

SENECA, *AGAMEMNON* 425–30

ad militares remus aptatur manus
 omnisque nimium longa properanti mora est.
 signum recursus regia ut fulsit rate
 et clara lentum remigem monuit tuba,
 aurata primas prora designat uias
 aperitque cursus mille quos puppes secent.

All is set for the Greeks' departure from Troy. As I understand the scene, the rowers have their oars strapped to their hands and are eager to start. A warning flare now shines out from the *regia ratis* and the actual signal to start is given by a trumpet-blast, either rhetorically viewed as addressed to the thousand ships from the flagship or sounded on each at sight of the flare (the point need not be too closely examined). The flagship then moves off and is followed by the fleet. Cf. the related passage, *Tro.* 1044–6 'cum tuba iussi dare uela nautae | et simul uentis properante remo | prenderint altum'.

428 *laetum* was conjectured by Leo in view of the difficulty of reconciling *lentum* (codd.), which would normally mean 'listless' or 'sluggish', and *properanti* in 426 (cf. *properantes* 422); note too 437 ff. 'properat iuuentus omnis adductos simul | lentare remos...' and the expression *properante remo* in *Tro.* 1045 (above). The simple correction *laetum* would appear both to remove the difficulty and to be entirely appropriate.¹ Yet, though accepted by Peiper–Richter and Herrmann, *laetum* has come in for resistance: it is rejected by Moricca, Viansino, Giardina, and Tarrant.² In defence of *lentum* Viansino compares *Medea* 623 *portibus lentis*, in which I find no relevance; F. Giancotti³ interprets that the men in their impatience to be off appear *lenti* to themselves; Tarrant renders 'slow to respond', explaining 'the rowing of the men is uncoordinated after ten years' lack of practice', but in 428 the rowing has not yet started, and note the harmony indicated in 437–9. *lentum* is alien to Seneca's spirited picture and seems to me indefensible; *laetum*, on the other hand, is both attractive in itself and supported by significant evidence, which I have not seen adduced.

The return voyage of the Greeks from Troy was a theme which inspired various accounts,⁴ and in descriptions of, or references to, this and other cognate episodes it was natural that allusion should be made to the joy of the men on their departure (in Hom. *Od.* 3. 130 ff. the latter is marred by dissension). So e.g. in Eur. *Tro.* 1263 f. ὥς ἂν κατασκάψαντες Ἰλίου πόλιν | στελλώμεθ' οἴκαδ' ἄσμενοι Τροίας ἄπο (cf. 19 ff.). Pacuvius, *TRF* 409 R, writes of the '[Achiui] profectio[n]e [ab Ilīo] laeti'. The adjective *laetus* is used in this context by Seneca himself in *Tro.* 203 'cum *laeta* pelago uela

¹ *laetum* spelt *letum* could readily become *lentum*. For the confusion of *laetus* and *lentus* in manuscripts, cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 7. 48, Ov. *Am.* 3. 6. 60, *A.A.* 3. 452, *Her.* 19. 81, Liv. 22. 14. 7, Sen. *Tro.* 897, etc. Above, *lentare remos* in 438 (cf. *Aen.* 3. 384) may have had its influence (cf. Catull. 64. 183 *lentos* – *remos*, Ov. *Trist.* 4. 1. 9, Sen. *Phaedr.* 306).

² I refer to editions of Seneca's tragedies by R. Peiper and G. Richter (Teubner, 1902), L. Herrmann (Budé, 1924–6), H. Moricca (Paravia, 1917–23), G. Viansino (Paravia, 1965), G. C. Giardina (Bologna, 1966), and to R. J. Tarrant's edition, with commentary, of the *Agamemnon* (Cambridge, 1976).

³ *RFIC* n.s. 30 (1952), 159 f.

⁴ See Tarrant pp. 19–23.

rediturus dares [Agamemnon]'. Quintus of Smyrna, again, in his long account of the episode, does not let us forget the exultation and joy of the departing Greeks: e.g. 14. 92 τῶν παρ νήεσσι μέγ' ἔνδοθι γηθομένων κῆρ, 403 ff. ἄλληκτον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ καγχαλῶντες [85, 232, 329]... ἰστία νηυσὶ μεμαότες ἐντύνοντο | ἔσσυμένως, etc. On comparable lines is *Od.* 5. 269 ff., where δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς departs from Calypso's island γηθόσυνος δ' οὐρῳ πέτασ' ἰστία; a wrathful Poseidon raises a storm that wrecks him. Likewise, at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, the Trojans leaving Sicily (1. 35) 'uela dabant laeti et spumas salis aere ruebant', only to be observed by Juno, who brings about a storm and shipwreck. Nor, in a wider context, where he compares himself with Odysseus, does Ovid fail us: *Trist.* 1. 5. 65 f. 'ille suam laetus patriam uictorque petebat: | a patria fugi uictus et exul ego', 78 'illum Neptuni, me Iouis ira premit'. In the descriptions the stress on the initial joy (in Sen. *Ag.* note also 435 ff. 'iuuat uidere nuda Troiae litora, | iuuat...') serves to heighten the contrast and present an omen of the wrath to come. As in *Tro.* 203 *laeta uela*, so above we find in *laetum remigem* a characteristic employment of a traditional motif.

Aberystwyth

A. HUDSON-WILLIAMS