

Such a deletion would provocatively juxtapose Jupiter and the *custos*, while giving greater point to *sed semel* in 657 'sed semel est custos longum redimendus in aevum': Jupiter receives frequent and repeated offerings, but the way to deal with a *custos* is to buy him once and for all. Further, after *homines deosque* in 653, there is no need to sub-divide humanity into 'sapientes' and 'stulti'. Then too, the force of *Iuppiter ipse* (654) is somewhat weakened by a second *ipse* in line 656. And finally, 655 appears to me the sort of line that an interpolator might write, as indeed is 656 with *ipse quoque*.

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to reproduce here, can be found *ad loc.* in 'Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.101–498: an Introduction and Commentary' (unpublished Oxford M.Litt. dissertation, Trinity 1989). Tarrant cites as other instances of interpolation in the *Ars* 1.585–8 and 2.669–74.

The omission of 656 in two MSS. should probably not be allowed to influence arguments for deletion here.

NOTES ON SENECA TRAGICUS

Agamemnon 545

tandem occupata rupe furibundum intonat
superasse nunc se pelagus atque ignes iuuat
uicisse caelum Palladem fulmen mare. 545

545 nunc se *A*, nunc *E*

Ajax is the subject of *intonat*, but little else is certain. Various punctuations are on offer, and even the authenticity of lines 545 and 546 is questioned; the difficulties are set out in Professor Tarrant's commentary (Cambridge, 1976). My concern is focused solely on 545 and the word *nunc*, printed in the text of the recent Oxford Classical Text and obelized by Professor Zwierlein. I suggest that the original word in this part of the line was *saeuum*, a standing epithet of the sea. Written *seuum*, its initial syllable might have disappeared through haplography; that would have left *uum* to be transformed into something else. *E* came up with a word close to the *ductus*, *nunc*; the *A*-tradition added *se* either to mend the metre or perhaps to indicate (by superscription?) the omitted syllable. If *saeuum* is a plausible emendation, we might at least keep 545 as a piece of direct speech introduced by *intonat*, exactly as at *Phaed.* 1065 *magnum intonat*.

Troades 584

Propone flammas, uulnera et diras mali
doloris artes et famem et saeuam sitim
uariasque pestes undique et ferrum inditum
uisceribus ipsis, carceris caeci luem... 584

585 ipsis *Wertis*: istis *E*, ustis *A*, his et *Williams apud Fantham*

Andromache defies Ulysses. But what does she mean by *ferrum*? Two interpretations are currently available, to which I shall add a third.

The common view appears to be that *ferrum* refers to a sword (so in addition to Zwierlein, M. Billerbeck, *Senecas Tragödien. Sprachliche und stilistische Untersuchungen* [*Mnemosyne* supplement 105, 1988], 30–1). It must be an objection to this that a sword thrust up into the guts is not a form of torture. Indeed, it would produce

exactly the effect Andromache wants, death. (In passing be it said that *morte* at 578 can hardly be taken in hendiadys with *cruciatu*; since four nouns are there listed asyndetically, a reader cannot be expected to suppose that any two form a unitary notion. But *morte* need not be corrupt, only another instance of Seneca's failing to keep his mind on the context.) *Ferrum*, if it is to have point in this context, ought to refer to a method of torture and not to an instrument of death.

Mrs Fantham was seized of this point and took *ferrum* to mean chains; *inditum* would then mean attached. This is along the right lines, since chains were loaded on people to afflict them, as she illustrates in her commentary (Princeton, 1982), p. 297. This leaves however *uisceribus*, which must now be taken to mean flesh, a possible sense, but unspecific in this context. With chains we might expect reference to arms or legs, not vague flesh. So a third interpretation may be found more attractive, especially since it offers the bonus of deciding what variant to choose in 585.

Heat was favoured by the Romans as a form of torture. One instrument was the lighted torch brought close up to the skin; Ulysses refers to it at 578 *igni*, as does Andromache at 582 *flammas*. Another was the heated metal plate set onto the flesh, the *lammina* of Lucretius 3.1017 *pix lammina taedae* (where a third instrument, heated pitch, is added). Poets referred to the plates as *ferrum*, e.g. Ovid at *Met.* 3.698 *ferrumque ignesque parantur* (where it is clear from line 700 that chains cannot be meant), and Juvenal 6.624 *haec poscit ferrum atque ignes* and 14.22 *uritur ardenti ferro*. This last example helps us with the text of 585. Once we see that *ferrum* refers to heated metal set against the skin (*inditum uisceribus*), the reading of the *A*-tradition, *ustis*, all but imposes itself as authentic. It is of course to be understood proleptically, for the effect of the torture is to scorch the flesh; cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.15.37 *uentres lamna candente...urendos*. Seneca himself elsewhere uses *ferrum* in this sense, e.g. at *Epist.* 14.4 *ferrum circa se et ignes habet et catenas et turbam ferarum quam in uiscera inmittat humana*; clearly *ferrum* must be distinct from *catenas* in this sentence and its proximity to *ignes* indicates the heated *lammina* of the Roman torturer.

(It would be possible to take *ustis* to mean 'chafed', for which see *OLD* s.v. 10; then Mrs Fantham's view that *ferrum* refers to chains would be possible, if only *uisceribus* were not too undefined.)

Oedipus 739

Agmina campos cognata tenent,
dignaque iacto semine proles
uno aetatem permensa die...

739

The Chorus describe the battle of the Sown Men at Thebes. The sense of 739 poses no problem, commentators are not troubled with it, and yet it may contain a riddle for the audience. Why exactly, they might be expected to ask, are the Sown Men said to be offspring worthy of the seed? Nothing in the context provides a clue. To be sure, we are reminded of the serpent from whom the 'seed' came at 726–30, but nothing else accounts for the descriptive phrase.

Seneca had a considerable knowledge of the byways of myth and it may be that here he teases his audience's own acquaintance with *historia fabularis*. Some authorities held that the snake killed by Cadmus was the son of Ares. Euripides is at least ambiguous at *Phoen.* 657–8 *ἐνθα φόνιος ἦν δράκων | Ἄρεος ὠμόφρων φύλαξ*; at 935 he describes the snake as *γγγενής*. But the scholiasts on the former passage refer to Ares' paternity, among other explanations; indeed, *νίος* has even been added to the text in a papyrus (see Mastronarde's apparatus). Moreover, there were

rationalizing accounts that made of Draco a human son of Ares and king of Thebes, e.g. Dercylus, cited by the scholia to *Phoen.* 7 (= *FGrHist* III 305F6). The mythological handbooks confirm this: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.1 and Hygin. *Fab.* 178. The Sown Men are therefore on one account grandsons of Ares, and show themselves worthy of their seed when they fight one another – Seneca describes the martial atmosphere at 732–4.

What may have made the allusion a bit less obscure is Seneca's reliance (as I should suppose) upon his audience's knowledge of Ovid's account of the foundation of Thebes in *Metamorphoses* 3. There he briskly referred to the *Martius anguis* (32) and left his own readers to recall the issue of the snake's paternity. Granting, however, that *Martius* is really no more decisive than Euripides' genitive *Ἀρεος*, it is the more significant that Pentheus calls the Thebans *anguigenae*, *proles Mauortia* at *Met.* 3.531. All of this paves the way to Seneca's highly allusive formulation, for which there is almost a commentary in the *Thebaid* of Statius. At 10.806–9 the mother of Menoeceus complains that the *Martius anguis* had engendered in his heart *nimius ... Mauors*. So Menoeceus too like the Sown Men is *digna ... semine proles*.

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NERO ON THE DISAPPEARING TIGRIS

quique pererratam subductus Persida Tigris
deserit et longo terrarum tractus hiatu
reddit quaesitas iam non quaerentibus undas

(Nero, fr. 1 Morel)

This is the only undisputed fragment of Nero's poetry which is longer than a single line. It is preserved for us by the scholiast on Lucan 3.261, who gives us the additional piece of information that it belongs to Nero's 'first book'. It is overwhelmingly likely that this refers to the first book of Nero's epic *Troica*, his most famous work and the only one, as far as we know, to have been comprised of several books.¹ Since the fragment is the most significant surviving, but this attribution to the *Troica* cannot be quite certain, Morel and Büchner list it as fragment 1 with the simple heading 'E libro primo' and scrupulously keep it entirely separate from Servius' two testimonia (frr. 9 and 10) on the content of the poem. This entirely sensible procedure, however, may trap the unwary reader into assuming that not a word of Nero's epic actually survives.

The passage of Lucan to which the scholiast compares our fragment reads as follows:

at Tigrim subito tellus absorbet hiatu
occultosque tegit cursus rursusque renatum
fonte novo flumen pelagi non abnegat undis.

(Luc. 3.261–3)

The 'scientific' background to all this can be found in Strabo (11.14.8, 16.1.21) and Pliny (*N.H.* 6.128), the first of whom could have been known directly to Lucan and Nero, while the latter was also no doubt using earlier sources also available in Nero's reign. Strabo and Pliny both inform us that, after crossing lake Thospitis, the Tigris disappears and flows underground for a considerable distance before re-emerging at Chalonitis (Strabo) or Nymphaeum (Pliny). This distance is twenty-two miles according to Pliny, while Strabo (11.14.8) says more vaguely *πολὺν τόπον*

¹ H. Bardon, *REL* 14 (1936), 347 'de tous les poèmes néroniens, seuls les *Troica* furent assez importants pour comprendre plusieurs livres'. d'où, scol. "in primo libro".