

BECOMING A DETECTIVE: READING WITH SENECA

OCTOBER 24, 2025

LOCATION:

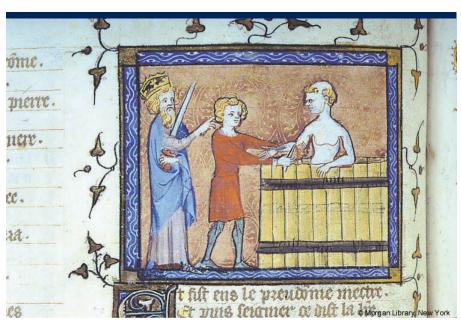
Modern Language Bldg. Room 413

TIME:

12:30 pm



Second Street Garage



This paper investigates two works of Seneca as well as a moment of Senecan reception, the translation of his *Oedipus* by Ted Hughes. As a way to analyze these works together, I posit that we can fruitfully think about Seneca's corpus with the mindset of a detective scanning for clues in order to understand the hidden truth of a matter. While this may mirror the methodology of close reading in many respects, Seneca seems to me to encourage such a hermeneutic more than other writers of this period. From his *Natural Questions*, a treatise dealing with Stoic physics and the natural world, to his *Oedipus*, a tragedy that diverges dramatically from Sophocles' original, Seneca asks his reader to delve deeper into his texts to uncover the truth. I will conclude with a moment in which my own detective work in the Ted Hughes archive revealed something mysterious and important for our understanding of Hughes' poetics.



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Chris Trinacty (MA 2000) is the author of Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry (Oxford University Press, 2014), two commentaries to Seneca's Natural Questions, and numerous articles on authors such as Seneca, Horace, and Pliny. He is Professor of Classics at Oberlin College and is currently working on books about Nero, Seneca, and Horace.