet and Gentien Hervet who worked and taught alongside Buchanan. Moreover, this school was presided over by André de Gouveia—"le plus grand principal de France."³ The text of Buchanan's play was to be published a year later by Michel Vascosan in Paris, along with Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* translated into Latin by Erasmus (first published in 1506).⁴ Buchanan's *Medea* later appeared in many editions of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, both in collections of his works and in anthologies of Greek tragedies.⁵

Although the text of Buchanan's *Medea* would go on to have a long and varied life with a range of readerships, there are a number of things that make this production in 1540s Bordeaux unusual and significant. First, the *Medea* in Euripides' play cuts quite a different figure to the more familiar character depicted in Ovid and Seneca,⁶ or the versions of her in medieval literature.⁷ Although multiple editions of Euripides' Greek play and a few Latin translations of the work were already in existence (or were coming into existence) as Buchanan began work on his version,⁸ the realisation of *Medea* as she would appear on the stage of Bordeaux, would have, to this local audience, marked out a distinct and different territory. Perhaps most striking in performance (and Buchanan's Latin translation is the first recorded *performance* of Euripides' *Medea* in the modern era) would be the fact that her skill as a sorceress, in Euripides' version, fades before her manifest rhetorical and persuasive skill. In light of Buchanan's wide and influential network of humanist contacts, his translation, and this production, marks an important beginning for the wider dissemination of this different Euripidean *Medea*. The second feature of this noteworthy production is the quality of Buchanan's Latin. Not only was the text fluent, literary, and rich in poetic references, it also aimed at rejuvenating the dramatic and ethical potential of Euripides' play through its sophisticated use of intertextual allusion. Refracted or 'unintentional' meanings, meanings shaped by contemporary scholastic and religious debate, would have been liberated through the play's new Latinate form.⁹

² Ian D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 31–34; Philip Ford, *George Buchanan. Prince of Poets* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University, 1982), 1–2.

³ See Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Albert Thibaudet and Maruice Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), I, 26, p. 176. For Bordeaux as "un centre provincial de l'humanisme" between 1530–50, see Robert Boutruche and Jacques Bernard, *Bordeaux de 1453 à 1715* (Bordeaux: Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 1966), 186–211.

⁴ Michael Vascosan, ed., *Hecuba, et Iphigenia in Aulide, Euripides tragoediae, in latinum tralatae Erasmo Roterdamo interprete. Medea eiusdem, Georgio Buchanano Scoto interprete* (Paris, 1544).

⁵ See McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 498–500, 509–10, which lists 24 editions containing the text of Buchanan's *Medea*. On some of the different receptions of Buchanan's plays more generally, see Hannah Crawford and Lucy Jackson, "Greek Tragedy and the University Stage: Buchanan and Euripides," in *Gathering Force*, ed. Kristen Poole and Lauren Shohet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 340–55.

⁶ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician Women, Medea, Phaedra*, ed. and trans. John G. Fitch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁷ See Ruth Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1996), 185–236.

⁸ Ancient Greek editions: *Tragoediae Quattuor: Medea, Hippolytus, Alcestis, Andromache*, ed. Janus Lascaris (Florence: Laurentius de Alopa, 1495); *Euripidis tragoediae septendecim*, ed. Aldus Manutius (Venice: Aldus, 1503); Latin translations: *Euripidis ... tragoediae XVIII nunc primum ... per D. Camillum et Latio donatae et in lucem editae* (Basel: Winter, 1541), *Medea Euripidis Petreio Tiara Frisio interprete* (Antwerp: Crom, 1543).

⁹ Of relevance to Buchanan's *Medea*, but foregrounded more deliberately in two of his other plays (*Jephthes* [1554] and *Alcestis* [1556]), would have been the contemporary debate about "the vow," and whether clergy should be expected to adhere to their vows of celibacy or be allowed to marry and have children.

Such refractions would depend on the audience for the production, and the schoolroom context makes for a third significant feature of the 1543 performance. Students at the college were primed to pay attention to the shape and quality of the Latin and the rhetorical strategies deployed (a dominant concern in most school curricula at the time), which invites closer scrutiny of the text as it models an ideal form of Latinity. But these students would also have experienced a play like this as a synthesis of their entire educational experience, formal and informal, combining rhetoric, a familiarity with classical (and those we might now term ‘post-classical’) authors, and, most importantly, the exploration of ethical action together with these worthy words. This was a time when classical learning and scholarship were under intense scrutiny, and the consequences for any perceived mis-step were severe. In the 1530s, the establishment of Royal Readerships in Paris prompted a swift and damning response from the orthodox Sorbonne, which sought to minimise the importance of knowing Greek and Hebrew for asserting theological authority. Scholars who “attached greater value to their philologically based interpretation of biblical texts than to the Vulgate” were duly arraigned before the French *Parlement* in January 1534.¹⁰ Such scrutiny would have been felt at the schoolroom level too, adding a dangerous significance to any engagement with a Greek text, albeit one in Latinate form.

The fourth and final element of interest in this particular production is the very fact that the play was, indeed, performed, as opposed to being solely read and circulated as a text. The performance of Latin plays (those of Plautus and Terence, but also newly composed plays)¹¹ was a fairly common practice across Europe, and granted students the opportunity to put into action the performative aspects of rhetorical training, memorisation (*memoria*) and delivery (*pronuntiatio* or *actio*) in particular.¹² However, while neo-Latin dramatic performance abounded, including at the *Collège de Guyenne* itself, performances of Greek tragedies in Latin remained scarce.¹³ The combination of the unusual dramatic and ethical content in Buchanan’s *Medea* with public performance of those ambiguous, at times thoroughly disturbing, ethical discussions prompts some intriguing questions concerning the wider impact of such performances on both performers and audience.

All four of these aspects interlink with one another. The style and forms of the Latin used were shaped by and for the purpose of teaching students how to express themselves in Latin with ease and elegance. The Greek content of the play was enhanced and informed by the interest in Greek authors and the study of many Greek texts that was ongoing in Bordeaux during this time.¹⁴ The understanding of the allusions and poetry of the Latin text, as well as its ‘Greekness,’ would have depended on the knowledge of the audience present for that performance in 1543. In the following exploration of these four angles, I do not propose four discrete ways of reading this, or any, performance of a Latin translation of Greek drama.

¹⁰ See McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 39–40.

¹¹ Titus Maccius Plautus, *The Merchant, the Braggart Soldier, the Ghost, the Persian*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang de Melo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Publius Terence, *Phormio, the Mother-in-law, the Brothers*, ed. and trans. John Barsby (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹² For the widespread phenomenon of neo-Latin dramatic performances see: Jan Bloemendal, “Receptions and Impact: Early Modern Latin Drama, Its Effect on the Audience and Its Role in Forming Public Opinion,” in *Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions*, ed. Jan Bloemendal and Philip Ford (Hildesheim, Olms: Noctes Neolatinae, 2008), 7–22; Jonathan Walker and Paul D. Streufert, *Early Modern Academic Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008); Jan Bloemendal and Howard B. Norland, *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013).

¹³ For performances of Latin plays based (possibly or probably) on Greek models see Tanya Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 270–77.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Ian D. McFarlane, “French Humanism,” in *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Anthony H. T. Levi (New York: Manchester University, 1970), 295–319.

Rather, I provide an example of how one can create a matrix of meaning, and one that goes beyond current models for analysing these important translated texts.

Analysis of Latin translations of Greek plays such as Buchanan's *Medea*, and the study of neo-Latin drama more generally, has tended to focus on the impact the *text* had on its readers. Performances of these texts, however, create new layers of meaning. A precise grasp of what these meanings were and the immediate impact of a performance in the sixteenth century, as with all performance, is impossible.¹⁵ And yet, however difficult it is to gauge, we are still able to recognise the dynamics at play when a text is publicly performed, particularly in terms of bringing contemporary political and social concerns, which were brought into the performance space with the audience, into sharp focus. These four aspects of the 1543 performance of *Medea*—its uncommon portrayal of the central character and the play's dramaturgical content, its rich and suggestive Latin, its pedagogically primed audience, its potential to elicit sharper reactions through the medium of performance—make this production worthy of closer inspection.

One possible reason for the underappreciation of the production's significance is the fact that Buchanan's translation stays very close to Euripides' Greek play. Such apparent 'faithfulness' to the Greek has allowed Buchanan's artful translation, and the intervention in meaning that comes with any act of translation, to fade from view. Following the welcome rise of Translation Studies and increased familiarity with the range of theories and approaches that can be deployed in analysing translations and translators, an appreciation of such literary Latin translations in the sixteenth century has begun to grow over the past two decades.¹⁶

However, current studies of Latin translations in the sixteenth century still lag far behind those of original works in Latin or European vernaculars: "too scholarly to receive the attention of literary historians, and too literary to interest the historians of scholarship" noted Paul Botley in 2004.¹⁷ In light of this dearth, still, of scholarship on Latin translations as literary works in their own right, this article aims to foreground the changes Buchanan has made in his dexterous Latin *Medea*. The need to address these changes has become more pressing in recent years, when a number of scholars have been looking to explain the "strange relationship"¹⁸ and subterranean presence of themes and figures from Greek tragedy in the work of authors with limited access (one way or another) to the language of Greek itself.¹⁹ In order to enrich their arguments about the presence of Greek

¹⁵ See Bloemendal, "Receptions and Impact," 18–20; for a broader treatment of the ephemerality of performance, but the importance of its study nonetheless, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Performance as Event — Reception as Transformation," in *Theorising Performance*, ed. Edith Hall and Stephe Harrop (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 29–42.

¹⁶ Fundamental is Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995); a recent and wide-ranging overview of Translation Studies can be found in Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London/New York: Oliver and Boyd, 2014). See also the collection of essays in the special issue by Andrew Taylor, ed., *Neo-Latin and Translation in the Renaissance*, in *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 41, no. 4 (2014).

¹⁷ Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 1.

¹⁸ Michael Silk, "Shakespeare and Greek Tragedy: Strange Relationship," in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and Andrew B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241–57.

¹⁹ See, for example: Louise Schleiner, "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of "Hamlet," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1990): 29–48; Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Striking Too Short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage," in *Agamemnon in Performance 458BCE to AD 2004*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, and Edith Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37–52; Tanya Pollard, "What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?," *Renaissance Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2012): 1064; the appeal to Latin translations goes at least as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century, see John Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Westminster: A Constable, 1904), v.

tragedy in early modern vernacular traditions, further attention must be paid to the Latinity of the translations they point to as (so far, neutral, if not outright inferior) vehicles for images, themes, and dramaturgy of Greek plays.

The analysis that has been conducted of Buchanan’s literary translation of Euripides’ *Medea* focuses, in general, on the literary ‘borrowings’ from and allusions to classical authors.²⁰ In this article I seek to reassert the contingency of meaning in this translation and the production of 1543 by uniting linguistic, social and cultural factors, and begin to root this translation in a particular historical and social moment. In doing so, I situate this study firmly within classical reception studies, translation studies, and performance studies. Some of the readings I suggest must, perforce, remain theoretical or speculative, but this should not deter us from the exercise of recognising the considerable potential that lies within Buchanan’s Latin translation. The aim of this article is to add to our appreciation of the potential range of meanings within this Latin translation. Although tightly focused on this one play, one translation, one audience, and one performance, the readings I give here might be taken as indicative for at least some of the kinds of readings possible in other Latin translations of Greek tragedies. Having seen how these readings contribute to our understanding of the significance of the production, we can turn to the broader question of the place of ancient Greek drama, or literature and culture more generally, within early modern Europe.

The Euripidean *Medea*

The Euripidean *Medea* differs in two major ways from the collection of characters that made up the myths as they were generally known at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The first difference is the rhetorical brilliance of the figure of *Medea*. Her intelligence and skill may have been widely accepted, but thanks to the prominent versions of her character in Ovid and Seneca and the preference for tales focusing on her adventures with the Argonauts, her character was defined by her skill as a sorceress. It is important to note that Euripides’ *Medea* relies to a much greater extent than might be expected on her wits and words to achieve her aims.²¹ Over the course of the play she must persuade the chorus to keep secret her desire to take vengeance on her faithless husband, Jason, for abandoning her at the prospect of a new marriage in Corinth; she must secure a day’s grace from the King of Corinth, Creon; she must then secure a safe haven for herself from Aegeus, who happens to be passing through Corinth just at her time of need; and, lastly, she must argue with herself before finally committing the act of filicide for which she is so infamous. Her use of poison to murder Creon and his daughter is present in the text (translated by Buchanan the first three times as *pharmacum*, a postclassical word, and the latter three times as *venenum*), but is functional and secondary to her immense rhetorical skill. The second facet of the Euripidean *Medea* is the multiplicity of

²⁰ Peter Sharratt, “Euripides Latinus: Buchanan’s Use of His Sources,” in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1985), 613–20; Jean-Frédéric Chevalier, “George Buchanan and the Poetics of Borrowing in the Latin Translation of Euripides’ *Medea*,” in *George Buchanan: Poet and Dramatist*, ed. Philip Ford and Roger Green (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2009), 183–95, considers Buchanan’s classical allusions as well as linguistic and metrical approaches, focusing on lines 271–356; Zoé Schweitzer, “Buchanan, helléniste et dramaturge, interprète d’Euripide (*Medea* et *Alceste*),” *Études Épistémè: revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* 23 (2013): goes much further and considers some of the pedagogical and philosophical goals manifest in the translation.

²¹ “[...] the restraint of Euripides in deploying this motif [skill in magic] is noteworthy,” see Donald J. Mastrorarde, *Medea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), 24–6.

motivations awarded to her actions, by Medea herself and the characters around her: anger, jealousy, and passion are prominent in the Senecan *Medea*, but the Euripidean text includes other rationalisations for Medea's actions: the demands of divine justice, the precepts of a heroic code, and the protection of her children from slaughter at others' hands.

We might make a more general observation of the greater stage time and space awarded to female characters in many Greek tragedies. In the Greek tragic corpus as a whole, female characters frequently provide the meat of a play's conflict, rhetoric, and poetry. The observation is all the more striking when comparison is made with the characters and plots of Senecan dramas, and even the comedies of Plautus and Terence, where women breaking out of their societal constraints, though present (Seneca's *Medea* being an obvious example) are in general few and far between. In light of Erasmus' choices of *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, a plausible case has been made for the Greeks being viewed as legitimate sources for a different kind of protagonist beyond the relatively restricted gender paradigms of the biblical canon.²²

These differences take on a greater significance in light of the fact that this play, and indeed the genre of Greek drama, was sought after, certainly by Buchanan himself, precisely because it presented an alternative model of theatre and morality to its sixteenth-century (school) audiences. In discussing his motivations for composing the kinds of plays he did for his schoolroom performers and audiences, he says he does so, "ut earum actione iuventutem ab allegoriis, quibus tam Gallia vehementer se oblectabat, ad imitationem veterum, qua posset, retraheret."²³ What is focused on by Buchanan in his recollections, is an anti-allegorical mode which is found readily in Greek tragedies. The awareness of difference was no doubt enhanced by the fact that so many classical Greek texts constituted a pagan 'other', simultaneously a safe haven for scholars to think with and transgressive in their presentation of gods, women, and morality.²⁴

More tentatively we might include within Buchanan's desire for a different model of theatre the fact that the conditions for the creation of Attic dramas such as Euripides' *Medea* were geared towards a theatre audience, something that may be seen in the dramaturgy of the work (and, again, might be contrasted with the Senecan form of tragedy). Too much weight cannot be placed on this difference in original dramaturgical context, but it adds to our picture of what it was, aside from the words themselves, that Buchanan was translating, i.e., not words alone but a new model of theatre, open, discursive, and ethically ambiguous.

Buchanan's Latin *Medea*

The unusual elements in the Euripidean *Medea* were significant and, indeed, sought after by Buchanan for his dramatic projects in Bordeaux. But these differences within the Greek play could not be preserved in their entirety in a Latin translation. Even in the most 'literal' of translations, the frames of reference are shifted so as to imbue translated terms with new meanings drawn from the target language and culture, in this case Latin language and

²² Schweitzer, "Buchanan," 16; Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women*, 19–20.

²³ "[...] in the hope that by acting in such plays the youth of Bordeaux might be weaned from the allegories then so very popular in France and recalled as far as possible to imitate the models of the ancients." From Buchanan's own account of his life, printed in McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 542. All translations from Latin are my own.

²⁴ See Carmel McCallum-Barry, "Why Did Erasmus Translate Greek Tragedy?," *Erasmus Studies* 24, no. 1 (2004): 52–70.

culture.²⁵ While eschewing some of the larger changes made by other translators of Euripides’ play (e.g., the Roman dramatist Ennius), Buchanan nevertheless transforms the play through Latinising it.²⁶ The choices made in translating the Greek, although most seem slight when taken individually, provide a fascinating instance of early modern reception in and of itself, but also, in light of the play’s wide public dissemination, will have had a significant impact on how Euripides’ *Medea* was to be received by early modern readers.

Running throughout the text we can identify the places where words with a cultural significance in a Greek context are transmuted or supplemented by elements from Roman life that invite comparison (although not direct equation). When *Medea* laments offstage her present plight, “φεῦ φεῦ· θανάτῳ καταλυσάμην/ βιοτᾶν στρυγερὰν προλιποῦσα” (E.146–47),²⁷ Buchanan inserts the figures of the Roman Fates (*Parcae*), frequently invoked in Latin poetry, and shifts the first person verb into a second person appeal to these figures: “eheu, longis tristem curis,/ Parcae, miseram abrumpite vitam” (157–58).²⁸ He introduces the Roman household gods, the Penates, at 846, sharpening and reorienting the meaning of the Greek δόμοι πατρώοι (E.801). Buchanan adds a Roman epithet used of Hecate, *triformis*, to *Medea*’s entreaty to the goddess at 421 (E.397), a choice that activates possible connections with Seneca’s *Medea* (7) and *Phaedra* (417), where the same address is found and also placed at the beginning of an iambic verse line.²⁹ The messenger uses a term, familiar from everyday Roman life as depicted in comedy, *gynaeceum* (1196), to describe the women’s quarters (“στέγαι γυναικῶν” in Euripides’ Greek), an elegant translation by virtue of its preservation of a Hellenic flavour (a Latinised form of a Greek word) and presence in Plautus and Terence (a more elegant translation, we might note, than that chosen by Erasmus when faced with the same Greek phrase in the *Hecuba*).³⁰ Buchanan’s easy use of Latin idiom, e.g., *solum vertere* (“to leave as an exile”) (838) for “ἔξομι γαίας,” (“I will leave the country”) (E.795, a phrase with no particular signification in the Greek),³¹ demonstrates how he enriches the Greek text with new cultural and language-specific meaning. The Latin text also displays an awareness of tone in the kinds of Latin used. For example, the messenger speech in Buchanan’s text (1188–1290) features a large number of words common in Roman comedy (e.g., *pedisequa* 1226, *eiulare* 1228, *silicernium* 1267), a choice that shapes an audience’s engagement with his long narrative through tone and at a crucial point in the play.

All these effects go some way to achieve a ‘domesticating’ effect, that is, bringing the Greek world of Euripides’ play closer to the more familiar Roman world (albeit one that combines over a millennium of Latin-speaking cultures). The recasting of the play in a

²⁵ An excellent articulation of this is found in Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1964), 36–44.

²⁶ See Anthony J. Boyle, “Introduction: *Medea* in Greece and Rome,” *Ramus* 41, nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–32.

²⁷ “Ah, ah! may I find my rest in death and leave behind my hateful life.” Line numbers prefaced with ‘E’ signal references to Euripides, *Fabulae, Vol. 1: Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea; Heraclidae; Hippolytus; Andromacha; Hecuba*, ed. James Diggle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). All others are to Buchanan’s Latin in Peter Sharratt and Peter G. Walsh, *George Buchanan Tragedies* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983), and all translations from the Greek are from David Kovacs, ed. and trans., *Euripides, Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁸ “Ah! You Fates, sever my wretched life, unhappy in its relentless anguish.”

²⁹ Note two other uses of the epithet in Ovid *Met.* 7 lines 94 and 177 at two different points in the *Medea* and Jason story.

³⁰ See Plautus *Most.* 755, 759, 908 and Terence *Phorm.* 862. Erasmus translates this phrase as *spoliorum tentoria* although arguably the use of *tentorium* is more appropriate for the temporary camp in the *Hecuba*.

³¹ Sharratt and Walsh, *George Buchanan Tragedies*, 304, see Lewis and Short B.1.

Roman light, however, is not, and could never have been, complete. The alterity of the central character has already been noted above, and it is tempting to imagine her ethical dissonance with early modern models of morality, framed as pagan ‘other.’ Small details appear in the language, supporting this ‘foreignizing’ effect. From inside the house, Medea cries out to Artemis, rather than Diana (170),³² an address unparalleled among classical Latin authors. The chorus, in their ode to the goddess of love (665–703), invoke not Venus but *Cypris* (668, 671, 681), an appellation for the goddess also not found in classical Latin but, as with the appeal to Artemis, a direct transliteration from the Greek of Euripides. The way the Latin is shaped, too, takes on new forms as Buchanan captures a sense of the Greek. Jean-Frédéric Chevalier demonstrated the depth of his lexical engagement with the Greek language, showing where Buchanan has taken a single word, the rare adjective *σκούθρωπος* (E.271, ‘gloomy’), and mined its meanings to create the Latin phrase, used by Creon of Medea, “torva vultu taetrico” (“scowling with sullen face”) (291). Such a phrase opens up resonances with Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, *Phoenissae*, Martial, and Seneca, all of which work to foreshadow the outcome of the play.³³ A highly poeticised tone is created through the inclusion of recondite Latin vocabulary (e.g., *circumrotari*, 1230) which, while not ‘foreignizing,’ does work in concert with other effects that distance the world of the play from that of the audience. Finding these unusual terms, or creating new Latin terms (e.g., *perpetratrix* 1172) and offering them up for students of Latin must have contributed to the kind and quality of Latin used (or aspired to) by the students, creating a lasting standard for their Latinity.³⁴

The combination of domesticating and foreignizing effects in Buchanan’s Latin translation would have been clear, too, in the poetic rhythms deployed. Buchanan seems to have paid very close attention to the rhythms of the Greek text and sought to mirror them in the construction of his Latin verse. Although iambic *senarii* are expected in the speech of Roman drama, it is significant that Buchanan opts to render the spoken verse in iambic trimeter, the difference between the two identifiable and audible through an avoidance of ‘resolution’ (that is, the use of two short syllables where a long might stand).³⁵ This approach to the spoken metre illustrates amply Buchanan’s attention to the multiple aspects of translation beyond the linguistic alone.³⁶ More than this, his pursuit of Greek rather than the standard Horatian models of prosody signals a commitment more generally to providing an alternative model of drama and of poetry for his students.³⁷

The small shifts in vocabulary and word choice render some considerable alterations in terms of characterisation in the play. We saw above how unusually even-handed Euripides is in the presentation of Medea—she is not out of her mind, nor controlled by dark and supernatural forces in contrast to, for example, her presentation in Seneca. We can see a tendency in Buchanan’s translation, however, to elide this openness of Medea’s rationale. For example, when Medea tells the chorus of her now-formed plan to murder her children (834–37), Buchanan chooses the verb *mactare*, used of general slaughter (e.g., in *Aeneid* 10.413) to be sure, but also redolent with religious and sacrificial overtones. Such a choice lends a grandiosity to Medea’s perception of her actions in Buchanan’s translation, something

³² “O magna Themis atque Artemis sancta” (“Oh mighty Themis and holy Artemis”).

³³ Chevalier, “Poetics of Borrowing,” 186–88.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 192, frames this as a conscious project of Buchanan’s.

³⁵ Sharratt and Walsh, *George Buchanan Tragedies*, 335, do not highlight this difference, labelling the verses as *senarii*—a not incorrect label, but one that obscures a Greek aural effect in Buchanan’s Latin.

³⁶ See Chevalier, “Poetics of Borrowing,” 183–84 for analysis of the Latin iambic trimeter.

³⁷ Ford, *Prince of Poets*, 36.

which is not evoked in the Greek verb of Euripides, *κατακτείνω* (E.792).³⁸ Similarly Medea’s judgement a few lines later of her abandonment of her home in Euripides is that she made a mistake (*ἡμάρτανον*, E.800), but Buchanan opts for the Latin *insanii* (845). Within such choices creep the moral and social attitudes of Buchanan’s day, as well as already-formed impressions of her character gained from his wide reading of other texts.

There is a temptation to link this altered presentation specifically to the influence of Seneca and his portrayal of the Colchian. The stunning image of Medea rejoicing in all her crimes that we find in Seneca’s play, and especially her use of the verb *iuvare* four times in as many lines,³⁹ lies close behind Buchanan’s rendition of the Greek Medea’s line “*λύει δ’άλλοις, ἦν σὺ μὴ ᾿γγελαῖ*” (E.1362) as “*Modo ne dolentem irrideas, iuvat dolor*” (1430).⁴⁰ It is interesting that Sharratt and Walsh in their note on this line assert—incorrectly—that Buchanan has misunderstood the Greek here, so marked is the counter-intuitive sentiment Medea speaks here.⁴¹ Buchanan’s translation quite correctly builds on and hones this typically Euripidean declaration of pain being a pleasure in certain circumstances, shifting Medea’s feelings from release in this pain to positive delight.

Seneca clearly hovers in the foreground at this point in the text. And yet, as some scholars have noted, there is less Seneca than expected woven into Buchanan’s language and imagery.⁴² Such an expectation might be mediated when we note that Erasmus, too, in no way reshaped Greek tragedy translations in a Senecan mould.⁴³ We should be sensitive to any temptation to see Seneca as the only obvious and inviting model for humanist scholars writing drama in the first half of the sixteenth century. This seems particularly true for Buchanan who, as we have seen, draws out elements from Euripides’ Greek that go against the prevailing dramatic forms, rooted in Roman dramatic practice.

We are better served acknowledging as full a range of intertexts as possible, rather than pinning Buchanan reductively to Senecan ‘influence.’ Virgil, Cicero, Plautus, Ovid, and many others provide just as much material for the Scotsman’s intertextual weavings. Reading Ovid’s account of a young Medea (*Met.* VII.19–21) alongside Buchanan’s version of the last lines in her great self-deliberation speech (1026–1129), we see how allusion can work in tandem with the tendencies already apparent in the translator’s linguistic choices, in this case how the remarkable self-possession of Euripides’ heroine is undermined in Buchanan’s text. Although the final lines of Medea’s speech are often reduced and misinterpreted as straightforwardly setting passion against reason (with passion winning out), we should note that the meaning of the Greek here (E.1078–80) is a good deal more ambiguous; there is too much in Medea’s speeches elsewhere in the play that demonstrates her absolute command of reason to allow for such a reductive interpretation.⁴⁴ Buchanan, as he does elsewhere, downplays her agency in his translation: where Euripides’ Medea says she will dare to do such evils (“*οἶα πολμήσω κακά*” E.1078), Buchanan’s distances herself a little, saying that she sees how wicked a deed it is that will be carried out (1127). But the echoes from Ovid strengthen the subversion of

³⁸ See 399 where she uses the same verb of her three initial intended victims, Creon, Glauce, and Jason.

³⁹ “*Medea nunc sum: crevit ingenium malis./ iuvat, iuvat rapuisse fraternal caput,/artus iuvat secuisse et arcano patrem/ spoliassse sacro, iuvat in exitium senis/ armasse natas. quaere materiam, dolor,*” my emphasis. Seneca, *Medea*, 910–14. See Schweitzer, “Buchanan,” 11–13.

⁴⁰ “The pain is worthwhile if you cannot mock me” (Greek); “But if you cannot mock me in my grief, then grief is a delight” (Latin). For further Senecan concepts in Buchanan’s plays, see Helen Slaney, *The Senecan Aesthetic: A Performance History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48–49.

⁴¹ Euripides, *Medea*, ed. Donald J. Mastronarde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), n. *ad loc.*

⁴² Chevalier, “Poetics of Borrowing,” 183.

⁴³ Erika Rummel, *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985), 31.

⁴⁴ Euripides, *Medea*, 393–97.

Medea's agency in her crime.⁴⁵ By connecting two points in Medea's story, her first sight of Jason and her love-induced decision to help him as told in Ovid, and her decision, several homicides later, to murder her own children, the maturation of her criminal mind and action is diminished. The presence in both Latin texts of the opposition of passion and reason (*cupido* and *mens* in Ovid, *furor* and *ratio* in Buchanan), then, mutually reinforce this picture of an emotionally-driven character. At other points, however, the setting side by side of Greek source and Latin intertext provokes new and suggestive philosophical and ethical questions. Chevalier has explored how a fresh take on the question of 'envy' (*invidentia*) in the public sphere, encompassing Virgil, Dante, Cicero, and the historian Florus, is offered by Buchanan's reshaping of a line in Medea's initial speech to the Corinthian women.⁴⁶ Such passages lend themselves as starting points for the kinds of formal or informal discussions amongst pupils and audiences that the humanist education prized so highly.

The act of translating Euripides' Greek in Latin did, in the ways gestured to above, transform the play as a whole, either setting the action in the cultures summoned by the cosmopolitan language of Latin, or heightening a sense of alterity in certain elements such as the gods or the poetry of the language itself, or inviting different kinds of conversations about ethical or philosophical concepts through the allusions, signalled at verbal and imagistic levels, to a range of other Latin authors. A full account of these changes would take up considerably more space, but the recognition that the text is anything but a neutral vehicle for 'a Greek play' is nevertheless valuable in and of itself. How much of the richness offered by this translation would be appreciated depends, as always, on the audience and/or reader, and it is to this pedagogical context that we turn now.

Pedagogical Contexts

We are fortunate enough to have a fairly accurate guide as to what was on the syllabus at the *Collège de Guyenne* around the time that Buchanan was teaching there and producing plays. In Elie Vinet's published account of the teaching and texts used at the school, we see the unsurprising choices of Cicero, Terence, and Ovid featuring prominently, as well as a focus on verse composition, taught using the popular text book, Despauterius' *Ars Versificatoria*.⁴⁷ Only in the upper two classes would pupils read more widely: Virgil, Lucan, Persius, Quintilian, Justin, Eutropius, Livy, and others. Seneca, we should note, was only taught to the highest class at the school. This serves to show how even amongst the students in the audience, the appreciation of some of the allusions noted above would have been varied. In terms of linguistic resonances, many students could have identified the adjective *anxiferae* used by the Chorus (1358) as typically Ciceronian, and the same for the verb *exaggerare*, used by Jason (552), although those in the upper classes would have seen it also in Quintilian. Only these upper orders, too, might have caught the Virgilian echoes in "ineluctabile fatum" (386, "unavoidable fate," see *Aen.*8.334) or "quo nos trahit fatum, sequamur" (1109–11, "Let us follow where fate draws us," see *Aen.*5.709: "nate dea, quo fata trahunt retrahuntque, sequamur"),⁴⁸ or a moment of Horace in Jason's use of *blaterare* (475, see *Sat.*2.7.35). And on the level of more sweeping parallels, the third *ordo*, who would have read the *Metamorphoses*, could have appreciated the dissonance between the young Medea depicted at the beginning

⁴⁵ For these echoes see Schweitzer, "Buchanan," 9–10.

⁴⁶ Chevalier, "Poetics of Borrowing," 189–92.

⁴⁷ See Louis Massebieau, *Schola Aquitanica. Programme d'études du Collège de Guyenne au XVI siècle* (Paris: Libr. Ch. Delagrave, 1886).

⁴⁸ "Goddess-born, let us follow where the Fates, in their ebb and flow, draw us."

of book seven and the powerful, mature Medea in Euripides’ play. Few students are likely to have heard the echoes of Seneca’s Medea where they can be found in Buchanan’s text.

The general orientation of the curriculum towards the teaching of rhetoric puts a further, important frame around the experience of this particular play. While many (if not most) neo-Latin dramas sought to provide rhetorical exempla to enrich the performer’s grasp of the construction and performance of persuasive speech, the entirety of the dramatic action in Euripides’ play is propelled by Medea’s rhetorical skill. Such a showcase of ability and strategy recasts Medea as, in this respect, a thoroughly positive exemplum; a pedagogical paradigm, almost. The awfulness of her murderous acts recedes within such a frame, where rhetoric is her primary occupation and the audience’s prime concern. The concern with speech and persuasiveness is already present in Euripides’ Greek, but translating such sentiments into Latin, the undisputed language of eloquent disquisition, praise, or appeal in the first half of the sixteenth century (and hearing them amongst peers aware of the expediency of such skill) adds a sharpness, a (to their ears) modern frisson to the drama.

Medea’s speech to Creon (313–39) is a beautiful exemplar for students of rhetoric, as she tackles the charges levelled against her by recasting the negative reaction to her reputation (*fama*) as jealousy (325),⁴⁹ as opposed to justified horror at her prior acts of betrayal, fratricide and incitement to murder. But the lesson is made more explicit through Creon’s reaction to it and his explicit denunciation of the ‘specious and alluring’ words and techniques he knows he has just heard (340).⁵⁰ Other such meta-commentary on the play’s exploration and exposition of rhetorical skill are recurrent: Medea’s insistence on clarity (498);⁵¹ Jason’s *captatio benevolentiae* at the beginning of his defence against the (justified) charges laid by Medea (548);⁵² the chorus’ verdict on the excellence of Jason’s speech, but his failure to obscure his guilt (609);⁵³ Medea’s intention to speak winning words (819).⁵⁴ Set in a context where the formation of speech in Latin that was excellent, persuasive, flattering if necessary, successful where possible, was an overarching goal and daily objective for which the *Medea* offers a very rich, if peculiar (in our eyes) prospect.

The didactic aim of this production is likely to have been dominated by the potential for practical examples of rhetorical success or failure, and discussion of why those examples succeeded or failed. But the question of what ethical lessons might be drawn from the play must also have been at issue, although we can be fairly certain that while exemplary in terms of rhetorical skill, Medea could hardly have been viewed as any kind of positive ethical model. The choice to translate a play with a protagonist like Medea is, in many ways, a surprising one, as Buchanan himself obliquely acknowledges in his preface to his other translation of a Greek play, *Alceste*.⁵⁵ There he assures Princess Margaret, his dedicatee, that “parricidii vero et veneficii et reliquorum quibus aliae tragoedia plenae sunt scelerum nulla prorsus hic mentio.”⁵⁶ There is something important here in the choice of so dubious a set of figures as Medea and Jason, which speaks to the kind of education offered by the Collège de Guyenne and the way these kinds of Greek texts were received more generally by humanists.

The inclusion of authors that provided alternatives to the dominant ethical models

⁴⁹ “[P]erita cum sim, hos urit invidentia” (“since I am skilled, they burn with envy”).

⁵⁰ “[S]peciosa sunt haec blandaque auribus” (“these words are beautiful and easy on the ears”).

⁵¹ “[E]t primum, ut a primis initiis ordiar” (“first, since I shall begin from the very beginning”).

⁵² “Me, ut video, oportet eloquendi esse haud rudem” (“I see I must speak eloquently, not rough and ready”).

⁵³ “Haec pulchre, Iason, perpolita oratio est” (“This is, Jason, a beautifully polished speech”).

⁵⁴ “[O]ratione blandiore colloquar” (“I shall speak a very soothing speech”).

⁵⁵ See n. 8 above, however, for other editors and translators who had been drawn to the figure of Medea.

⁵⁶ “[T]here will be no mention beyond this point of parricide and poisoning and of all the other wickedness with which other tragedies are filled,” Sharratt and Walsh, *George Buchanan Tragedies*, 211 (lines 6–7).

exemplified in Christian texts and the couching of these novel ethical models in new forms (classically structured drama) was central to the humanistic project, particularly in early sixteenth-century Europe.⁵⁷ Audiences at this time were not, it seems, invited to condemn or approve of the pagan material offered up by Euripides in any straightforward way. Rather, the presentation of dubious ethical exempla in the forms of Jason and Medea would have chafed against contemporary Christian conventions; the results of this productive friction for the broader reception of Medea, and Greek tragedy as a whole, as far as such Latin translations as Buchanan's go, are still waiting to be uncovered.⁵⁸ The fact that such dubious exempla were no cause for undue concern, and in a pedagogical context at that, speaks to the atmosphere of the time, when the production of a play such as this was drawing on and feeding into a vibrant exchange of ideas and questions, both literary and religious. The school context for this production in 1543 was intimately linked with the larger context of scholarly activity taking place in and around Bordeaux. Buchanan himself was part of a network of scholars who lived in or near Bordeaux, including Julius Caesar Scaliger and Nicolas de Grouchy (titans in the field of Aristotelian scholarship),⁵⁹ and fellow dramatist Marc-Antoine Muret, often regarded, together with Buchanan in fact, as one of the founding fathers of French drama.

The significance of Buchanan's dissonant ethical models in the *Medea* comes all the more clearly into focus when we note that it would be another five years until the publication of Robortello's influential commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* in 1548 and the beginning of a more widespread discussion and dissemination of the description of tragedy's ethical impact in that work. Buchanan's *Medea* stands as a rare example of drama in Latin thoroughly (although far from completely) drawn from Greek models and apparently independent of the Horatian-influenced Aristotelian precepts that would so critically define the reception of Greek drama in the second half of the century and beyond.⁶⁰ The potential at this moment with broader, humanistic discussions both in and out of the classroom provide a further rich context for any reading of the 1543 production.

Potential in Performance

Remembering that the text of the play alone is "like a musical score" brings us to the fourth and final aspect of this production's significance: its performance.⁶¹ The humanist scholars of the sixteenth century were acutely aware of the difference in impact a performance might have to reading the text alone or studying it seated in the classroom. This commitment was made manifest in the statutes of universities and colleges across Europe that set down requirements for at least one performance a year.⁶² The reformers Luther and Melanchthon valued the performance of drama for its ability to entertain, and its consequent appeal as a vehicle for

⁵⁷ This theme is identified in many of the chapters in T. C. Earle and Catarina Fouto, *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance* (Leeds: Legenda, 2014).

⁵⁸ The monograph by Heavey Katherine, *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558-1688* (Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), is excellent, but focuses on English-language instantiations of the character with little space given to Latin texts. See also Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women*, 43–88 for the impact of Greek models (transmitted via Latin and vernaculars) in English contexts.

⁵⁹ McFarlane, "French Humanism," 296, 299–300.

⁶⁰ See Bruce R. Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500–1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 12–58.

⁶¹ Bloemendal, "Receptions and Impact," 15.

⁶² At the Collège de Guyenne, it seems to have been more "custom" (*consuetudo*) than requirement, see McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 542; on Petrus Ramus' counter-cultural resistance to the academic drama, see Walter J. Ong, "A Ramist Translation of Euripides," *Manuscripta* 8, no. 1 (1964): 25.

leading audiences to particular views or courses of action, perhaps even more effectively than sermons and sermonising.⁶³ Buchanan himself writes of the positive experience of producing such plays for his students in the dedicatory preface to his translation of *Alcestis*: "actio enim rerum sermone et spiritu paene animate acrius quam nuda praecepta sensus impellit, et facilius in animos influit et illabatur; atque ubi illapsa fuerit, firmiter haeret et quasi radices agit."⁶⁴ The practice of performance, and its ennobling potential for those who participated, would be vigorously defended by the next generation of humanist writers, including one of the colleges most famous alumni, Michel de Montaigne: "et ay veu nos Princes s'y adonner depuis en personne, à l'exemple d'aucuns des anciens, honnestement et louablement. Il estoit loisible mesme d'en faire mestier aux gens d'honneur en Grece: *Aristoni tragico actori rem aperit: huic et genus et fortuna honesta erant; nec ars, quia nihil tale apud Graecos pudori est, ea deformabat.*"⁶⁵ William Gager was to highlight the ethical training that came with the performance of such academic dramas, and the opportunity afforded to pupils to inhabit that language, to test and try their own voices and opinions, and their own approaches to moral questions or potential actions: "to trye what mettell is in evrye one, and of what disposition thay are of; wherby never any one amongst us, that I knowe was made the worse, many have byn much better."⁶⁶

We are lucky enough to have a hint of the resilient impression made by Buchanan's plays in performance, along with others that were performed around the same time, in Montaigne's recollections. He recalls playing "les premiers personnages" in the tragedies of Buchanan, Guerente, and Muret and, as we just saw, testified to the "louabilité" of such performance. And while Montaigne did not seem to have quoted Greek tragedians in his writings,⁶⁷ attempts have been made to trace the impact of a Greek (but not Aristotelian) model of tragic character or *ethe*.⁶⁸ This is but one small example we happen to have some evidence for, but we do well to keep in mind the potential of performance in general to shape and inform, at both conscious and unconscious levels, the world views of those in the audience.

The fact of performance will also have sharpened and heightened the moments where the distinctions between the world of the play and the world of the actors and audience, sometimes quite suddenly, collapse. The physical space where the play was performed may have laid some important groundwork. It is likely that the largest space in the school would have been used for the production, the room known as the 'aula,' a room large enough to house the most numerous class, the ninth *ordo*. In his description of this space, Vinet on two occasions compares it to a theatre and, indeed, says that it was commonly referred to

⁶³ See *Epistola de legendis Tragoediis et Comoediis* (written in 1545) in Philip Melancton, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Schwetschke: Halis Saxonum, 1834–60), 319; see also Bloemendal, "Receptions and Impact," 19.

⁶⁴ "For a performance, almost given a soul with its dialogues and liveliness, stimulates the senses more vividly than bare rules do, and more easily it flows into one's mind and inspires it. Plus, when it gets taken in, it sticks more firmly and acts like a 'root'." Sharratt and Walsh, *George Buchanan Tragedies*, 211 (lines 17–20).

⁶⁵ "And I have since seen our Princes take part in it in person, following the example of some of the ancients, honorably and commendably. It was even praiseworthy for persons of honor to make a profession of it in Greece: 'He disclosed the matter to the tragic actor Ariston. This man was worthy both in family and in fortune; nor did his art spoil this worthiness, since nothing of this kind is considered shameful among the Greeks'" Montaigne, *Essais*, I, 26, 176 B (quoting Livy).

⁶⁶ Quoted in Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 235–36.

⁶⁷ John R. C. Martyn, "Montaigne and George Buchanan," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 26 (1977): 140.

⁶⁸ Hervé-Thomas Campagne, "Tragic *Ethe* in Montaigne's *Essais*," in "*Revelations of Character*": *Ethos, Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy in Montaigne*, ed. Corinne Noirot-Maguire and Valerie M. Dionne (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 87.

as “the Theatre” (“quod et veterum theatra quodammodo refert, et ideo Theatrum vulgo dicitur”).⁶⁹ In such an environment, moments in the play such as the Nurse’s call to Medea’s children—“Introite, pueri...!” (“Come in, children!” 93)—must have suddenly called to mind the speaking of Latin to the boys of the college, and blurred the lines between the world of the play and the experiences of the students in the audience, past and present. There are a considerable number of passages in this play which could have had a similar effect on the audience: discussions of education and its value (315–17);⁷⁰ of the nature of the young (52);⁷¹ or the trials of parenthood (the fourth choral ode, esp. 1140–66).

Sharper in performance, too, would be the exempla of the failure of rhetoric, and the need for acts to work with words to achieve the desired goal. As noted above, Medea’s initial conciliatory speech to Creon fails, as the king is all too aware of the blandishments and strategies she is using. It is at that point that Medea uses physical action to further her cause; she supplicates him, a gesture not without weight even transposed from a Greek into a Christian context.⁷² The scene leads the audience through a range of reactions to both characters, and in doing so offers up possible lessons on persuasive rhetoric (as seen in her exchange with Creon as she tries multiple angles of approach), and also, the limitation of rhetoric alone. Action is also needed.

But the lesson (‘deeds and words,’ perhaps) does not end here. After Creon has left, the chorus express their pity for Medea, with a near overdose of mournful alliteration (a favourite technique for Buchanan in his translations) and psalmic echoes in the repetition of miser: “infelix mulier, misera malis,/ miseris obnoxia, quo tandem te vertes? [...] traxit ineluctabile fatum/ in mare te, Medea, malorum” (381–87).⁷³ Medea’s *volte face* in the lines that follow carries considerable drama in it, as she dismisses their lyric in spoken trimeter before mocking their credulity (392–94). Her energy here is amplified in Buchanan’s translation, as a single rhetorical question in the Greek is extended into a series of stinging retorts that undercut the feigned sincerity of her suppliant act: “supplex fuisset? contigisset illi manum?”⁷⁴ In this dramatic moment, previous lessons are undercut, and the ways in which deeds and words can be manipulated are laid bare.

Such lessons were not just theoretical, and in an atmosphere of religious upheaval in sixteenth-century France the relevance would have resonated sharply with members of the audience. The students themselves were no doubt aware of the dangerous times they were living in and the risks that could attend a humanist education. The Collège de Guyenne, although at some remove from turbulent Paris, had been visited in 1540 and reformed on account of its overly lenient attitude towards religious instruction and discussion.⁷⁵ The vigour of humanist education did not seem to be materially curtailed as a result of this visitation, but the potential danger in discussing a great number of topics would have been discernible even for the school’s pupils, and would have been even more clear to the wider audience

⁶⁹ Massebieau, *Schola Aquitanica. Programme d’études du Collège de Guyenne au XVI siècle*, 10.

⁷⁰ “[Q]uicumque vera praeditus prudentia est,/ ne disciplinis liberos impensius/ erudiat aequo, nec sapere doceat nimis” (“whoever is endowed with true wisdom,/ may they not educate their children in subjects / more than is reasonable, nor teach them to know too much”).

⁷¹ “[P]uerilis animus gravibus haud curis patet” (“a boy’s mind is not attentive to serious concerns”).

⁷² Leah Whittington, *Renaissance Suppliants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–45.

⁷³ “Unhappy woman, suffering misfortune after misfortune, where will you turn to after this? [...] Inescapable fate draws you, Medea, into a sea of ills.”

⁷⁴ “Would I have supplicated him? Would I have touched the hand of that man?”

⁷⁵ Raymond Lebégue, *La tragédie religieuse en France: Les débuts (1514-1573)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1929), 200.

of the play, not only parents but also members of the general public.⁷⁶ It is the awareness of contemporary events, and the specific historical context of this performance of *Medea*, that raises the fact of its performance to a crucial level for our interpretation. We have already noted above that the character of *Medea* in Euripides' play develops in ways different from, even dissonant with, earlier models. But beyond this, the themes within the play—the power of speech and of silence, the importance of rhetoric, the dangers of education, and the miseries of exile—would have resonated acutely in 1540s France. Buchanan himself had to leave Scotland in 1538, shortly before he began teaching in Bordeaux, under a cloud of intrigue and accusations of heresy.⁷⁷ As he passed through England on his way to France, he was careful about what he said of his travel plans, fearing further suspicion and accusations, and even made it known to some that he was travelling to Germany, to throw any interested parties off the scent.⁷⁸ Beyond Buchanan's own personal experiences of exile and intrigue, all of France would have felt the effects of the *Affaires des Placards* in 1534 and the consequent end of conciliatory measures towards Protestants under Francis I. Drama was not deemed innocent of implication in the religious tumult of the period. In the mid-1540s, just after Buchanan's *Medea* was published, two scholars from Antwerp were convicted of heresy for the plays they had written and were sentenced to death.⁷⁹ While dangerous suggestions might be voiced in print or thought in the mind, the presence of an audience who are all aware of each other and their present circumstances will always add to the power, and danger, of the fact of performance.

Conclusion

The immediate impact of Buchanan's *Medea* may be difficult to discern. Although he was once hailed as one of the 'godfathers' of French tragedy, this claim has been qualified in recent times, leaving a question as to just how important his dramatic works as a whole were.⁸⁰ But what can be said with some certainty is that the contribution of his plays, especially his Latin translations of tragedy, to the early modern literary world does not conform to current models of understanding of 'influence.' Giacomo Cardinali has posited that what Buchanan does do, is demonstrate that these new kinds of tragedy need not be 'sterile' exercises in literary imitation and, second of all, encourage students to observe the tragedy from within the world of the play.⁸¹ What I have sought to show here is that the *Medea*, by virtue of its pagan Greek otherness, is a persistent counterpoint to the more familiar rhythms and conventions of Roman drama that had and would continue to shape the way in which audiences received drama at the time. It is plays like Buchanan's *Medea* that challenge us to think in more theoretically sophisticated ways when we construe the role of Greek drama in Latin plays in school performances and, of course, in wider European literary production.

⁷⁶ See Bloemendal, "Receptions and Impact," 11.

⁷⁷ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 66–77.

⁷⁸ James M. Aitken, *The Trial of George Buchanan before the Lisbon Inquisition* (Edinburgh/London: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), 10.

⁷⁹ Bloemendal, "Receptions and Impact," 13.

⁸⁰ Giacomo Cardinali, "George Buchanan 'Parrain' De La Tragédie Française? La Fortune De La Production Tragique De George Buchanan Auprès Des Dramaturges De Langue Française (1553–1573)," in *Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions*, ed. J. Bloemendal and P. Ford (Hildesheim: Olms, 2008), Giacomo Cardinali, "George Buchanan 'parrain' de la tragédie française? La fortune de la production tragique de George Buchanan auprès des dramaturges de langue française (1553–1573)," in *Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions*, ed. Jan Bloemendal and Philip Ford (Hildesheim: Olms, 2008), 35–36.

⁸¹ "[d]'un point de vue intérieur," *ibid.*, 52.

But how useful is it to focus on an example that, as I have argued at some length, was so unusual in its combination of literary and cultural contexts? An analysis of potential in the Latin translations of Greek drama is, I argue, a useful and worthy exercise, drawing on the data we *do* have concerning a particular production. For it is by addressing this potential that we might begin to recalibrate our approach to evaluating translations such as this. What I have worked through in this article is one method in such a reorientation, incorporating notions of the alternative ethical and dramatic patterns that are central within the world of Euripides' play, the significant shifts that occurs even in the most 'literal' or 'faithful' of translation acts, the more sophisticated pedagogical goals of Latin drama possible at the time, a didacticism that goes beyond the moralizing of other dramas, and the raised stakes that occur in any act of live performance, where politics and ethics can take on a real-life and occasionally dangerous edge.

References

- Aitken, James M. *The Trial of George Buchanan before the Lisbon Inquisition*. Edinburgh/London: Oliver and Boyd, 1939.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Translation*. London/New York: Oliver and Boyd, 2014.
- Bloemendal, Jan. "Receptions and Impact: Early Modern Latin Drama, Its Effect on the Audience and Its Role in Forming Public Opinion." In *Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions*, edited by Jan Bloemendal and Philip Ford, 7–22. Hildesheim, Olms: Noctes Neolatinae, 2008.
- Bloemendal, Jan, and Howard B. Norland. *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013.
- Boas, Frederick S. *University Drama in the Tudor Age*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*." In *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, 36–44. New York: New Directions, 1964.
- Botley, Paul. *Latin Translation in the Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004.
- Boutruche, Robert, and Jacques Bernard. *Bordeaux de 1453 à 1715*. Bordeaux: Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 1966.
- Boyle, Anthony J. "Introduction: Medea in Greece and Rome." *Ramus* 41, nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–32.
- Campagne, Hervé-Thomas. "Tragic *Etbe* in Montaigne's *Essais*." In "*Revelations of Character*": *Ethos, Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy in Montaigne*, edited by Corinne Noirot-Maguire and Valerie M. Dionne, 85–97. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.
- Cardinali, Giacomo. "George Buchanan 'parrain' de la tragédie française? La fortune de la production tragique de George Buchanan auprès des dramaturges de langue française (1553–1573)." In *Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions*, edited by Jan Bloemendal and Philip Ford, 35–53. Hildesheim: Olms, 2008.

- Chevalier, Jean-Frédéric. "George Buchanan and the Poetics of Borrowing in the Latin Translation of Euripides' *Medea*." In *George Buchanan: Poet and Dramatist*, edited by Philip Ford and Roger Green, 183–95. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2009.
- Collins, John Churton. *Studies in Shakespeare*. Westminster: A Constable, 1904.
- Crawforth, Hannah, and Lucy Jackson. "Greek Tragedy and the University Stage: Buchanan and Euripides." In *Gathering Force*, edited by Kristen Poole and Lauren Shohet, 340–55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Earle, T. C., and Catarina Fouto. *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance*. Leeds: Legenda, 2014.
- Euripides. *Fabulae, Vol. 1: Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea; Heraclidae; Hippolytus; Andromacha; Hecuba*. Edited by James Diggle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- . *Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea*. Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . *Medea*. Edited by Donald J. Mastrorarde. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Euripidis ... tragoediae XVIII nunc primum ... per D. Camillum et Latio donatae et in lucem editae*. Basel: Winter, 1541.
- Euripidis tragoediae septendecim*. Edited by Aldus Manutius. Venice: Aldus, 1503.
- Ewbank, Inga-Stina. "Striking Too Short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage." In *Agamemnon in Performance 458BCE to AD 2004*, edited by Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, and Edith Hall, 37–52. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. "Performance as Event — Reception as Transformation." In *Theorising Performance*, edited by Edith Hall and Stephe Harrop, 29–42. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2010.
- Ford, Philip. *George Buchanan. Prince of Poets*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University, 1982.
- Katherine, Heavey. *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558-1688*. Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Lebégue, Raymond. *La tragédie religieuse en France: Les débuts (1514-1573)*. Paris: H. Champion, 1929.
- Lewis, Charlton T., and Charles Short. *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879.
- Martyn, John R. C. "Montaigne and George Buchanan." *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 26 (1977): 132–42.
- Massebieau, Louis. *Schola Aquitanica. Programme d'études du Collège de Guyenne au XVI siècle*. Paris: Libr. Ch. Delagrave, 1886.
- McCallum-Barry, Carmel. "Why Did Erasmus Translate Greek Tragedy?" *Erasmus Studies* 24, no. 1 (2004): 52–70.
- McFarlane, Ian D. "French Humanism." In *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance*, edited by Anthony H. T. Levi, 295–319. New York: Manchester University, 1970.
- . *Buchanan*. London: Duckworth, 1981.
- Medea Euripidis Petreio Tiara Frisio interprete*. Antwerp: Crom, 1543.
- Melanchton, Philip. *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. Edited by Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider. Schwetschke: Halis Saxonum, 1834–60.

- Montaigne, Michel de. *Essais*. In *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Albert Thibaudet and Maruice Rat. Paris: Gallimard, 1962.
- Morse, Ruth. *The Medieval Medea*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1996.
- Ong, Walter J. "A Ramist Translation of Euripides." *Manuscripta* 8, no. 1 (1964): 18–28.
- Plautus, Titus Maccius. *The Merchant, the Braggart Soldier, the Ghost, the Persian*. Edited and translated by Wolfgang de Melo. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Pollard, Tanya. "What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2012): 1060–93.
- . *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Rummel, Erika. *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985.
- Schleiner, Louise. "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of "Hamlet." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1990): 29–48.
- Schweitzer, Zoé. "Buchanan, helléniste et dramaturge, interprète d'Euripide (*Medea* et *Alceste*)." *Études Épistémè: revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* 23 (2013): 1–11.
- Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. *Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician Women, Medea, Phaedra*. Edited and translated by John G. Fitch. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Sharratt, Peter. "Euripides Latinus: Buchanan's Use of His Sources." In *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, 613–20. Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1985.
- Sharratt, Peter, and Peter G. Walsh. *George Buchanan Tragedies*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983.
- Silk, Michael. "Shakespeare and Greek Tragedy: Strange Relationship." In *Shakespeare and the Classics*, edited by Charles Martindale and Andrew B. Taylor, 241–57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Slaney, Helen. *The Senecan Aesthetic: A Performance History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Smith, Bruce R. *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500–1700*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Taylor, Andrew. "Introduction: The Translations of Renaissance Latin." *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 41, no. 4 (2014).
- Terence, Publius. *Phormio, the Mother-in-law, the Brothers*. Edited and translated by John Barsby. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Tragoediae Quattuor: Medea, Hippolytus, Alceste, Andromache*. Edited by Janus Lascaris. Florence: Laurentius de Alopa, 1495.
- Vascosan, Michael, ed. *Hecuba, et Iphigenia in Aulide, Euripides tragoediae, in latinum tralatae Erasmo Roterdamo interprete. Medea eiusdem, Georgio Buchanano Scoto interprete*. Paris, 1544.
- Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility*. London/New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Walker, Jonathan, and Paul D. Streufert. *Early Modern Academic Drama*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2008.
- Whittington, Leah. *Renaissance Suppliants*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.