This is the first monograph in English devoted to the most important of Seneca’s tragedies, *Thyestes*, which has had a notable influence on Western drama from Shakespeare to Antonin Artaud. *Thyestes* emerges as the master text of ‘Silver’ Latin poetry, and as an original reflection on the nature of theatre comparable to Euripides’ *Bacchae*. The book analyses the complex structure of the play, its main themes, the relationship between Seneca’s vibrant style and his obsession with dark issues of revenge and regression. Substantial discussion of other plays – especially *Trojan Women*, *Oedipus* and *Medea* – permits a comprehensive re-evaluation of Seneca’s poetics and its pivotal role in post-Virgilian literature. Topics explored include the relationship between Seneca’s plays and his theory of the emotions, the connection between poetic inspiration and the underworld, and Seneca’s treatment of time, which, in a perspective informed by psychoanalysis, is seen as a central preoccupation of Senecan tragedy.

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THE PASSIONS IN PLAY
Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama

ALESSANDRO SCHIESARO
per mia madre

e in memoria di mio padre
Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
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Citations from Seneca’s tragedies are from Zwierlein’s OCT edition (1986). Translations of some authors are taken, by kind permission, from the editions listed in the Note on translations. Other translations are my own.

Abbreviations of classical works correspond to those used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and, when not available there, in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. 
Note on translations

The following published translations have been used in this work:

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