

NOTES ON SOME PASSAGES IN SENECA'S TRAGEDIES AND THE *OCTAVIA**

The text quoted above each note is that of the edition of Seneca's tragedies by Otto Zwierlein (Zw.), OCT 1986; numerous passages are discussed in his *Kritischer Kommentar zu den Tragödien Senecas* (K.K.), Stuttgart, 1986; various textual suggestions were made in a correspondence with Zw. by B. Axelson (Ax.). Other works on Seneca's tragedies, referred to by the scholar's name only, are: (i) *Text and translation*: F. J. Miller, Loeb, 1917; L. Herrmann, Budé, 1924–6. (ii) *Text with commentary*: R. J. Tarrant, *Agamemnon* (Cambridge, 1976), and *Thyestes* (Atlanta, 1985); J. G. Fitch, *Hercules Furens* (Ithaca, 1987). (iii) *Text with commentary and translation*: Elaine Fantham, *Troades* (Princeton, 1982); A. J. Boyle, *Phaedra* (Liverpool, 1987).

H.F. 19–21

una me dira ac fera

Thebana tellus matribus sparsa impiis
quotiens nouercam fecit!

Juno, filled with fury at Jupiter's numerous infidelities, now rages against Thebes and its womenfolk, in particular Alcmene, mother of Hercules. In 20, where E has *nuribus*, leaving the line unmetrical (A omits the passage), I see no case for Axelson's drastic substitution of *matribus* for *nuribus*. It is held that Juno is generalizing about the wickedness of Thebes, that *sparsa* means *s. cruore* [strained Latin], and that Juno is speaking here of the 'von ruchlosen Müttern...blutbespritzten Theben' (cf. 758 *impiae Cadmeides*): see K.K. 15f. The keynote of the whole passage, however, lies in the words *me...quotiens nouercam fecit* (not *dira ac fera T. t.*): it is the women's seductive, not bloodthirsty, qualities that concern Juno.¹ The simple solution is J. G. Fitch's *aspersa* for *sparsa*,² which satisfies both sense and metre;³ the exaggerated language, 'bespattered with unhallowed brides', is worthy of both Juno and Seneca. For the use of *aspergo* Fitch compares e.g. Mela 1.91 'is [mons]...paruis urbibus aspersus est'; cf. too Ov. *Met.* 14.408 'sparsa...sanguineis maduerunt pabula guttis', 15.359f. 'sparsae...membra uenenis...Scythides'. I do not understand how later (in his edition, *Addenda* p. 479) he finds Axelson's *matribus* 'highly persuasive'.

H.F. 139f.

pastor gelida cana pruina
grege dimisso pabula carpit.

'Labor exoritur durus' (337) at the break of day. I have seen no convincing explanation of the words *pabula carpit*. *TLL s. carpo* 492.56f. explains 'i. *carpere iubet*' (cf. 'le pâtre fait tondre, par le troupeau..., les pâturages', Herrmann),⁴ vainly comparing Virg. *G.* 3.324f. 'frigida rura carpamus' (and noting Serv. ad loc. 'carpere cogamus animalia'); here the shepherd, it has been thought by some, is being identified with his flock, i.e. 'let us graze', but the straightforward sense is rather 'let

* I am grateful to the Editors for their help and to the *CQ* referee for criticisms and comments in the preparation of this article.

¹ Cf. her general invective against Jupiter's mistresses: 4f. 'locum...caelo pulsa paelicibus dedi;...paelices caelum tenent.'

² *TAPhA* 111 (1981), 65f., and edition ad loc.

³ A close metrical parallel is e.g. 111 'uersata primam, facere si quicquam apparo'.

⁴ Similarly Farnaby: 'dimittit gregem qui carpat pabula'.

¹¹ But *H.F.* 948 has support for the reading *rutilam* E^{pc} (*m ex t*), Zw. (*K.K.* 64), against *rutilat* A, Fitch, from *H.O.* 70 *ferudam*; just as *H.O.* 70 has support for Ascensius' correction *collo* for *c(a)elo* ω from *H.F.* 949 *ceruice*.

caput [Cadmus iam serpens]' and *H.O.* 1254f. 'serpens squalidum crista caput / uibrans', etc.

Tro. 766–70

O dulce pignus, o decus lapsae domus
summumque Troiae funus, o Danaum timor,
genetricis o spes uana, cui demens ego
laudes parentis bellicas, annos aui
medios precabar, uota destituit deus.

Andromache addresses the doomed Astyanax. In 766f. is not *summum* ('last') to be taken ἀπὸ κοινοῦ with both *decus* and *funus*? So *Thy.* 1081 'tectā et immeritas domos'. Cf. *Hor. Epist.* 1.17.57 'nulla fides damnis uerisque doloribus adsit', etc.¹²

770 *medios* has been suspected and has inspired such unacceptable conjectures as *demens* (Richter; cf. 768), *toties* (Leo), *melius* (Garrod). Andromache, it would seem, used to pray that the child should have the warlike renown of Hector and the 'middle years' of Priam. To many readers the latter expression, respectable enough in its latinity, appears improbably prosaic and flat:¹³ had not Andromache something more vital to pray for in her son, some quality to match the *laudes bellicae* of his father? The text is, however, defended by Farnaby: 'Priami aetatem mediam, id est, florentem opibus, regno, liberis; non optarem eius senectutem: quae miseriarum exemplum', which won the enthusiastic eulogies of Housman¹⁴ and the acceptance of Zw. (*K.K.* 99). Housman's championship of Farnaby and contempt of those unable to grasp the subtlety of *annos aui medios* are pungently expressed. One essential feature, however, is absent, the citation of some comparable turn found elsewhere in our poet (Farnaby is not indeed invariably right: cf. footnote 4). In its absence I would make one modest suggestion, that the reading *medios* has lost one letter and that Seneca wrote *annos aui medi<c>os*,¹⁵ 'the healing years' of Priam, denoting the restoration of Troy after its destruction by Hercules and the city's resultant prosperity.¹⁶ Cf. 470ff. where the mother thus addresses her son: 'eritne tempus illud ac felix dies / quo Troici defensor et uindex soli / recidiua ponas Pergama et sparsos fuga / ciues reducas, nomen et patriae suum / Phrygibusque reddas?'; so again (739f.) she cries out in despair 'has, has ruinas urbis in cinerem datae / hic excitabit? hae manus Troiam erigent?'. For the use of *medicus* cf. *Stat. Theb.* 2.11 'medica uirga [Mercuri]', *Val. Fl.* 4.87 'medicabile carmen [Orpheji]', *Cic. Sest.* 51 'periculorum ... medicina', *id. Tusc.* 3.54 'calamitatis praesentis ... medicina', *Sil.* 15.7 'quasso medicamina ... imperio'.

Tro. 783–5

o morte dira tristius leti genus!
flebilis aliquid Hectoris magni nece
muri uidebunt.

The soundness of the text has been amply demonstrated,¹⁷ but it should be noted that we have here a variation from the other passages cited, viz. the addition to *morte* of

¹² For examples of this common type see Housman, *CQ* 10 (1916), 150.

¹³ Fantham's rendering 'the good years of your grandfather's prime' is not an equivalent of *annos aui medios*.

¹⁴ *CQ* 17 (1923), 163f. (= Housman, *Classical Papers*, ed. Diggle and Goodyear [1972], p. 1074): '*medios* ... at once smart and subtle ...', etc.

¹⁵ For the error cf. 768 *opes* A for *o spes* E, 782 *barbara* E f. *barbarica* A, 1013 *et magnus* A f. *est malignus* E, etc.; for *medicus* and *medius* confused see *TLL* s. *medicus* 547.14f.

¹⁶ In 718ff. we are told that, after the destruction of Troy and the killing of Laomedon, Hercules showed mercy to the boy Priam and directed him to occupy his father's throne. We know little of Priam's record, but it was believed that under his kingship Troy was rebuilt and its rule greatly enlarged (see Roscher's mythol. lexicon s. *Priamos* 2941ff., P.–W. s. *Priamos* 1848ff.).

¹⁷ See G. Stegen, *Latomus* 32 (1973), 185f., Zw. *K.K.* 100.

the adjective *dira*. In the other cases *morte* (or equivalent) has no adjective and denotes death in general terms.¹⁸ The meaning is not 'O form of death more grim than dreadful death itself' (Fantham), for *mors* is not necessarily *dira*; the adjective limits the application of *morte* to the particular case, and the sense must be that the form of the boy's death is one whose sadness exceeds its direness, = *o leti (mortis) genus tristius quam dirius*. Being flung from the walls is indeed a dire death, but in view of the boy's youthfulness and future promise¹⁹ the direness of the form taken by his death is exceeded by its sadness, and this is further emphasized in the next few words: Hector's death was dire, but less pitiful than that of the boy.

Tro. 1088–92 per spatia late plena sublimi gradu
 incedit Ithacus paruulum dextra trahens
 Priami nepotem, nec gradu segni puer
 ad alta pergit moenia. ut summa stetit
 pro turre, uultus huc et huc acres tulit.

1088 *sublimi gradu* is not adequately represented by 'la démarche fière' (Herrmann) or 'with proud steps' (Fantham). Though grammatically linked with *gradu*, the epithet *sublimi* cannot fail to suggest the 'towering' height of Ulysses in contrast to the 'tiny' (*paruulum*) Astyanax.²⁰ But *sublimi* must suggest too the former's exalted bearing and nobility. Miller has 'with stately step'; perhaps 'with lofty stride', *incedit* emphasizing its stateliness.²¹

1091f. The words *ut summa stetit pro turre* are liable to misinterpretation: cf. 'Dès qu'il fut arrivé devant le haut de la tour' (Herrmann), 'As he stood before the height of the tower' (Fantham), apparently as though *stetit ante turrem*, i.e. facing the tower,²² but it is clear from 1092 that the pair have ascended the tower. Miller's 'when he stood on the tower's summit' allows for this but takes no account of *pro*. The latter must here mean 'in a forward or prominent position on' (cf. *OLD* s. *pro* 1 b), and we must add to Miller's rendering the words 'close to its edge'; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 9.575 'summis stantem pro turribus Idan'.²³ Cf. the expression *pro tribunali* = 'on the front part of the t.'.

Phaed. 385f. reclinis ipsa sedis auratae toro
 solitos amictus mente non sana abnuat.

385 sc. *Phaedra*. The meaning of *r. sedis auratae toro* is liable to misunderstanding: 'lying on a golden couch' Miller, as though merely *aurato toro*; '*sedis*: lit de repos' P. Grimal,²⁴ offering no parallel; 'etendue sur son lit dans ce lieu éclatant d'or' Herrmann.²⁵ Here *sedis* can only mean 'chair' or 'throne', and *toro*, accordingly, cannot mean 'bed' or 'couch', but has the less usual sense of 'cushion' or 'cushioning'. Cf. Virg. *A.* 5.388 'uiridante *toro consederat* herbae', Val. Fl. 3.463f. '[nautae] insternunt tabulata [benches] toris, oriturque...remorum sonus',²⁶ Stat.

¹⁸ E.g. *H.F.* 706 'ipsaque morte peior est mortis locus', *Oed.* 180f. 'o dira noui facies leti / grauior leto', *Mart.* 11.91.5 'tristius est leto leti genus'.

¹⁹ Note the mother's preceding laments in 766ff.

²⁰ Cf. the succeeding comparison, 1093f. 'qualis ingentis ferae / paruus tenerque fetus...'.
²¹ Cf. *Oct.* 704–6 '*sublimis* inter ciuium laeta omina / *incessit* habitu atque ore laetitia

gerens / princeps superbo' (Nero).

²² For the distinction between *pro* and *ante* see Kühn.–Steg. i.513f. and 532, Hofm.–Sz. 223, 270.

²³ *turribus* poet. plur. as Ov. *M.* 13.415 'mittitur Astyanax illis de turribus' (see Bömer ad loc.).
²⁴ Seneca, *Phaedra*, edition with commentary (Paris, 1965).

²⁵ Boyle's translation 'lying on the couch of her golden throne' is unclear.

²⁶ Langen ad loc. explains '*tabulata* hoc loco sedes lignae remigum nominantur...; haec t., ut mollius remiges sedeant, sternuntur toris, quae Graeci ὑπηρέσια dicunt' (ὑπηρέσιον, τό, 'cushion on a rower's bench', L.–S).

Silv. 1.2.54 'fulcra torosque deae [thalamo iacentis]...premit agmen Amorum' ('sie sitzen auf den Kissen' Vollmer ad loc.). The meaning of *r. sedis a. toro* must therefore be 'leaning back against the cushions or cushioning of a gilded chair' (*reclinis* does not imply a horizontal position: cf. *Sil.* 5.470, *Stat. S.* 1.2.237 'poste reclinis').

Phaed. 418-21 sic te lucidi uultus ferant
 et nube rupta cornibus puris eas,
 sic te regentem frena nocturni aetheris
 detrahare numquam Thessali cantus queant.

The nurse addresses Diana as the moon-goddess. **418** *te lucidi uultus ferant*: a striking variation of the simple *lucido uultu feraris*. The sense of **420** is not immediately obvious and Bentley even conjectured *nocturnis rotis*. Grimal, following K. Kunst,²⁷ takes *frena* as = *iugum*, 'attelage',²⁸ rendering 'l'attelage de l'éther, pendant la nuit'; and much to the same effect Miller and Herrmann.²⁹ This is unsatisfying: the language has a wider meaning. The word *frena* (-i) is sometimes used figuratively = 'control', like our 'reins', e.g. *Ov. P.* 4.12.24 'cum regerem tenera frena nouella manu', and with genitive id. ib. 2.9.33 'Caesar ut imperii moderetur frena precamur', *Juv.* 10.128 '[Demosthenem] pleni moderantem frena theatri', *Sil.* 3.226 'ausa sibi Libye rerum deposcere frenos', *Prudent. Praef.* 17 'frenos nobilium reximus urbium', etc. Thus *regentem frena nocturni aetheris* means 'exercising control over the night sky', the moon or Diana being the ruler of the sky at night; cf. 309 'obscuri dea clara mundi', 793 'dea noctium', *Hor. Saec.* 35 'siderum regina bicornis', *Stat. Theb.* 10.365 'arcanæ moderatrix Cynthia noctis'. Yet the words *te regentem frena nocturni aetheris* suggest a double sense: they do imply the picture of the moon guiding her chariot through the night sky,³⁰ but what they emphasize is her supreme authority over it as she does so. Boyle is incomplete with 'as you manage the heaven's night reins'. We might perhaps translate 'directing in your course the control of the night sky'. Cf. the ambiguity in *Oed.* 36 'fecimus caelum nocere', and see Miller's note ad loc.

Phaed. 520f. certior somnus premit
 securo duro membra laxantem toro.

laxantem Axelson, Zw., for *uersantem* E, *uersantur* A. The simple life, states Hippolytus, as opposed to wealth and ambition, ensures *certior somnus*. Why then E's *membra uersantem* (as previous editors), which can only mean 'tossing this way and that',³¹ the sure sign of sleeplessness?³² Axelson spotted the discrepancy and proposed *laxantem* or *soluentem* or *releuantem*: see Zw. (K.K. 196f.), who approves *laxantem*, with quotations relevant to the problem, to which may be added *Sen. Ep.* 56.7 'huc...uersatur atque illuc, somnum inter aegritudines leuem captans' (see *OLD uerso* 4 b). But Axelson's proposals have no manuscript support. Is not *uersantem* merely an error of transposition of letters for *seruantem*, 'as he keeps his body at peace'? *Seruo*, like our 'keep', is used both of persons and of things, and in some

²⁷ Seneca, *Phaedra*, edit. with comm. (Vienne, 1924).

²⁸ For *frena* used of a chariot and its team, cf. *Ag.* 296 'Phoebum...nocte subita frena reuocantem sua', etc.

²⁹ 'When thou drivest thy car through the nightly skies' Miller, 'lorsque tu diriges ton char nocturne dans les cieux' Herrmann.

³⁰ Cf. *Ov. Tr.* 1.3.28 'Lunaque nocturnos alta regebat equos', *Virg. A.* 10.216 'curru noctiuago Phoebe', etc.

³¹ Certainly not 'as he lays him down, care-free' Miller, or 'celui qui repose ses membres' Herrmann.

³² Boyle does not accept this, translating 'Surer sleep grips him/On his hard bed tossing his carefree limbs.'

cases persons may be regarded as unconscious as things: contrast *H.F.* 1090 'seruat longos unda tumultus' or *Phaed.* 1126 'seruat [homines] placidos obscura quies' with *Med.* 860f. '[*Medea furibunda*] nullum... seruat diu colorem'. Above, the man is fast asleep and his keeping his body at peace is an unconscious action.

Phaed. 1042f. opima ceruix arduos tollit toros
 naresque hiulcis haustibus patulae fremunt.

1042 These words describing the sea-bull may be misunderstood:³³ they are but an artificial variation of a commonplace reference to the necks, held high (*arduos*) and muscular, of powerful bulls or other beasts, i.e. 'the full neck'³⁴ rears aloft its muscular strength'. For the neck held high, cf. 1036 'caerulea taurus colla sublimis gerens', *Tro.* 539 '[taurus] ceruice... celsus et fronte arduus', *Ag.* 738 'colla sublimis [leo]';³⁵ and for the muscular neck, *Ov. M.* 7.429 'colla torosa boum', *Col.* 6.20 '[bono tauro] torosior ceruix', and of lions, *Catull.* 63.83.

1043 A variation of *Ov. M.* 15.513 'naribus et patulo partem maris euomit ore', where the beast remains in the sea and it is sea-water that is expelled from both nostrils and mouth; above, he lands (1032) and it is air that is noisily inhaled through the wide-open nostrils.

Phaed. 1098–1102 tandemque raptum truncus ambusta sude
 medium per inguen stipite ingesto tenet;
 [paulumque domino currus affixo stetit]
 haesere biuuges uulnere – et pariter moram
 dominumque rumpunt.

1098 *truncus ambusta sude*: *Zw* (*K.K.* 214) well explains that the tree-trunk's condition must be the result of lightning or a forest fire, hence a 'stake scorched all round', suggestive of the weapon used by early Romans, of which he gives illustrative examples.³⁶ As regards the type of ablative, it may be added, *ambusta sude* further defines the noun *truncus*, i.e. 'a trunk that is now a charred stake': cf. *H.F.* 665f. 'hiatque rupes alta et immenso specu/ingens uorago faucibus uastis patet' ('a huge chasm, a bottomless abyss' (Miller), *Thy.* 665 'nigra piger haeret palude [fons]', 1034 'epulatus... es impia natos dape', 1089 'trisolco flammeam telo facem' ('your flaming brand, the three-forked bolt'), *Val. Fl.* 2.357 'Pliada... nimbo mouerat astro/Iuppiter' ('the Pleiads' stormy constellation' Mozley, Loeb),³⁷ *Paul. Nol. Carm.* 19.365 'carnis apostolicae sacra pignora puluere paruo' ('in the form of a fragment of dust', *P. G. Walsh*).³⁸

1099 *stipite* is a more precise designation of the preceding *truncus*, i.e. the remains of the trunk, the stump; cf. *Ovid's* account, *Met.* 15.523–5 '[rota] stipitis occursu fracta... uiscera uiua trahi nervosque in stipe [stirpe v.l.] teneri... uideres'. *ingesto* is a conjecture of *Heinsius*,³⁹ followed by *Zw.* (see *K.K.* 214), for *eiecto* *A*, *iecto* *E*, *erecto*

³³ Cf. 'his brawny neck with great muscles bulges' Miller, 'sa nuque grasse fait saillir des muscles fermes' Herrmann, 'bulging muscles ripple on brawny neck' Boyle.

³⁴ Cf. *Suetonius's* description of the emperor *Claudius* (*Cl.* 30.1), 'prolixo nec exili corpore erat... opimis ceruicibus'.

³⁵ Cf. too *Virg. G.* 3.79 'illi [equo] ardua ceruix', *Hor. Sat.* 1.2.89; so of humans, *Phaed.* 830 'alto uertice attollens caput [Theseus]'.

³⁶ E.g. *Virg. A.* 7.523–5 'non iam certamine agresti/stipitibus duris agitur sudibus praeustis, / sed ferro ancipiti decernunt'. Note the different turn in *Iliad* 13.564, where part of a flung spear μέιν' ὥς τε σκάλος πυρίκαυστος ἐν σάκει 'Ἀντιλόχοιο: here the 'charred stake' is a pointed post that is driven into the ground.

³⁷ E. Courtney (Teubner, 1970) ad loc. compares 6.745 'atro nebulam diffundit amictu', 'a dark shroud of mist' Mozley.

³⁸ In his translation of *Paulinus's* poems (1975).

³⁹ Comparing *H.O.* 1449 *stipite ingesto*, which there means 'with a blow from my club'.

τ.⁴⁰ The reading *erecto*, in view of its closeness to the manuscript evidence and its stylistic interest, merits, and has lately received (see below), more consideration. The verb *erigo* means in the passive 'raise oneself' or 'rise', as in *H.O.* 317 'caelo tenus erecta... fama', *Ov. M.* 15.512 '[taurus ex undis] erectus in auras', *id. Ep.* 17 (18).84 'in summas erigor altus aquas'. Transl. '...held him fast, the stump having risen up through the middle of his groin'.⁴¹ This is indeed no ordinary language, yet a type characteristic of the Silver Age. Though the pointed stump is stationary, it is vividly represented as risen upwards instead of the body being forced downwards by the impact. For such an inversion cf. *Catull.* 62.52 '[uidua uitis] contingit summum radice flagellum', *Sen. Dial.* 5.2.6 '[barbari] gaudent feriri et instare ferro...et per suum uulnus exire', *Luc.* 1.212 '[sacuius leo] per ferrum tanti securus uulneris exit', 9.336 'terra ferit puppes' (see Housman on *Luc.* 9.925).

The passage is discussed by R. G. M. Nisbet in his contribution to *Homo Viator*,⁴² p. 247, and the reading *erecto* is adopted. He argues that 'it surely cannot be accidental in this of all plays that the injury is inflicted on the *inguen*, and one suspects a bizarre caricature of Priapus...: such is nature's revenge on chastity.' We may compare the language of Ovid (*M.* 15.523-5 quoted above) in his description, 'uiscera uiua trahi, neruos in stipe teneri'; but note *Sen. Dial.* 6.20.3 'alii [tortores] per obscena [= *inguen*] stipitem egerunt'.

1100 The verse's deletion by Axelson and Zw. (*K.K.* 215) as an intrusive amplification of 1101 *haesere biuges uulnere* surely ignores a typical feature of Roman poetry, viz. the deliberate repetition of a statement in different words. Here *paulum* belongs to both clauses, and we need a comma after *stetit*. The arrangement of words is virtually chiasmic: *uulnere* corresponds to *domino...affixo*, *biuges* to *currus*, and *haesere* to *stetit*. I see no case for deletion.⁴³

Phaed. 1262f. durate trepidae lugubri officio manus,
fletusque largos sistite, arentes genae.

Theseus addresses his hands and eyes (cf. *Ov. M.* 14.835 'siste tuos fletus'). Editors in general place a comma after *sistite*,⁴⁴ whereby the meaning can only be 'stop your copious tears, dry eyes' (cf. *trepidae manus*), which is nonsense.⁴⁵ Dryness can only be effected by the action of the verb *sistite* and the comma must be placed after *arentes*, which now becomes proleptic with *fletus*, i.e. 'and, my eyes, stop your copious tears so that they are dry'; cf. such cases as *Virg. Aen.* 9.537 '[flamma] postibus haesit adesis' ('so that they were consumed'). For the use of *arentes*, cf. *Rhet. Her.* 2.50 'nihil...lacrima citius arescit' (*Cic. Inuent.* 1.109), *Ov. M.* 9.658 'uenam [lacrimarum], quae numquam arescere posset', *Prop.* 1.19.23 'lacrimas siccare cadentis'.

Oedipus 293-5 quod tarda fatu est lingua, quod quaerit moras
haut te quidem, magnanime, mirari addeceat:
uisu carenti magna pars ueri patet.

295 *patet*, Axelson's substitution for *latet* (ω) adopted by Zw. (see *K.K.* 236),

⁴⁰ τ, a manuscript, now lost, used by N. Trevet in the early fourteenth century.

⁴¹ Not 'a tree...stays him with its stock driven right through the groin and holds him fast' Miller, nor 'holds him mid-groin on its upright stump' Boyle, both reading *erecto*.

⁴² Being *Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bristol, 1987).

⁴³ Cf. such structures as *Phaed.* 907f. 'redit ad auctores genus/stirpemque primam degener sanguis refert', where *refert* corresponds to *redit ad*, *degener sanguis* to *genus*, and *stirpem primam* to *auctores*, the scope of *sanguis* (and so *genus*) being particularised by *degener*.

⁴⁴ The early editors Delrio, Farnaby, and Gronovius, I note, have no comma.

⁴⁵ Yet cf. 'be dry, my cheeks, stay your flowing tears' Miller. With 'arrêtez vos abondantes larmes, ô mes yeux brûlants' Herrmann seems to have *ardentes* in mind.

contradicts the whole tenor of the narrative. Tiresias is no doubt referred to as highly knowledgeable though blind by other Latin writers (Ovid *et al.* quoted by Zw.) and more significantly so by Sophocles, whose *Oedipus Tyrannus* is Seneca's model (cf. *O.T.* 300ff.); in the latter work indeed, when asked by the king to discover the slayer of Laius, he is already aware of the truth. In a striking departure from his model,⁴⁶ however, Seneca depicts the seer as so ignorant of the slayer's identity, that Laius' ghost has in the end to rise from the underworld and reveal the truth in person. When Tiresias declares that a great part of the truth escapes him (*latet*), he does not exaggerate; the three lines emphasize his incapacity. This departure from Sophocles enabled Seneca to indulge his relish for the supernatural and macabre in the detailed accounts of sacrifice and necromancy (530–659).

Ag. 544–46 tandem occupata rupe furibundum intonat:
 'superasse †nunc pelagus atque ignes iuuat,
 uicisse caelum Palladem fulmen mare.

Ajax (the Lesser), hit and shipwrecked by Pallas' bolt, rises flame-scorched from the sea and reaches a rock. On 545 Zw. reports: 'nunc E, nunc se A, n. iam Peiper, cuncta Richter, numen uel nunc nunc Axelson'. E's reading leaves the line a syllable short, and A's *se* yields no sense.⁴⁷ What can be the origin of this *se*, for which none of the conjectures account? May it not be the missing initial syllable of a disyllabic word following *superasse*, omitted by haplography, and replaced in wrong position in the text of A? I suggest that this word is *seuum*, i.e. *saeuum*. For the error of haplography, cf. *Thy.* 526 *frater imperi* A for *fraterni imperi* E, *H.F.* 1143 *prostrata domo* ω for *prostrata ad domum* Schmidt, edd.; and for that of *nunc* (*nē* or *n̄*) for *uum* (*uū*), *Tro.* 936 *etiam nunc* A for *et unum* E, *Thy.* 1 *me furor nunc* A for *inferorum* E. The expression *saeuum pelagus* matches the preceding *insanum mare* (540) of the narrative.

I do not find anything in 545f. so alien to Seneca's language and style as to justify Tarrant's deletion of the lines (preserved by Zw.).⁴⁸ The objects specified above by Ajax as conquered by him are all mentioned in the narrative (528ff.) and are essential ingredients in it; cf. 556 'terraque et igne uictus et pelago iacet [Aiax]'. Pallas plays a leading part (529 and 536 *Pallas*), but in 546 Tarrant objects to the accusative form *Palladem* (for which Zw. conjectures *caelites*) in place of 'the correct form ... *Pallada*' (here unmetrical). Yet Seneca uses the form *Hectorem* five times (*Tro.* 189, 459, 602, 684, 907) and *Hectora* only twice (ib. 98 = 116, 160); cf. *Tyndaridem* *Lucr.* 1.464, *Phaethontem* *Manil.* 1.736 (see Neue-Wag. *Form.* 1.462ff.). Add that the one instance of the genitive of *Pallas* in these tragedies is *Palladis* (*Phaed.* 103).

Thy. 56–60 Thracium fiat nefas
 maiore numero. dextra cur patrui uacat?
 nondum Thyestes liberos deflet suos?
 et quando tollet? ignibus iam subditis
 spument aena,...

The Fury (in the prologue) goads the ghost of Tantalus to action and denounces Atreus' lethargy. Difficulties arise in 57–9. Some critics have linked the question 'et quando tollet?' (59) closely with 57, taking the subject of *tollet*, interpreted as 'raise' (sc. *dextram*), to be *patruus* (Atreus). Tarrant objects with reason to the change of subject as being 'very harsh', but with less reason resorts to the drastic deletion of 58 as spurious. Yet what can be the meaning of *et quando tollet*? It has occurred to

⁴⁶ Cf. Schanz-Hosius, *Gesch. d. röm. Lit.* ii (1935), p. 463.

⁴⁷ Herrmann's punctuation '...intonat/superasse nunc se pelagus atque ignes: "iuuat/uicisse caelum..."' seems highly artificial.

⁴⁸ See *Würzb. Jbb.* 3 (1977), 174f.

me that a practical solution may lie in our assuming a small dislocation in the text, whereby the words *nondum Thyestes* (58) and *et quando tollet* (59), which occupy a similar amount of space, have exchanged places and that the true arrangement is:

dextra our patruī uacat?
et quando tollet? liberos deflet suos
nondum Thyestes?

For the position of *Thyestes* cf. 280f. 'tam diu cur innocens / uersatur Atreus?', 299f. 'si... preces spernet Thyestes'.⁴⁹

Zw., however, preserves the traditional text and writes (*K.K.* 294–7) with some persuasiveness in its defence. With *tollet* having *Thyestes* as its subject he interprets the verb as meaning 'remove', 'do away with' ('beseitigen', 'hinwegschaffen') in reference to the meal of his children. What may well cause puzzlement is that *Atreus* will already have 'done away with' them very effectively indeed (cf. 57): he will have slaughtered, cut up, and cooked them. We have to assume that in the prologue to the play the *Fury* is concentrating on *Thyestes*' 'removal', i.e. eating, of his children, as the supreme horror, to which *Atreus*' handiwork is but a necessary preliminary. Zw. points out that *tollet* may be purposely ambiguous.⁵⁰ Uncertainty remains.

Ascensius' *ecquando* ('will he ever...?') for *et quando* in 59 (adopted by Tarrant) and in *Phaed.* 673, is indeed tempting, but manuscript evidence for the use of this word in poetry seems very slight (see *TLL* s.v.).

Thy. 62–4 epulae instruuntur – non noui sceleris tibi
 conuiua uenies. liberum dedimus diem
 tuamque ad istas soluimus mensas famem.

The *Fury* further instructs *Tantalus*. For the context, cf. 147f. '[Pelops] diuisus... tua est, Tantale, dextera, / mensas ut strueres hospitibus deis'. 62f. The expression *non noui sceleris tibi conuiua* may call for comment. The genitive I take to be of the descriptive type, i.e. 'you will come as a dining-companion involved in, or associated with, a crime that is not new to you': cf. *Phaed.* 726 '*nefandi* raptor Hippolytus *stupri* / instat', 'H., a ravisher involved in a criminal debauchery'. It is, however, for consideration whether the genitive is not dependent on *epulae*, if we thus amend the punctuation:

epulae instruuntur non noui sceleris tibi.
conuiua uenies: liberum dedimus diem
tuamque ad istas soluimus mensas famem.

Let the feast be prepared, one that constitutes a crime not new to you [defining genitive]. You will come as a dining-companion: we have given you a holiday and let loose your hunger on this board.

Thy. 279–81 hic placet poenae modus
 tantisper. ubinam est? tam diu cur innocens
 seruatur Atreus?

Atreus soliloquizes. I cannot see valid grounds for Axelson's conjecture *seruatur*, adopted by Zw. (*K.K.* 300f.), for the manuscripts' reading *uersatur*, on the ground that *uersari* = *agere*, *se gerere* constitutes a 'Unikum' in the poet's language.⁵¹ The

⁴⁹ For the use of *tollo* Tarrant compares Stat. *S.* 2.5.21 'attollit... manum et ferro... minatur'; note too Virg. *A.* 5.443f., Val. Fl. 4.289 'dextramque parat dextramque minatur'.

⁵⁰ The verb *tollo* has indeed a wide range of meanings: cf. the satirical couplet circulating in Nero's time (Suet. *Nero* 39.2): 'quis negat Aeneae magna de stirpe Neronem? / sustulit hic matrem, sustulit ille patrem', N. removed his mother, A. removed (carried off) his father.

⁵¹ A 'Unikum' in the poet's language is not in itself proof of textual corruption; the small area 278–300 alone contains four examples: 278 the verb *ēdo* (*ēdat*), 280 *tantisper*, 287 the verb

usage falls under the general sense indicated in *OLD s. uersor* 10: lit. 'Why does A. so long *pass his time, conduct himself*, in guiltless behaviour?'. Cf. 494 'iam tuto in loco / uersantur odia' ('Now on safe footing does my hatred fare' Miller), where see Tarrant's note, also *Phaed.* 29. The use with adjectives or adverbs, as *innocens*, is natural enough: cf. Cic. *Rep.* 1.35 'non ... me ulla in cogitatione ... diligentius solere uersari.'

Thy. 296–304 gnatis tamen mandata quae patruo ferant
dabimus: relictis exul hospitibus uagus
regno ut miserias mutet atque Argos regat
ex parte dominus. si nimis durus preces
spernet Thyestes, liberos eius rudes
malisque fessos grauibis et faciles capi
prece commouebo. * * * *
* * * hinc uetus regni furor,
illinc egestas tristis ac durus labor
quamuis rigentem tot malis subigent uirum.

Atreus plans to induce Thyestes to return from exile. 302 '*prece commouebo* E, *precommouebunt* A, *prece commouebunt* L. Müller 185, post *commouebo* lacunam indicau. Ax. sic fere explendam <*sed libens frater, reor, / per se ipse ueniet*>' Zw. app. crit. Tarrant, discarding E's unmetrical reading, adopts A's *pr(a)ecommouebunt* (understanding *preces* from 299 as subject), a verb which occurs nowhere else and is a clumsy formation whose prefix is unnecessary to the sense (see Zw. *K.K.* 301). Axelson follows E, detecting a gap in the narrative (as indicated above). I cannot see any difficulty in Müller's simple correction *prece commouebunt* (so Peiper-Richter), the understood subject, obviously persons, being *gnati* (from 296), the sons, far more suitable than Atreus himself (with *commouebo*);⁵² *prece ἀπὸ κοινοῦ* with both *faciles capi* and *commouebunt*;⁵³ after the latter we need a comma. Atreus has stated (296–9) that he will send his sons to Thyestes inviting him to return from exile and share the throne of Argos; but (299–304), if Thyestes spurn their prayers, stated in a chiasmic arrangement two things will happen, the one affecting Thyestes' young sons, *liberos*, prominently placed at the beginning of its clause, the other Thyestes himself, *uirum*, prominently placed at the end: the gullible and wearied *children* will prove easy victims to the sons' prayers, his frenzied ambition on the one hand, poverty and oppressive toil on the other, will overcome the hardened obstinacy of the *man*.

Thy. 1071f. audite terrae, Noxque Tartarea grauis
et atra nube, uocibus nostris uaca.

'...and Night, heavy with black, Tartarean fogs' Miller; 'et toi, lourde Nuit du Tartare aux noires nuées' Herrmann; '*Tartarea* abl. with *nube*, parallel to *atra*' Tarrant; the *Index uerborum*⁵⁴ under *Tartareus* has '...(voc.) *Thy.* 1071'. Does not Seneca's use of the iambic trimeter, which regularly bars a tribrach in the fifth foot (1071) and a spondee in the second (1072),⁵⁵ show that *Tartārēā* is ablative and *atrā*

perduco (*perductus*), 300 *eius* (*K.K.* 301). Cf. my remarks on the single occurrence of a word or usage in a poet, *CQ* 30 (1980), 127, and 34 (1984), 459.

⁵² In *Med.* 843f., to which Zw. appeals, 'huc natos uoca, / pretiosa per quos dona nubenti feram' (Bentley, *feras* ω), the agency of the sons is emphasized by *per quos*.

⁵³ There is nothing uncharacteristic of the poet and other Latin poets in the repetition, *preces* 299 and *prece* 302, to which Tarrant objects: see e.g. C. J. Fordyce (ed.), Virgil, *Aeneid* 7–8 (1977), on 7.491. More noteworthy is the repetition of *amputat* in *Thy.* 761–3 (cf. too, above, 299 and 303 *durus* in the same verse-position, though with different sense).

⁵⁴ *Index uerborum* to Seneca's tragedies by Oldfather-Pease-Canter, 1918 (1964).

⁵⁵ Cf. D. S. Raven's *Latin Metre, An Introduction* (London, 1965), p. 58; Tarrant's edition of *Thyestes*, p. 29.

vocative, i.e. 'and Night heavy and black with Tartarean cloud'?

Oct. 111–14 ... cuius [tyranni] obsequium meus
 haud ferre posset fata post fratris dolor
 scelere interempti, cuius imperium tenet
 et sorte gaudet auctor infandae necis.

Octavia declares her hatred of Nero. Zw.⁵⁶ writes '*Oct.* 114 wird *morte* [A] so eng mit *imperium* zusammengestellt, dass die geringfügige Änderung von Lipsius (*sorte*) unausweichlich erscheint.' But can we be so sure? D. Korzeniewski⁵⁷ very reasonably sees no difficulty in *imperium* and *morte* belonging to the same relative *cuius*. To the latter likewise may belong *sorte* with very similar meaning: cf. Herrmann's reading, *sorte*, and translation 'dont il usurpe le pouvoir et dont le sort réjouit son âme'. In short, to be clear in Zw.'s sense, *sorte* needs the addition of *sua*. A further point is this: the conjecture *sorte* removes a characteristic example of the liking for a succession of synonyms found in Seneca: with the above use of *fata* (112), *morte* and *necis* (114), cf. 106 *mortis*, 107 *fatis meis*, 108 *mori...nece*; so Sen. *Phaed.* 257 *nece*, 258 *mors...fati genus*; *H.O.* 1176 *mortem*, 1177 *fatum...necis*; *Tro.* 783 *morte...leti*, 784 *nece*; *Phaed.* 854 *necis*, 855 *morti*, 856 *leti*, 857 *letum*.

Oct. 458–61 NE. Metuant necesse est – SE. Quidquid exprimitur graue est.
 NE. Iussisque nostris pareant. SE. Iusta impera.
 NE. Statuam ipse. SE. Quae consensus efficiat rata.
 NE. Destructus ensis faciet. SE. Hoc absit nefas.

In an exchange with Seneca, a leader, states Nero, must be entirely ruthless: his unflinching maxim is (456) 'ferrum tuetur principem'. 461 in place of *despectus* A, *respectus* G, Zw. (*K.K.* 469), without discussion of the manuscript readings, accepts Raphaelengius' conjecture *destructus* (favoured too by Löfstedt),⁵⁸ which having no manuscript authority remains no more than a guess.⁵⁹ The readings of G and A merit consideration. G's *respectus* yields a very possible sense (but Miller's 'the sword will force respect' is barred by metre), i.e. 'respect for the sword'; *respectus* is regularly followed by an objective genitive (*OLD* s.v. 3) and the meaning is crystal clear. I cannot but wonder, however, whether a desire for the obvious is not the cause of its existence as a simplification for the less than obvious reading of A, *despectus*. The sentence *despectus ensis faciet [rata]* I interpret as 'Disregard of the sword will ratify',⁶⁰ i.e. by the sword's immediate application, a grim and effective rejoinder in Seneca's manner. For the use of the participle in place of a verbal substantive,⁶¹ cf. *H.F.* 481 'ipsius opus est caestibus fractus suis/Eryx', 'Hercules' work too is the crushing of E. by his own gloves', *Oed.* 18 'est maius aliquod patre mactato nefas?', 'than the murder of one's father', so too the adjective, ib. 442 'post laceros Pentheos artus'.

Aberystwyth

A. HUDSON-WILLIAMS

⁵⁶ *Gnom.* 41 (1969), 769.

⁵⁷ *Gymnasium* 75 (1968), 296.

⁵⁸ *Eranos* 11 (1911), 245.

⁵⁹ Other conjectures include *dispectus* (Ritter), *suspectus* (Peiper), etc. (see Herrmann app. crit.).

⁶⁰ Not 'mais ce glaive que tu méprises les fera ratifier!' Herrmann.

⁶¹ For the usage see Kühn.–Steg. i.766ff., Hofm.–Sz. 393. The *TLL* gives no example of the noun *despectus* = *contemptio* (or *-us*) in poetry before Claud. *Eutrop.* i.138.