

Tiresias between texts and sex¹

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From Greece to Rome

It was almost a commonplace in Senecan studies at least until the 1980s to consider Greek tragedy not merely as a starting point but rather as the only point for intertextual comparison with Seneca's dramatic production. Hence, the choice of common myth between Seneca and Sophocles made the Sophoclean *Oedipus Tyrannus* the most probable model for Seneca's own version of the story of Oedipus². There is no doubt that the Roman dramatist made extensive use of the Sophoclean play; however, a sounder approach to Seneca's complex dramatic technique cannot be established unless we broaden the intertextual horizon, so as to include a wider range of works and genres (both Greek and Latin). We are in position to know that Seneca had at his disposal a much greater number of dramatic productions of Oedipus' myth than those that survive today. We are aware

1 — Versions of this paper have been presented at the Finnish Institute at Athens and at the University of Exeter. I would like to thank all those who participated in the discussions and offered me their stimulating questions and remarks. I am most grateful to the anonymous readers of *Eugesta* for their constructive suggestions and improvements on the first draft of this paper.

2 — For the direct dependence of the Senecan *Oedipus* on the Sophoclean *Oedipus Tyrannus* see the bibliography collated by Ugolini (1995) 225 n. 2 and Capdeville (2000) 143 n. 29.

of Aeschylus³ and Euripides⁴ plays entitled *Oedipus* and we also know that the myth was very popular in dramatic productions of the fourth century BC and during Hellenistic times⁵. In Rome, 'Oedipus is a much referenced figure in literature and drama from Plautus (*Poen.* 443-4) and Terence (*Andr.* 194) onwards, and may have figured in Accius' *Antigona*, *Phoenissae*, and/or *Thebais* and such late republican/early imperial epics as Ponticus' *Thebaid*⁶. From Suetonius (*Jul.* 56.7) we learn that the young Julius Caesar also wrote a tragedy entitled *Oedipus*⁷. In this vast literary output, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* still retained its mark as the most famous tragedy of Greek antiquity among the members of the upper and well-educated classes of Imperial Rome⁸.

Seneca's choice to include Tiresias in a play about Oedipus hardly makes an unusual choice. Tiresias has a long and established connection with the House of Cadmus, which spans over many generations from the very founding of Thebes until its fall to the armies of the Epigoni⁹. Tiresias was among the most ancient native people of Thebes, since his grandfather Udaeus was one of the five Sparti ('Sown men') who helped Cadmus found the city of Thebes¹⁰. In Greek drama Tiresias figures persistently in plays of the Theban cycle (e.g. Sophocles: *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*; Euripides: *Bacchae*, *Phoenissae*)¹¹. The Sophoclean *Oedipus Tyrannus*, in particular, features a scene of remarkable tension and high pathos, in which Oedipus who is determined to save his fellow citizens clashes with Tiresias who seems rather reluctant to offer his help. The divide between the unwilling seer and the impulsive king culminates in a vehement quarrel over the theme of knowledge, replete with puns and ambiguous exchanges on physical and spiritual blindness¹². Against such background, one can hardly fail to notice Tiresias' somewhat reduced

3 — *TrGF* fr. 173(= 387a).

4 — *TrGF* fr. 539a-557.

5 — For dramatic productions of Oedipus' myth on the fifth-century BC Athenian stage see Töchterle (1994) 9-18; Edmunds (2006) 32-56; Ahl (2008) 18, 63-74.

6 — Boyle (2011) 96.

7 — Boyle (1997) 96 with n. 21.

8 — For an overview of Sophocles' reception in Rome see Holford-Strevens (2000), esp. 239-254 on Seneca.

9 — For Tiresias' strong connection with the House of Cadmus see Brisson (1976) 41-3. According to the ancient Scholion on Ap. Rhod. 1.308b (= *Epigoni* fr. 4 West) Tiresias had already appeared in the cyclic epic of the *Epigoni*. For more on Tiresias' presence in the Greek epic cycle see Ugolini (1995) 92-99.

10 — Tiresias was the son of Everes, the son of Udaeus. The other four Sparti were Echion, Chthonius, Hyperenor and Pelorus.

11 — Ugolini (1995) 117-150 offers a well-researched (cf. esp. the bibliography compiled in p. 120 n. 8) and informative discussion of Tiresias' presence in Greek tragedy. See also his balanced enquiry of Tiresias' presence (or not) in Greek fragmentary plays (pp. 205-224).

12 — Ugolini (1995) 191-195. For the combination of old age with blindness in Greek drama see Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) 33-47.

role in Seneca's *Oedipus*. Compared to the seventy-six lines of Tiresias' on-stage appearance in Sophocles, Seneca limits his presence to only forty-six lines. Tiresias' rather restricted role has given cause for further speculation. Despite the fact that the Delphic oracle was essentially defunct by Cicero's time¹³ and that the Romans, like the Greeks, often treated prophecy with less respect than it is nowadays presumed, especially in tragedy, Seneca opted for including Tiresias in his *Oedipus*. He could have left him out had he wished to do so. Nothing stopped him, for example, from omitting Aegeus, the Athenian king, who had appeared in the Euripidean *Medea*, from his own dramatic adaptation of the myth¹⁴. Tiresias' presence and his divinatory role in the play cause no inconvenience at all, especially when considering the Romans' superstitious preoccupations and their institutionalized system of divination¹⁵. Tiresias functions in the way of a typical Roman augur, 'whose special expertise was in the prophetic lore derived from birds'¹⁶; the Roman equivalent of a Greek *οἰωνοσκόπος*¹⁷. In Greek tragedy Tiresias is also thought to be an augur *par excellence*¹⁸. What makes modern critics feel uneasy is the stark contrast between the Sophoclean Tiresias and his Senecan counterpart regarding the possession and revelation of divine truth. In *Oedipus Tyrannus* Tiresias does not need to perform further divinatory activities in order to inquire into the future; he already knows, but he is reluctant to reveal the truth to Oedipus. In Seneca, we come across a moderate seer, eager to help, but hindered from the acquisition of divine truth by physical limitations. This Tiresias struggles for truth as much as his king. It has even been argued that Seneca's Tiresias is 'not only a less contentious presence than Sophocles' seer, but much less a presence altogether [...], an ancillary figure who interacts minimally with the other characters in the play [...]'¹⁹; Seneca's Tiresias 'does not serve to focus any thematic

13 — Ahl (2008) 121 with n. 108.

14 — Roisman (2003) 12.

15 — For the so-called *extispicium* scene as a Senecan innovation see Capdeville (2000) 143 n. 30 with bibliography ad loc.

16 — Ahl (2008) 121. For Tiresias in the Senecan play as interpreter of signs see also Staley (2010) 105.

17 — For Tiresias as *οἰωνοσκόπος* cf. e.g. Ps-Apollod. 3.6.7 Φερεκύδης δὲ ὑπὸ Ἀθηνᾶς αὐτὸν τυφλωθῆναι· οὖσαν γὰρ τὴν Χαρικλῶ προσφιλῇ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ ... γυμνὴν ἐπὶ πάντα ἰδεῖν, τὴν δὲ ταῖς χερσὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ καταλαβομένην πηρὸν ποιῆσαι, Χαρικλοῦς δὲ δεομένης ἀποκαταστήσαι πάλιν τὰς ὁράσεις, μὴ δυναμένην τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, τὰς ἀκοὰς διακαθάρασαν πᾶσαν ὀρνίθων φωνὴν ποιῆσαι συνεῖναι.

18 — Brisson (1976) 29-30. Cf. also Tiresias' etymological derivation from *τείρεα*, EM s.v. *τείρεα*: Καὶ Τειρεσίας ὁ μάντις παρὰ τὸ εἶρω, τὸ λέγω· ἢ παρὰ τὸ *τείρεα*· πολλάκις γὰρ οἱ μάντιες ἐκ τῶν ἀστέρων τι λέγουσιν. Ἡ παρὰ τὸ *τείρεσθαι*, οἶονεῖ ὁ καταπονούμενος ἐκ τῆς στερήσεως τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν· τυφλὸς γὰρ ἦν.

19 — Roisman (2003) 12.

issue of the play'²⁰. Moments before performing the ritual of *extispicium* Tiresias claims that he is too old and weak for divinely inspired prophecy and revelation (Sen. *Oed.* 297-8)²¹. Boyle's remark that 'metadramatically the phrase underscores that he is not the Tiresias of Sophocles'²² points us in the right direction. In addition, there is something particularly Roman in the ritual inspection of the entrails (*extispicium*), even though the practice was recognized by the Romans as pre-Roman²³. This scene has also impressed Lucan, who rewrote it as a similar divinatory ritual performed by the Etruscan *haruspex* Arruns in the first book of his *Pharsalia* (1.608-638)²⁴. As Capdeville has fairly recently argued in a detailed and well-researched paper, the association between the two texts is close both in language and content²⁵. Yet there is an important difference between Arruns and Tiresias, since 'Arruns reads the signs correctly and articulates his reading to those who have commissioned it. Tiresias, on the other hand, though aware that the signs are bad for Oedipus (387), offers no reading'²⁶.

Manto, the daughter of Tiresias

I will now turn my attention to Manto, Tiresias' daughter, in an attempt to explore the special dramatic function of her combined on-stage presence with her father. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* Tiresias is led by a child that remains unnamed. Seneca replaces the unnamed child in his *Oedipus* with Manto, the daughter of Tiresias. This is surely a strange choice, but not an unprecedented one. Manto, the daughter and guide of blind Tiresias, also appears in Euripides' *Phoenissae*²⁷, where – though unmentioned – she remains on stage throughout the scene between Creon and Tiresias (lines 834-959)²⁸. Hence, the possibility of a Euripidean reminiscence should not be discarded, especially if taken

20 — Roisman (2003) 17.

21 — For Ugolini (1995) 227 Tiresias' physical frailty and his consequent decline of prophetic power serve as the perfect excuse for Seneca to introduce the *extispicium* and the necromancy scene.

22 — Boyle (2011) on Sen. *Oed.* 297-8.

23 — See Capdeville (2000) 124-25 and Boyle (2011) on Sen. *Oed.* 291-402 and 353-383. For Tiresias acting more like an Etruscan *haruspex* and less like a Delphic prophet see Ugolini (1995) 227-228 with n. 7.

24 — Boyle (2011) on Sen. *Oed.* 353-83.

25 — Capdeville (2000) 123-126, 155 n. 87 with bibliography ad loc.

26 — So Boyle (2011) on Sen. *Oed.* 353-83. The Manto-Tiresias scene also influenced Statius, who 'imitated' it in Book 4 of his *Thebaid* (443-64).

27 — For Euripides' innovative characterization of Tiresias in his *Phoenissae* see Papadopoulou (2001) 21-26. For the poet's rather light attitude towards Tiresias in his *Bacchae* see Roth (1984) 59-63.

28 — It is very fortunate that we have an artistic representation of this particular scene preserved on a Greek vase (c. 3rd-2nd BC, from Thebes (?), today in the British Museum). On this see Capdeville (2000) 166-67 n. 156 with bibliography ad loc.

into account that this is Manto's only appearance in Greek drama to have survived.

Manto is a rather obscure figure both in Greek and Latin literature. Her earliest appearance dates back to the cyclic epic of the *Epigoni*²⁹, where Manto, after the sack of Thebes, is dedicated to Apollo at Delphi. Different strands of her story can also be found in later prose writers, such as Ps.-Apollodorus³⁰ and Pausanias³¹. In all these versions Manto is identified with the daughter of Tiresias and she is granted the gift of prophecy³².

The Italian myths about Manto are no less intriguing³³. Manto's trip from Greece to Italy seems to have been made initially through her association with the foundation of Mantua, so much as we can tell from a passing reference in Vergil's *Aeneid* (10.198-200)³⁴. Servius' comment on line 198 offers valuable background information³⁵. Manto, after the death of her father, Tiresias, came to Italy, where she was married to the river-god, Tiber, and had a son, Ocnus³⁶. Ocnus founded Mantua, a new city, named after his mother³⁷. The popularity of Oedipus' myth in Etruria, which is well attested in art³⁸, also seems to have contributed to the diffusion of Manto in Etruscan mythology³⁹.

29 — Cf. *Epigoni* fr. 4 West (= Σ on Ap. Rhod. 1.308b).

30 — In Ps.-Apollod. 3.7.7 Manto is married to Alcmaeon, one of the Epigoni, and gives birth to two children (Amphilochus and Tisiphone).

31 — Pausanias offers two versions of Manto's story: an extended (7.3.1-2 9) and a shorter one (9.33.1-2). After the sack of Troy by the Epigoni, Manto was dedicated to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Under Apollo's instructions the exiled Thebans crossed the sea across to Asia Minor, where they founded a new colony, Clarus. Manto married Rhacius, the leader of the Cretans who had initially set out against them, and gave him a son, Mopsus. For more references see Capdeville (2000) 167 n. 160.

32 — For the etymological derivation of Manto from μάντις see Eitrem in *RE* 14.2 (1932) s.v. *mantis* (μάντις) 1355.63. Capdeville (2000) 167 n. 161 taking into account the information provided by Diodorus (4.66.5-6) that the name of Tiresias' daughter was Daphne makes an interesting suggestion that Manto was actually a nickname associated with her divinatory prowess.

33 — My discussion here draws heavily on Capdeville (2000) 130 and his informative notes.

34 — Verg. *Aen.* 10.198-200 *Ille etiam patriis agmen ciet Ocnus ab oris, / fatidicae Mantus et Tusci filius amnis, / qui muros matrisque dedit tibi, Mantua, nomen.*

35 — Serv. on Verg. *Aen.* 10.198 *ocnus iste est Ocnus, quem in bucolicis Bianorem dicit, ut «namque sepulchrum incipit apparere Bianoris». hic Mantuam dicitur condidisse, quam a matris nomine appellavit: nam fuit filius Tiberis et Mantus, Tiresiae Thebani vatis filiae, quae post patris interitum ad Italiam venit.*

36 — Servius Danielis adds two mythological variations on Ocnus (see Capdeville (2000) 168-169 n. 169).

37 — Isidore of Seville offers an even more imaginative mythological variant in which Manto was the founder of Mantua (15.1.59 *Manto Tiresiae filia post interitum Thebanorum dicitur delata in Italiam Mantuam condidisse: est autem in Venetia, quae Gallia Cisalpina dicitur: et dicta Mantua quod manes tuetur*).

38 — See Capdeville (2000) 168 nn. 163, 168.

39 — There is an alternative version, which bears evidence to the Etruscan origin of Manto/Mantua. Following Servius Danielis the founder of Mantua was not Ocnus but Tarchon, an ancient Etruscan hero. Tarchon named the new city after Mantus, an Etruscan infernal god, and equivalent of

Manto's presence in the surviving Latin literature is somewhat restricted. Apart from the above mentioned reference in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Manto's only other appearance prior to Seneca is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There, in the tragic story of Niobe (6.146-316), Manto, who is introduced as Tiresias' daughter⁴⁰, appears as a prophetess who warns Niobe against her arrogant behavior towards the goddess Latona⁴¹. Despite her passing appearance, I would like to stress the fact that Manto in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* acts as a female surrogate for Tiresias, in a story which follows a similar pattern to Oedipus' story, yet with female protagonists. The correspondence between the Ovidian narrative and the story of Oedipus is hard to miss: in both stories the setting is the same (the city of Thebes), the main character is a member of the Theban royal family (Oedipus is the king of Thebes, Niobe is the queen of Thebes), the insult is directed against Apollo or against a member of Apollo's family (Latona is Apollo's mother); finally, in both stories the tragic aftermath involves the killing of the protagonist's children (Eteocles and Polynices, Niobe's children). Did Seneca pick up the idea of using Manto in his *Oedipus* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*? Manto's only other appearance in Seneca seems to suggest an Ovidian influence. In Seneca's *Agamemnon* Manto is also mentioned as the daughter of Tiresias who advocates honour and worship for Latona's children. The close association of the two texts is sustained further on a verbal level through Seneca's intentional reference to Manto as *sata Tiresia*⁴², which seems to be echoing the Ovidian text. Still, the Ovidian influence here should not be exaggerated in view of Seneca's equally possible use of mythographical works⁴³.

Dis Pater (Serv. Dan. on Verg. *Aen.* 10.198 *Alia a Tarchone Tyrrheni fratre conditam dicunt: Mantuam autem ideo nominatam, quod Etrusca lingua Mantum Ditem patrem appellant, cui cum ceteris urbibus et hanc consecravit*).

40 — Ov. *Met.* 6.157 *nam sata Tiresia venturi praescia Manto*. Cf. also Hyg. *Fab.* 128.2, where Manto appears (together with her father Tiresias) in a catalogue of augurs (*AUGURES. Am<p>ycus Elati filius, Mopsus Ampyci filius, Amphiarus Oeclei vel Apollinis filius, Tiresias Eu<eris> filius, Manto Tiresiae filia, Polyidus Coerani filius, Helenus Priami filius, Cassandra Priami filia, Calchas Thestoris filius, Theocl<y>menus [Thestoris filius, Telemus] Protei filius, Telemus Eurymi filius, Sibylla Samia, alii Cym<a>eam dixerunt*).

41 — Following Bömer (1976) on Ov. *Met.* 6.157 Ovid is the first extant ancient source to connect Manto with Niobe.

42 — Sen. *Ag.* 319-322 *quam fatorum praescia Manto, / sata Tiresia, / Latonigena monuit sacris / celebrare deos* — Ov. *Met.* 6.157 *nam sata Tiresia uenturi praescia Manto*. After Seneca Manto appears again only in Statius' *Thebaid*, where she assists Tiresias to perform a necromancy (4.443-645). This necromancy, during which Tiresias calls Manto the 'guide and strength of his old age' (4.536 *o nostrae regimen uiresque senectae*), culminates with Laius' ghost prophesying the mutual killing of Eteocles and Polynices. For Tiresias and Manto in Statius in comparison with their presence in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* see Keith (2002) 397-402.

43 — For mythographical echoes in the Ovidian narrative of Tiresias' story see Fabre-Serris (2011) 106-7.

One might argue that Seneca's use of Manto is a dramatic version of the well established mythological pattern, according to which a male hero (Oedipus in this case) must use the aid of an awesome female figure (i.e. Manto) in order to gain access to a formidable male seer (i.e. Tiresias) and his ultimate knowledge⁴⁴. This is, for example, the case with Circe and Tiresias, Eidotheia and Proteus in the *Odyssey* or Sibyl and Anchises in Vergil's *Aeneid* 6. However, in Seneca's *Oedipus* Manto can hardly be considered a fully developed character. Throughout her on-stage appearance she remains a mouthpiece of Tiresias and nothing more. She is addressed by no one than Tiresias; she replies to no other, but Tiresias. Manto is an intermediary between the on-going sacrifice and her blind father without any further interaction with any other person on stage. Father and daughter are interdependent and inseparable. So, what exactly are we supposed to make out of the 'Tiresias-Manto' pair? Why Manto and not a nameless (and theatrically voiceless) boy-guide? Is there anything particularly important behind the on-stage appearance of Tiresias' daughter? It is the premise of my argument that the strange, and to a certain extent, rather unexpected father-daughter pair provides Seneca with ample opportunity to explore the mythological background of the enigmatic role of Tiresias and offers new perspectives to his presence in the play, which I will explore in the following section.

The Tiresias-Manto pair in Seneca's Oedipus

It is true that the imagery of 'seeing' and 'knowing', upon which the Sophoclean Tiresias plays extensively, is conspicuously absent from the Senecan play, especially on the level of language⁴⁵. The Senecan Tiresias does not contribute much to the clarification of the Delphic oracle; he resorts, instead, to necromancy (sciomancy, to be precise)⁴⁶ in an additional attempt to come closer to the revelation of the truth⁴⁷. Tiresias retrieves his mantic power during the deadly ritual, where the apparition of Laius' ghost leaves no room for doubt regarding the identity of his murderer. In the Senecan play the truth comes to light not in words, but rather in action. After the necromancy, the Senecan Tiresias reports to

44 — Carp (1979); *eadem* (1983) 280.

45 — Cf. Motto and Clark (1988) 148f.

46 — The proper term for the ritual in question is sciomancy (σκοιμαντεία) and not necromancy, since Tiresias only recalls the ghost of Laius from the dead without trying to bring the dead corpse back to life, as it is the case with necromancy (νεκρομαντεία). For more on the distinction see Capdeville (2000) 145 n. 41.

47 — Schiesaro (2003) 8-12 in a concise discussion of the necromancy scene rightly draws attention to Tiresias' association with the poet in view of the traditional intersection of the magic and prophetic power of poets and seers.

Oedipus what his Sophoclean counterpart only insinuated with unique mastery.

To move a step further, I am suggesting that the Senecan Oedipus has in front of his very eyes what his Sophoclean counterpart failed to grasp in Tiresias' ominous prophecy. Seneca puts his emphasis on action rather than on word and gives his Oedipus the unique privilege of a glimpse into his own future. The powerful image of a blind father, Tiresias, guided by his daughter, Manto, is essentially a realization, a dramatization of Oedipus' own fate. The father-daughter pair constitutes an on-stage, flesh-and-blood pre-figuration of Oedipus' future, which recalls on a dramatic level the all too familiar image of blind Oedipus guided by his daughter Antigone in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (or in Euripides' *Phoenissae*). Seneca promotes action over word and spectacle over speech⁴⁸. In this light, I contend that despite the absence of the 'blindness/vision' opposition on a verbal level, the 'darkness/light' dichotomy operates more vividly on a dramatic level through the physical presence of the father-daughter pair.

Bisexual Tiresias

There is an element in Tiresias' myth which in my view offers additional justification for Seneca's choice to bring Manto on stage as a complementary figure to Tiresias. This element is Tiresias' bisexuality. Following Brisson's (1976) exemplary study of the myth of Tiresias⁴⁹, there seems to have been three major strands in the mythological history of the blind seer. What is particularly important is that the two major versions of the myth, together with their numerous variations⁵⁰, associate Tiresias' mantic power with his change of sex. Tiresias' sexual change has given cause for a whole series of critical interpretations ranging from a critique of the male – prejudiced Athenian perception of wedding to the shamanic origin of Tiresias' bisexuality⁵¹, or the more plausible suggestion of the interconnection between sexual change and poetic capacity⁵². Yet, despite the methodological variety, there seems to be a common understanding that 'the notion of bisexuality is critical to the identity of

48 — Roisman (2003) 15 draws attention to the spectacular quality of the scene: 'The three scenes in which Tiresias figures, albeit rather differently in each, are all spectacle, in the sense of extravagant and fantastic displays'.

49 — Brisson (1976). Cf. also Brisson (1997) 103-27.

50 — A total of seventeen variations. For more see Brisson (1976) 12-28.

51 — For possible shamanic traits in Tiresias' bisexuality see Garcia Gual (1975) 119-120; Ugolini (1995) 62-63.

52 — Ugolini (1995) 59-65 offers an informative, yet concise, critical assessment of this literature.

Tiresias'⁵³, since the duality of his sexual nature reveals and reinforces 'the transcendence [...] between mortal and higher planes'⁵⁴. Tiresias intervenes between gods and mortals through his art of augury, while at the same time finding himself caught at the crossfire of a multitude of dichotomies, such as male/female, blind/sighted, outer shape/inner nature, stability/flux. And since prophetic knowledge stands on the verge between 'here' and 'there', between the human and the divine, we might argue as well that the seer's bisexuality becomes an emblem, or better, constitutes a metaphor for Tiresias' prophetic transcendence.

The first version of Tiresias' myth comprises two different episodes, namely his encounter with the mating snakes, and his role as *arbiter iudicii* in the feud between Jupiter and Juno on sexual pleasure⁵⁵. The earliest reference to this version dates back to Ps.-Hesiod's *Melampodia*, as we read in Ps.-Apollodorus⁵⁶. Two variations of this mythological strand are particularly relevant to my discussion: the first comes from the paradoxographer Phlegon of Tralles (a freedman of the emperor Hadrian)⁵⁷; the second comes from Ovid's third book of his *Metamorphoses* (lines 316-338), where the poet concludes the narrative of the miraculous birth of Bacchus with a compressed aetiology of Tiresias' blindness and his prophetic power⁵⁸. In both accounts, the outline of the story has Tiresias wandering in the woods of Mount Cyllene (or Cithaeron in some versions)⁵⁹, where he encountered a pair of mating snakes. He either hit or killed the snakes, which caused him the double change of his sex into woman and back to man again. It was because of this bisexual experience that Tiresias was drawn into the feud between Juno and Jupiter on the question of who has more pleasure in sex. When Tiresias answered that women enjoy sex nine times more than men, angry Juno struck him blind

53 — Carp (1983) 275.

54 — Carp (1983) 278.

55 — For sources and detailed analyses of this version and its thirteen variations see Brisson (1976) 12-21 and 29-77.

56 — Ps.-Apollod. 3.6.7. Cf. also [Hes.] *Melamp.* fr. 275 Merkelbach-West; Σ. Hom. *Od.* 10.494; Σ. Lyc. *Alex.* 682; Tz. on Lyc. *Alex.* 682). Ugolini (1995) 39-56 offers a full record of all later versions of the Hesiodic account, accompanied by a useful discussion of similarities and deviations among them.

57 — Phlegon of Tralles, *Περὶ θαυμασίων* (*Mirabilia*) IV (= Keller O. (1877). *Rerum naturalium scriptores Graeci minores*, vol. 1, pp. 73-4, *Fragmenta Hesiodica* 275 (p. 136) Merkelbach-West; *FGrHist* 257 F 36, VI, Dicaearchus fr. 37 Wehrli; Kle(it)archus (*FGrHist* 137 F 37); Callimachus (fr. 576 Pf.).

58 — For the importance of Tiresias' bisexuality in the stories of Echo and Narcissus in Book 3 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's use of the Sophoclean *Oedipus Tyrannus* for that reason see Janan (2009) 156-184.

59 — Most versions have mount Cyllene as the place of the encounter. On the contrary, Ugolini (1995) 51 based on Tiresias' Theban descent argues for the appropriateness of mount Cithaeron, which also features in some versions. For mount Cithaeron offering a link between Tiresias and Oedipus see my discussion below.

and Jupiter offered him the gift of prophecy in recompense. In this strand of the myth it becomes clear that the centrality of Tiresias' sexual change ultimately makes his bisexuality 'generically related to the attainment of seerhood'⁶⁰.

The second version of Tiresias' myth was told by Pherecydes, a fifth century BC Greek historian⁶¹. A particularly famous descendant of this version comes from Callimachus' *Hymn to Pallas*, also known as *The Bath of Pallas* (lines 75-132)⁶². In the poem Tiresias, the son of nymph Chariclo, Athena's protégée, is blinded by the goddess for seeing her naked in her bath (lines 75-82). Athena ultimately succumbs to Chariclo's fervent supplication and in an attempt to compensate for her heavy punishment offers Tiresias prophetic power, longevity and the privilege to maintain his mind even after death (lines 121-30). This version saves no room for Tiresias' sexual transformation⁶³. Yet, in this story Tiresias also loses physical sight as a punishment and receives prophetic power in recompense⁶⁴. Furthermore, he is granted the privilege to maintain his wisdom *post mortem*. This last element seems to echo Tiresias' Homeric portrayal, in *Odyssey* book 10, where Circe is instructing Odysseus in how to descend to the Underworld in order to consult Tiresias about the continuation of his trip back home⁶⁵. Circe refers to Tiresias as a blind

60 — Carp (1983) 280. Both Carp (1983) and Liveley (2003) offer two exceptional gender-based readings of Ovid's treatment of Tiresias' bisexuality in the *Metamorphoses*. Following Gildenhard and Zissos (2000) 131-133 Ovid's insertion of Tiresias in the so-called 'Theban section' of his *Metamorphoses* aims at signaling a whole series of thematic connections between his story of Narcissus and the Sophoclean *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

61 — Ps.-Apollod. 3.6.7 (= Pherecydes *FGrHist* 3 F 92a, pp. 85-6) ἄλλοι μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ὑπὸ θεῶν φασὶ τυφλωθῆναι, ὅτι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἃ κρύπτειν ἤθελον ἐμήνυε, Φερεκύδης δὲ ὑπὸ Ἀθηνᾶς αὐτὸν τυφλωθῆναι. οὖσαν γὰρ τὴν Χαρικλῶ προσφιλῇ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ ... γυμνὴν ἐπὶ πάντα ἰδεῖν, τὴν δὲ ταῖς χερσὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ καταλαβομένην πηρὸν ποιῆσαι, Χαρικλοῦς δὲ δεομένης ἀποκαταστήσαι πάλιν τὰς ὁράσεις, μὴ δυναμένην τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, τὰς ἀκοὰς διακαθάρσασαν πᾶσαν ὀρνίθων φωνὴν ποιῆσαι συνέειναι, καὶ σκῆπτρον αὐτῷ δωρήσασθαι κράνειον, ὃ φέρων ὁμοίως τοῖς βλέπουσιν ἐβάδιζεν.

62 — For Callimachus' innovative treatment of the story see McKay (1960) 36-47 and Ugolini (1995) 71-74. After Callimachus two short references to this story survive: Prop. 4.9.57-58 and Non. *Dion.* 5.337-345.

63 — Loraux (1989) 253-71 offers a learned discussion on the reciprocity of mortal and divine vision in the Callimachean text with special emphasis on the ambiguity and/or impossibility of Athena's nudity. Loraux is rather reluctant to adopt Brisson's (1976) 34 suggestion that Athena's virile body helps to introduce the theme of bisexuality, which is otherwise silenced in this version of the myth (pp. 259-61).

64 — For the widespread motif of 'blindness as punishment' in Greek myth see the informative discussion by Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) 57-93.

65 — Hom. *Od.* 10.487-95. For a detailed discussion of Tiresias' presence in the *Nekyia* see Ugolini (1995) 88-91. The Homeric version of Tiresias is also present in Greek tragedy, so far as we can tell from the surviving fragments of Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* (*TrGF* 273-278) and Sophocles' *Odysseus akantrophex* (*TrGF* 453-461a) (see Ugolini (1995) 211-213). Horace in his *Satires* 2.5 also offers a playful parody of this Homeric version of Tiresias.

seer, who retains his spirit and mind, even in the Underworld, as a gift granted to him by Persephone.

The third version of Tiresias' myth comes from a prose summary in the Homeric commentary of Eustathius, the twelfth-century AD commentator of Homer and bishop of Thessalonica⁶⁶. In his comment on Homer's *Odyssey* 10.494 Eustathius mentions a certain Sostratus, possibly of Hellenistic age, and his elegiac poem entitled *Tiresias* (*Suppl. Hell.* 733)⁶⁷. What is remarkable about this version – and this is something that until very recently has gone overlooked – is the overt emphasis placed on Tiresias' bisexual nature. The fact that Tiresias is born as a girl and not as a boy constitutes a striking mythological diversion. The seer's sexual ambiguity is further enhanced by the accumulation of six consecutive sex-changes⁶⁸, which culminate in his final transformation into an almost sex-less creature. Eustathius in his note remarks among the poets who treated Tiresias' bisexuality also the Hellenistic poet Lycophron⁶⁹. Unfortunately, the dearth of adequate evidence from Hellenistic literature is rather disheartening and does not allow for any definite conclusions⁷⁰. The above evidence combined with the particular taste of Hellenistic literature for metamorphosis⁷¹ puts Tiresias in all probability high on the list of famous transexual mythological figures. Hence, his bisexuality must have become a standard feature of his mythological pedigree. It is exactly this side of Tiresias that I now want to explore further in view of his appearance in the Senecan play.

It is my contention that the somewhat strange pairing of Tiresias-Manto not only prefigures Oedipus' future, but more importantly offers a bold, dramatic incarnation of Tiresias' bisexual nature. During the on-stage sacrifice, father and daughter are interdependent and inseparable. Manto interacts with nobody else but her father and vice-versa. Her words depend solely on her father's words to the extent that her very presence becomes essentially an extension of her father's presence. In this light, I am arguing that the Tiresias, the sexually ambiguous seer

66 — Eust. on Hom. *Od.* 10.494 (p. 1665.48ff.), whose source is probably Ptolemy Chennus, an author writing in the first and early second century AD. Cf. also *SH* 733; *FGrHist* 23 F 7, p. 188.

67 — O'Hara (1996) has argued for a Catullan-era date of the poem. Cameron (2004) 150-2, on the other hand, considers the reference to Sostratus' elegy a forgery by Ptolemy Chennus.

68 — Ptolemy Hephaestion 183 (éd. Westermann) mentions seven sex-changes of Tiresias.

69 — Cf. Lyc. *Alexandra* 681-7 καὶ νεκρόμαντιν πέμπλον διζήσεται/ἀνδρῶν γυναικῶν εἰδῶτα ξυνουσίας./ψυχαῖσι θερμὸν αἷμα προσράνας βόθρῳ./καὶ φασγάνου πρόβλημα, νεπτέροις φόβον./πήλας ἀκούσει κείθι πεμφίδων ὅπα/λεπτὴν ἄμανρᾶς μάστακος προσφθέγμασιν.

70 — We could also add a fragment from the work of the Hellenistic poet Euphorion (fr. 96 Powell (= fr. 100 van Groningen)), which most probably refers to Tiresias. In this surviving fragment, however, there is no hint to Tiresias' bisexual nature.

71 — For Hellenistic and Roman interest in metamorphosis see O'Hara (1996) 179 n. 6 with bibliography ad loc.

of prior literature now becomes a person of dual existence. On Senecan stage Tiresias' bisexual nature translates into a dual presence, as he appears simultaneously both in the form of a man and a girl. The duality of his inner self reflects on the duality of his physical appearance. Tiresias' female-half (i.e. Manto) describes to his male-half (i.e. old seer) what he cannot see, hindered by his blindness. In this ingenious way Seneca manages to dramatically emphasize and comment upon Tiresias' bisexuality as a symbol of his transcendence of a whole set of dualities, such as male/female, blindness/vision, knowledge/ignorance, stability/change.

It is perhaps not fortuitous that throughout the *extispicium* scene there is a dense repetition of the number two. Manto reports how the divinator fire splits in two flames (321-2 *sed ecce pugnax ignis in partes duas/ discedit*), Tiresias orders two sacrificial victims (a heifer and a bull), the bull needs to be struck twice (342 ... *at taurus duos/perpessus ictus*) and finally two heads protrude ominously from the diseased entrails (360 *en capita paribus bina consurgunt toris*). This binary imagery is obviously intended as allusion to the imminent fratricide of Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. However, I am inclined to read Manto's persistence in number as a subtle metadramatic comment on Tiresias' sexual and physical duality, which is visually incarnated on stage through the simultaneous presence of the old seer and the young girl.

Oedipus as Tiresias (or Tiresias as Oedipus)

In his *Oedipus* Seneca tries to establish a strong and close association between Tiresias and Oedipus by offering a number of (more or less obvious) connections. Before anything else, the stories of Tiresias and Oedipus share the same three-stage mythological pattern involving: a) prohibition, b) violation, and c) punishment⁷². Both Tiresias and Oedipus violate divine law and both get punished for their transgression. Moreover, there seems to be a certain sense of excessive vengeance and violence in their punishment. In Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas* young Tiresias loses his vision because he found himself in the wrong moment at the wrong place⁷³, just like Oedipus found himself in the wrong moment at the wrong place, the fatal crossroad, where he killed Laius, his father. Having said that, one cannot fail to consider that Oedipus' deadly attack against Laius, an aged traveler who was simply coming from the opposite direction, was as unnecessary and aggressive as was Tiresias' attack on the

72 — This three partite pattern can also be applied to the Hesiodic account of the myth, as well as to the Pherecydean and Callimachean versions. Cf. Ugolini (1995) 35-36, and 74 respectively.

73 — Call. *Lav. Pall.* 77-78 διψάσας δ' ἄφατόν τι ποτὶ ρόον ἤλυθε κράνας./σχέτιος· οὐκ ἐθέλων δ' εἶδε τὰ μὴ θεμιτά.

mating snakes⁷⁴. In both cases, the unnecessary violence exercised by Oedipus or Tiresias leads to a series of events, which ultimately result in their loss of vision through divine intervention. There is an interesting verbal link which further enhances the association. Ovid in his account of Tiresias' story refers to his blow of the huge snakes with his staff with the noun *ictus*⁷⁵, which is exactly the word used by Seneca, when Oedipus is contemplating killing himself with a sword⁷⁶. This could well be a case of verbal coincidence. However, *ictus* was a common Latin euphemism for the 'male sexual act'⁷⁷, which points to the common lore of both stories: the blindness of both Tiresias and Oedipus occurs as punishment for a sexual crime. For Oedipus it is patricide and incest; for Tiresias it is either the forbidden glimpse of a naked goddess (in the Callimachean version) or his flawed use of his bisexuality, which in turn was the outcome of his violent disruption of the coupling snakes (in the Ovidian version)⁷⁸.

The description of Oedipus' self-blinding supports the connection between Tiresias and Oedipus even more. In the Senecan play the messenger reports that Oedipus, after the revelation of his true identity, decides to blind himself, as he finds this punishment to be the most fitting for his crimes. Oedipus justifies his decision by claiming that his blindness will be a never-ending cycle of death and rebirth which will inflict on him perpetual punishment⁷⁹. His blindness becomes essentially a prolonged death. Moreover, in a powerful analeptic moment, reported by the messenger, Oedipus depicts himself as a blind man, a living dead, excluded both by the living and by the dead⁸⁰. The image of a blind Oedipus, and most precisely the detail of a living-dead wandering among the dead, recalls Tiresias' fate in the Underworld, as we have seen it earlier in the *Odyssey* and in the Callimachean *Bath of Pallas*. According to Circe, Tiresias is granted by Persephone the gift to retain his prophetic power even after death⁸¹. In Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas* Tiresias is offered the

74 — In some variants of the myth Tiresias not only attacks the mating snakes, but he even kills them (cf. Σ on Hom. *Od.* 10.494; Tzetzes on Lycophr. 683; Anton. Lib. *Metam.* 17.5).

75 — Ov. *Met.* 3.325 *corpora serpentum baculi violaverat ictu*.

76 — Sen. *Oed.* 935-8 *haec fatus aptat impiam capulo manum/ensemque ducit. 'itane? tam magnis breves/poenas sceleribus solvis atque uno omnia/pensabis ictu?'*

77 — So Adams (1982) 148. Further on the phallic significance of Tiresias' attack against the snakes with his staff see Liveley (2003) 160.

78 — For Ovid's correlation of women's excessive female pleasure in sex with the attack against the snakes as acts of violation see Fabre-Serris (2011) 106-7.

79 — Sen. *Oed.* 945-947 [...] *iterum vivere atque iterum mori/liceat, renasci semper ut totiens nova/supplicia pendas* [...].

80 — Sen. *Oed.* 949-951 *mors eligatur longa. quaeratur vialqua nec sepultis mixtus et vivis tamen/exemptus erres* [...].

81 — Hom. *Od.* 10.492-495 *ψυχῇ χρησομένουσ' Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο, μάντιος ἀλαοῦ, τοῦ τε φρένες ἐμπεδοί εἰσι· τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνεια/οἴῳ πεπνύσθαι. τοῖ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουν*. Also Tzetzes on Lycophr. 683.

same privilege this time by goddess Athena as a compensation for his blindness⁸². Blind Tiresias is essentially a living person among the dead, which is exactly the kind of punishment the Senecan Oedipus wishes for himself. I am tempted to detect behind Oedipus' wish for constant rebirth a (remote) echo of Tiresias' numerous transformational rebirths through sex-change narrated by Sostratus in his elegiac poem⁸³.

Another link between bisexual Tiresias and Oedipus derives from Oedipus' anguished invocation of mount Cithaeron at line 931⁸⁴. Only moments after the revelation of the horrible truth, Oedipus evokes mount Cithaeron and asks for punishment. Mount Cithaeron plays an emblematic role in Oedipus' life, since it defines the beginning and the end of his terrible crimes⁸⁵. In the Senecan play, Oedipus holds Cithaeron responsible even for his crimes (Sen. *Oed.* 930-1 *ipse tu scelerum capax, / sacer Cithaeron*), at least for a moment, since Oedipus soon comes round and puts the blame on himself alone (Sen. *Oed.* 936-941)⁸⁶. Oedipus' identity, his whole life and ultimately his catastrophe revolve around this mountain and are determined by it. After all, Cithaeron was the place, where Oedipus was exposed as a baby and where all his adventures began. But Cithaeron plays a crucial part in Tiresias' life too. Following Eustathius' comment on *Od.* 10.949 Cithaeron was the place, where Tiresias was transformed into a woman after attacking the mating snakes⁸⁷. Indeed, mount Cithaeron makes a much more appropriate place for a Theban seer than the Arcadian mount Cyllene⁸⁸. Antoninus Liberalis offers an interesting detail, which helps us draw a further close connection with

82 — Call. *Law. Pall.* 119-130, esp. 129-130 καὶ μόνος, εὔτε θάνῃ, πεπνυμένος ἐν νεκύεσσι/φοιτασεῖ, μεγάλῳ τίμιος Ἀγεσίλῃ.

83 — See n. 65 above.

84 — Sen. *Oed.* 930-3 [...] *ipse tu scelerum capax, / sacer Cithaeron, vel feras in me tuis / mitte silvis, mitte vel rabidos canes — / nunc redde Agaven* [...]. Seneca is echoing here Soph. *OT* 1391-93 ἰὼ Κιθαίων, τί μ' ἐδέχου; τί μ' οὐ λαβῶν/ἐκτεινας εὐθύς, ὥς ἐδειξα μήποτε/ἐμαυτὸν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔνθεν ἢ γεγώς; For Seneca's use of Cithaeron as extra-scenic space in the play see Michalopoulos (forthcoming).

85 — Pace Holford-Strevens (2000) 244-5 who finds in Seneca's invocation of Cithaeron 'no pathos, only rhodomontade that at best leaves the untroubled reader patting the author on his back for cleverness'.

86 — See Busch (2007) 254.

87 — Eustathius on Hom. *Od.* 10.949, p. 1665.44f. φέρεται δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ μυθικὸς λόγος, ὅτι δράκοντας ἐν Κιθαίωνι μινυμένους ἰδὼν καὶ τὴν θήλειαν ἀνελὼν μετέπεσεν εἰς γυναικα. εἶτα συγκατενεγκὼν μετὰ καιρὸν καὶ τὸν ἄρρενα τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν ἀπέλαβε. Also see Σ on Hom. *Od.* 10.494 and Tzetzes on Lycophr. 683. For Cithaeron as the place of Tiresias' transformation see Brisson (1976) 65 n. 79 and Schol. Ambros. on Hom. *Od.* 10.494. For a different view see Garcia Gual (1975) 120, who considers mount Cyllene as the original place of the encounter.

88 — So Ps.-Apollod. 3.6.7 (= [Hesiod] *Melampodia* fr. 275 Merkelbach-West); Phlegon of Tralles, *Περὶ θαυμασίων (Mirabilia)* IV (= Keller O. (1877). *Rerum naturalium scriptores Graeci minores*, vol. 1, pp. 73-4; *FGrHist* 257 F 36, VI; Dikaearchus fr. 37 Wehrli; Kle(it)archus *FGrHist* 137 F 37; Callimachus (fr. 576 Pf.), Hyg. 75; Lactantius Placidus, *Comm. in Statii Theb.* 2.95 Janke; Var. Myth. II 84, p. 104.

Oedipus. According to the mythographer, the place where Tiresias' sex-change occurred, was a three-road crossroad⁸⁹, which inevitably brings to mind the fatal crossroad where Oedipus killed his father⁹⁰.

Tiresias' bisexual nature also partakes in his association with Oedipus. In the choral song preceding the necromancy scene (Sen. *Oed.* 403-508) Tiresias incites the members of the Chorus to sing a celebratory paean to Bacchus⁹¹. Roisman has rightly remarked that 'in having Tiresias introduce the paean to Bacchus Seneca might have drawn on his role developed in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Tiresias as a wise priest acknowledged the divinity of the late-coming god Bacchus and welcomed him to the Theban religion'⁹². In any case it is totally legitimate for the Thebans to appeal for deliverance to their patron god; a god also closely associated with nature's vegetative processes. The opening invocation of the god (Sen. *Oed.* 403-411) is followed by a flashback to Bacchus' early life (Sen. *Oed.* 412-428)⁹³ with special reference to the androgynous, even female, appearance of the god⁹⁴. The mythological pattern of Juno's wrath and the consequent sexual ambiguity of Bacchus are almost identical with that of Tiresias and his own sexual change as a result of Juno's wrath. Perhaps it is not by chance that Juno's jealous response against the newly born Bacchus is briefly alluded to at the beginning of the Tiresias episode in Book 3 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Tiresias' story is told in connection with Bacchus' double birth⁹⁵. The emphasis on Bacchus' sexual ambiguity at the opening of the choral ode could be seen as an implicit allusion to Tiresias, especially since the choral ode is being sung on stage, while the necromancy (presided by Tiresias) is being performed off stage. On the face of it, the ambiguity of Bacchus, a telling sign of the inversion of nature, through the mediation of Tiresias' troubled identity seems also to reflect on the equally troubled status of Oedipus (husband/son)⁹⁶. The possibility of yet another Ovidian influence on Seneca's of bisexual

89 — Ant. Lib. *Met.* 17.5.1-4 Τειρεσίας δὲ γυνὴ μὲν ἐξ ἀνδρός, ὅτι τοὺς ἐν τῇ τριόδῳ μιν γυνόμενους ὄφεις ἐν τυγῶν ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐκ δὲ γυναικὸς αὐτὶς ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο διὰ τὸ δράκοντα ἱππολάκις πάνακτα...

90 — Sen. *Oed.* 277-8 *calcavit artis obsitum dumis iter, / trigemina qua se spargit in campos via*, 772-3 [...]. *Thebis procul/Phocaea trifidas regio qua scindit vias*. Cf also Soph. *OT* 715-6 καὶ τὸν μὲν, ὥσπερ γ' ἡ φάτις, ξένοι ποτὲ/ληστὰι φονεύουσ' ἐν τριπλαῖς ἀμαξίτοϊς.

91 — Boyle (2011) 208 draws attention to the metapoetic and metatragic function of the ode.

92 — Roisman (2003) 14. Fabre-Serris (2011) 110-2 has recently also argued for Ovid's combined use of the Euripidean *Bacchae* and the Sophoclean *Oedipus* in his portrayal of Pentheus in *Metamorphoses* 3.

93 — For Bacchus' unusual circumstances of birth cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.36 and 2.62; also Valerius Maximus 4.6.1

94 — Sen. *Oed.* 418-420 *qualis inatam metuens novercam/creveras falsos imitatus artus, / crine flauenti simulata virgo*.

95 — Cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.316-7.

96 — So Boyle (2011) 207.

Tiresias as a thematic unifier for Oedipal Thebes seems to be very likely, since Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* Book 3 also employed the adventures of Tiresias as an interpretative key for the whole of the Theban cycle, as Fabre-Serris has so efficiently shown⁹⁷.

Conclusion

The man, the woman, the blind, the sighted, the epic, the tragic are but a few of Tiresias' numerous transformations during his fascinating journey from Greek to Latin literature. Tiresias is an emblematic figure of divine wisdom and of sexual ambiguity. Despite the somewhat reserved, if not deprecatory, critical assessment of his version of Tiresias, Seneca proves to have exploited the colourful mythological and literary past of the blind seer to a maximum. In Seneca's *Oedipus* Tiresias is a far cry from being merely "a much reduced figure, without a 'character'"⁹⁸; more importantly he becomes an emblem of duality and of prophetic transcendence. Furthermore, in dramatic terms, Tiresias together with his daughter Manto offer a powerful incarnation of a multitude of oppositions (male/female, blind/sighted, stability/flux), which are generically inherent to the play.

I would like to finish my paper with a modern transformation of Tiresias, which seems to resound with numerous echoes of the seer's troubled intertextual past; most of all his sexual ambiguity and the prophetic gift of poetry. T. S. Eliot in the third part (*The Fire Sermon*) of *The Waste Land* (1922) borrows the figure of the old, bisexual, respected Tiresias to incarnate the very consciousness of his work and give voice to its essence⁹⁹:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour...

...

97 — Fabre-Serris (2011) *passim*, esp. 107 'ce court passage consacré à Tirésias est, à double titre, une clef pour l'ensemble du cycle thébain' and 'les aventures de Tirésias servent de clef interprétative pour l'ensemble du cycle thébain'.

98 — So Roisman (2003) 1.

99 — In a note to *The Fire Sermon* Eliot wrote: "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character", is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (quoted by Theodore Spencer in Eliot V. (éd.) (1971). *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, New York:1). For Eliot's use of bisexual Tiresias in *The Waste Land* as a symbolic embodiment of gender conflict and conflation see Comley (1979), Lee (2005), Di Rocco (2007) 313-344, Schein (2008-9) 92-4, Offutt (2009).

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest –
 I too awaited the expected guest. 230
 ...
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall 245
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.

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