THREE NOTES ON SENECA, TROADES

1. Having pictured her fallen city as the victim of fire and plundering, Hecuba describes the attitude of the enemy looking on this, 22-4:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{stat auditus irae iector et lentum Ilium} \\
\text{metitur oculis ac decem tandem ferus} \\
\text{ignoscit annis;}
\end{align*}
\]

Kingery\(^2\), Caviglia\(^3\) and Boyle\(^4\) are silent on *metitur*, Fantham’s note “The standing victor surveys the fallen opponent, a bold use of *metiri*”\(^5\) calls for an addition. The phrase *metiri oculis* (and sim.), for which OLD s.v. 4 also quotes Liv. 6.13.1 oculis utramque metiens aciem temere proelium initit, Ov. Ep. 10.28 aequora prospectu metier alta meo, Stat. Theb. 10.840 turvo metier culmina uisu, Quint. Decl. 255 quotiens oculos circumtuli et singulas castrorum metier partes, Stat. Theb. 6.263 f. metiri numerum uultusque habitusque suorum / dulce uiris, may be compared to the use of *μετρέω* at Soph. Aj. 5 f. μετρούμενον / ἤχη τῶν κείνων. In our passage, however, one might also suspect a subdued contrast to the surveying with *perticae* that goes along with the actual land division after a conquest; see e.g. Brian Campbell, JRS 86 (1996), 81\(^6\).

The verb may also recall Seneca’s use of *remetior* in the description of his habit at the end of the day, *Dial.* 5.36.3 cum sublatum e conspectu lumen est et conticuit uxor moris iam mei conscia, totum diem meum scrutor factaque ac dicta mea remetior; nihil mihi ipse abscondo, nihil transeo (in the sequel of that passage *ignoso* is also found).

2. At the beginning of Act IV, Helen in an aside words her unpleasant task concerning Polyxena, 864-6:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ego Pyrrhi toros} \\
\text{narrare falsos iubeor, ego cultus dare} \\
\text{habitusque Graios.}
\end{align*}
\]

The words *cultus habitusque* have been variously translated: ‘to dress the bride in a Greek fashion’ (Miller\(^7\)), ‘Schmuck ... und Aufmachung’ (Thomann\(^8\)), ‘I am to see her dressed and decorated in Grecian fashion’ (Walling\(^9\)), ‘ornament and clothing’ (Fantham), ‘vesti ed ornamenti’ (Caviglia), ‘clothes and jewelry’ (Ahl\(^10\)), ‘jewellery and dress’ (Boyle). For *cultus* = ‘dress’, commentators rightly compare Calchas’ instructions regarding the sacrifice of Polyxena, 361-3 mactanda virgo est Thessali busto ducis; / sed quo iugari Thessalae cultu solent / Ionides uel Mycenaeae nurus. As for *habitus*, it seems appropriate to recall Henry’s famous note on the word at Verg. Aen. 1.315: “air, aspect, personal appearance, σχήμα, ... the combined result of figure, gesture, clothing, and, especially, mode of wearing the hair”. The last part of his comment is validated, I think, by two subsequent passages in the play.

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Mnemosyne, Vol. LI, Fasc. 1
a) Helen’s own words to Polyxena, 883-5:

depone cultus squalidos, festos cape,
dedisce captam; deprime horrentis comas
 cinemque docta patere distinguere manu.

b) Andromache’s description of Polyxena when she has heard the real mes-
sage, 945-7:

uide ut animus ingens laetus audierit necem.
cultus decoros regiae uestis petit
et admueri crinibus patitur manum.

Therefore ‘coiffure’ seems preferable to the above quoted translations.

3. After she has described Polyxena’s reaction to the discovery that she
is to be sacrificed, Andromache contrasts the effect of the news on Hecuba,
949-54:

at misera luctu mater audito stupet;
labefacta mens succubuit - assurge, alleua
animum et cadentem, misera, firma spiritum.
quam tenuis anima uinculo pendet lei:
minimum est quod Hecubam facere felicem potest -
spirat, reuixit. prima mors miseris fugit.

The last line is echoed in Hecuba’s lament at the end of the play, 1171-
5: sola mors uotum meum, ... ubique properas, saeua: me solam times uitasque ...
cupi-entem fugis (cf. also [Sen.] H.O. 122 felices sequeris, mors, miseris fugis; 766 mors
refugit illum, Sen. Phoen. 258 f. sed quem deus damnauit, abiecit pater, / mors quo-
que refugit, Luc. 2.75 f. mors ipsa refugit / ipsa uirum). Here the addition of
prima, however, raises a question: “If death is first to shun the wretched,
who or what follows death in doing so?” 1)

In my view the Senecan line is a textual interplay with Verg. G. 3.66-
8; the passage was one that interested Seneca, since he discusses it at
length at Dial. 10.9.2 ff. and Ep. 108.24 ff. (see Mynors12) ad loc.):

optima quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aequi
prima fugit; subeunt morbi tristisque senectus
et labor, et durae rapid inclementia mortis.

Though the situations are different, in both the thing wished for is the
first to flee.

7555 KP HENGelo (Ov.), Berkellaan 48       A.J. Keulen

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