Although there is no evidence that Seneca’s tragedies were performed in antiquity, there are many traces that indicate that the texts as such were generally known, read, and cited from Seneca’s lifetime onwards. The reception of his work, however, has varied. The remarkable revival of Seneca between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century was followed by a decline in the eighteenth century; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the interest in Seneca’s tragedies began to increase again, at least among scholars (Seidensticker and Armstrong 1985). Only in the past few decades have Seneca’s tragedies made an appearance on the stage, not in Latin, except for performances at schools and universities—but translated into modern languages and adapted to modern theatrical traditions.

**Antiquity**

As far as we can judge, Lucan, Seneca’s nephew, had certain passages of his uncle’s tragedies in mind when he wrote his (uncompleted) epic *Pharsalia*. Valerius Flaccus’s characterization of tyrants as well as the shadowy portrait of Medea in his epic *Argonautica* is indebted to Seneca, too, while Statius’s *Thebaid* is influenced both by the epic of his friend Lucan and Seneca’s tragedies, especially by *Phoenissae* and *Oedipus*. Concerning the crucial *Troiae Halosis* and the *Bellum civile*, which are both poetic fragments “composed” by the poetaster Eumolpus in Petronius’s *Satyricon*, at least the former poem may be a parody of Senecan monologues.

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1 See the list of performances of Senecan tragedies from 1993 to 2007 by K. Kagerer and W. Stroh (http://www.lrz.de/~stroh/schriften/seneca_scaenicus.html).

2 Cf. also the section “The Present” in this article, *infra*, pp. 92 f.
The most considerable signs of a more or less contemporary influence are to be seen in the Corpus Senecanum itself. As far as we know today, the tragedies Octavia and Hercules Oetaeus do not originate from Seneca himself, but are strictly shaped, by unknown poets, according to the structure of the genuine Senecan dramas. The language and style of these two tragedies, however, are identical to the language and style of the others; that is why the discussion of whether these two tragedies are genuine has not yet ceased. Hercules Oetaeus is by far the longest tragedy in the Corpus Senecanum and thus in ancient Latin literature. It contains many resemblances to Hercules furens; the unknown author of Hercules Oetaeus entered an intertextual dialogue between himself and Seneca concerning the identical subject of the two works. In the Octavia we note the same dramatic technique as in the other tragedies. Moreover, the obvious “prince’s mirror” parts are doubtlessly influenced by the earlier Senecan dramas.

Seneca’s tragedies were, then, starting from Lucan and Petronius, both imitated and criticized, but nonetheless read and transmitted throughout the Roman world. Seneca’s choruses, being very innovative, influenced ancient authors from Caesius Bassus († 79) to Boethius († 524). Quintilian recalls in his Institutio oratoria that when still a student he heard a Senecan praefatio to one of his tragedies. In 9.2.9 he quotes Sen. Med. 453; in 10.1.125–131, however, he gives his judgment on Seneca’s prose writings rather than on his poems. Pushed back because of classicistic and archaic tendencies, Seneca was to be rediscovered only some centuries later, starting about AD 370. One of the strangest adaptations of a Senecan drama in late antiquity is Hosidius Geta’s Medea, an odd cento of Vergilian fragments. The play is no boring l’ art pour l’art exercise of style, but a very demanding discussion of different traditions through its deconstruction and reconstruction of both Vergil and Seneca (cf. Schmidt 1978: 37 ff.).

At this time “Seneca tragicus” and “Seneca philosophus” were wrongly regarded as two different persons. The following authors often refer to Seneca’s tragedies: Claudianus (Zwierlein 1984: 7–12; 46–57), Prudentius, Orientius (and the anonymous comedy Querolus), Sidonius Apollinaris, Avitus, Dracontius, Ennodius, and Boethius (Trillitzsch 1978: 121 f.). Whether Augustine ever read Senecan tragedies we do not know; his few citations may just as well have been taken from anthologies, grammars, or somewhere else. As to the poets among the listed authors, we can assume that they knew the one or the other Senecan tragedy very well. Hieronymus evidently made use of some verses taken from Seneca’s Troades when he wrote his Vita Malchi. The Senecan prologues or choral parts with their more general concern with philosophy or mythology inspired a special interest among the authors of