NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

THE SKY IS OVERCAST: OVID, ARS 3.173–6

aeris, ecce, color tum cum sine nubibus aer
nec tepidus pluvias concitat Auster aquas;
ecce tibi similis, quae quondam Phrixon et Hellen
diceris Inois eripuisse dolis

Although Kenney points out in the apparatus of his OCT that quae R (cf. the now correctly dated Y)\(^2\) refers to Nephele, as was appreciated fully by W.M. Edwards\(^3\) and perhaps to a lesser extent by Brandt,\(^4\) translators have continued to take it as referring to the golden-fleeced ram sent to rescue her children, Phrixus and Helle, from their wicked step-mother Ino.\(^5\)

Two facts make this identification impossible: firstly, the feminine quae (which Goold observes, but overrides — revised Loeb 1979; note at 175) cannot be used of a ram and secondly there is no evidence for gold dyes in Antiquity (while a yellow dye might be possible, this would make 184\(^6\) repetitive).\(^7\)

The correctness of understanding Nephele as the antecedent of quae can be appreciated fully only by taking lines 173–4 into account. There cloth the colour of a cloudless sky is indicated, probably the colour ‘caeruleum indicum’, a sky blue imported from India.\(^8\) Lines 175–6 (linked to the previous couplet by the repeated ecce) indicate the opposite, the grey colour of an overcast sky, Nephele being, of course, a cloud goddess (see e.g. Kl. Pauly 4.61.28; contrast sine nubibus 173).

In discussing dark dyes, Forbes\(^9\) speaks of gall black which, together with an alum mordant, was used to darken wool (Pliny, HN 16.27). This could be what Ovid means. As alternatives, he suggests Acacia Arabica and Nilotica Del: while these plants are not specifically mentioned in the production of dark dyes, they were certainly known even in pre-classical days.

NOTES

1. Professor E.J. Kenney kindly provided me with a xerox at a time when it was difficult for me to get to a library. In thanking him, I must, however, absolve him from any responsibility for this note.


5. Edwards, *op.cit.*, deals with Marchesi (1933) who understands *aurea ovis* and Borneo (Budé 1929) who adopts *qui* for *quae* from the interpolated traditions. Others to mistake the antecedent of *quae* include Goold, as mentioned above, Green (Penguin transl. 1982; repr. 1984) and Moore, now reincarnated with minimal editing in A.D. Melville, *Ovid: the Love Poems*, Oxford 1990 (p.132). In a confusing (*confused?*) apparatus note, Lenz (Turin 1969) apparently attempts to keep both *qui* and *quae*: *i.e. Nephele (Edwards), i.e. aurea ovis coll. Her. 17(18).143 sq (Ma)*.


7. As Edwards points out (p.143), there is also the saffron dye at 179.


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**A TEXTUAL PROBLEM IN SENECA’S PHOENISSAE**

*in vestra manu est*

utrum velitis: sancta si pietas placet

*donate matrem pace*; si placuit scelus,

maius paratum est: media se opponit parens.

proinde bellum tollite aut belli moram

Jocasta is trying to persuade her sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, to abandon their warlike intentions against each other.

All the Mss. read ‘*donate matri pacem*’, which is unsatisfactory on metrical grounds, in that it results in a fourth foot spondee. Moricca, in his edition of the plays,¹ defends the anomaly by citing in support of it Sen. *Troad.* 264 ‘vincendo didici. Troia nos tumidos facit’ as a second foot dactyl (equally anomalous) and 932 ‘altum vadoso Sigeon spectans sinu’ as another fourth foot spondee. In the first case, however, the final syllable of ‘vincende’, as not uncommonly in Silver Latin poetry, is short,² and in the second, the middle syllable of ‘Sigeon’, a word which is variously scanned in
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