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## SENECA'S *PHAEDRA* 406–430 AND THE E-BRANCH OF THE MS TRADITION

ABSTRACT. Słomak Iwona, *Seneca's Phaedra 406–430 and the E-branch of the MS Tradition*

This paper aims to revise previous findings concerning lines 406–430 of Seneca's *Phaedra*. Referring to the manuscript tradition, it demonstrates that the heading before 406 and the marginal notation used to identify speaking characters may have been misinterpreted as a result of this notation having been erased from codex Etruscus, the main representative of one of the two branches of the manuscript tradition of Seneca's plays. Next, it argues that because of the formal consistency of this codex reading (E) – as contrasted with the inconsistencies in A – and the fact that E makes satisfactory sense here, the reconstructed reading of Etruscus should be taken into consideration in future editions of Seneca's drama.

Keywords: Seneca's *Phaedra*; textual criticism; the manuscript tradition of Seneca's dramas

Editors and commentators of Seneca's *Phaedra* usually attribute lines 406–430 to the Nurse,<sup>1</sup> thus following the A-branch of the manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Still, there is partial agreement in this reading: codex Cantabrigensis (C) consistently omits the marginal notation for the identification of characters at the beginning of scenes, but the order of the names in the heading before 406 (nutrix. ypolitus) indicates that the Nurse is the first character to speak. In other A-manuscripts (PTSV), the order of the names in the heading is the same as in codex Etruscus (E: HYPPOLITUS. NUTRIX), but Parisinus (P), Scorialensis (S), and Vaticanus

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<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Viansino 1968; Boyle 1987; Zwierlein 1986a and 1986b, 189–190; de Meo 1990; Chaumartin 1996; Fitch 2002 and 2004: 113–114; Giardina 2007.

<sup>2</sup>Plays attributed to Seneca the Younger have been preserved in two manuscript branches: E, with codex Etruscus as its sole uncontaminated representative (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 37.13), and A, with four or five codices regarded as its best specimens: P (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 8260), T (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 8031), C (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 406), S (Escorial, Biblioteca Real, T III 11), and V (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 2829). For the MS tradition of Seneca's tragedies, see MacGregor 1985: 1135–1241; MacGregor 1971: 327–356; Zwierlein 1984: 6–181; Philp 1968: 150–179; Tarrant 1976: 23–86.

(V) add the Nurse (nu.) before 406. The same editors attribute lines 404–405 at the end of the previous scene to the Chorus, thus following E; according to A, this passage consists of a single line<sup>3</sup> and is ascribed to the Nurse. A different attribution has been proposed by Friedrich (1933: 24–38), followed by Vretska (1968: 153–161), Primmer (1976: 218–219), Coffey and Mayer (1990: 127), and Gamberale (2007: 57–73), who ascribe lines 404–405 to the Nurse, as in A, and the lines that follow to Phaedra (406–426 or 406–423) and the Nurse (427–430 or 434–430). In her review of Coffey and Mayer, Fantham (1991: 331–332) supports the attribution of 404–405 to the Nurse but suggests that because of the “binary repetitive nature” of the opening part of the scene, it should be divided between Phaedra (406–408, 413–414, 417b–419, 423–426) and the Nurse (409–412, 415–417a, 420–422, 427–430). According to this scholar, the discrepancies in the MS tradition at this point result from “an original alternation of the women in the prayer.”

Objections against the attribution of lines 406–427 to Phaedra have been raised by Zwierlein (1986b: 189–190), among others; his arguments – there is the Nurse’s earlier announcement (271–273); doing magic appears more suitable for an elderly woman;<sup>4</sup> and it is implausible that at the sight of Hippolytus, Phaedra sends the Nurse rather than acts on her own<sup>5</sup> – seem to some extent convincing. According to Fitch (2004: 113–114), the solution adopted by Friedrich, for example, is based on the arbitrary assumption<sup>6</sup> that Seneca was not very flexible with his use of Greek plot patterns, in this case, particularly the lost Ἰππόλυτος Καλυπτόμενος.<sup>7</sup> Gamberale (2007: 59–60), in turn, begins his argumentation with the assumption that lines 404–405 cannot be spoken by the Chorus because there is no room for it in the scene involving the Nurse and Phaedra (as for the attribution of further lines,<sup>8</sup> it is based on an otherwise interesting interpretation but inconsistent with the manuscript reading). It is worth noting, though, that the Nurse and Phaedra (the latter on the *regiae fastigia*, cf. 384) do not actually

<sup>3</sup> P and T transfer line 405 to the end of the previous scene, after 359; CSV transfer lines 359 (with the last word omitted) and 405 to the middle of the scene, between 340 and 341.

<sup>4</sup> Among the examples cited by Zwierlein (see in particular: *Hor. Sat.* 1, 8; *Epod.* 5 and 17; *Ov. Am.* 1, 8), the most significant motif seems to be that of the nurse-witch in *Her. O.* 452–464, a tragedy which features a large number of borrowings from Seneca’s plays.

<sup>5</sup> A certain dependence of Phaedra on the Nurse in Seneca has also been noticed by Heldmann 1974: 162–164 and n. 463.

<sup>6</sup> It is also worth noting that in his comprehensive study, Zwierlein (2004: 57–133, especially 90–91) – one of the most scrupulous researchers of the connections between Seneca’s *Phaedra* and lost Greek tragedies – is supportive of the conclusion that Seneca might have contaminated the content inherited from his predecessors and that one needs to take into account his artistic invention.

<sup>7</sup> See ταῖς ἔρωτι κατεχομέναις τὴν Σελήνην ἀνακαλεῖσθαι σύνθηες. ὡς καὶ Εὐριπίδης ποιεῖ τὴν Φαίδραν ἐν τῷ Καλυπτομένῳ Ἰππολύτῳ – Σ Theocr. 2, 10c, cf. test. IV: TrGF V, p. 464–465.

<sup>8</sup> See Gamberale 2007: 60–79.

engage in any dialogue in this scene. The Nurse's words at 360–385 are clearly a response to the Chorus' question at 358–359, and it is likely that the Chorus then responds with advice at 404–405; cf. also, e.g., *Sen. Oed.* 998–1061.

However, none of the commentators referred to the order of names in the scene heading before line 406, which suggests that it is Hippolytus who speaks first.<sup>9</sup> Seemingly incorrect at first glance,<sup>10</sup> the heading demands attention once we juxtapose Etruscus with two of the three codices that probably derive from  $\Sigma$ , a copy of Etruscus.<sup>11</sup> N and M – F cannot be included in this

<sup>9</sup>In E and A, the character whose name appears first in the heading consistently speaks first. If the order of names in the headings is different in E and A, the characters consistently speak in a different order, cf. *Her.F.* before 205 and 205; *Her.F.* before 895 and 918. Inconsistencies – the heading indicates a different order of characters than the marginal notation – are rare. In A, this is the case before *Tro.* 861. In E, there are two such places. The first one is not immediately obvious: instead of the names, the heading includes *et idem* (*idem* refers certainly to Oedipus and probably to Creon and the Chorus, who speak in the previous scene but here are silent). *Scil.* before line 291 in *Oed.*, the heading reads: TIREZIA. ET IDEM. MANTO, but the marginal notation before 291 indicates OED. The second one is from *Her.O.* (the text of this play in E contains a large number of errors, e.g., numerous omissions, cf. Zwielerin 1984: 60) and seems to be an accidental mistake: the heading before line 1607 reads NUNTIUS. CHORUS, but according to the marginal notation and the text logic, the Messenger does not speak until 1609; A introduces other characters in this scene (Nutrix Philoctetes). In addition to the order of names, there are other differences between the headings in E and A. Sometimes they result from the fact that, unlike A, E also announces silent characters. In other cases, the differences in the headings seem to be related to the different length of the scene in the two traditions, which is reflected in the number of characters that take part in it; there are also instances of a simple substitution of characters. See, e.g., *Her.F.* before 895; *Tro.* before 1 and 67 (differences and inconsistencies in PT); *Tro.* before 409, 524, 705; 736 (inconsistencies in A); *Phoen.* before 320, 363, 403 and 443 (inconsistencies in A); *Med.* before 879 (differences within A); *Phaed.* before 360; *Oed.* before 202 and 206; *Oed.* before 764 and 784 (inconsistencies and differences within A); *Ag.* before 226; before 589 and 775 (inconsistency in A); *Ag.* before 808 and 867; *Thy.* act I and III; *Thy.* before 920; *Her.O.* before 706; *Her.O.* before 742 (inconsistency in A; in E, probably a misspelling before 932); *Her.O.* before 1758 and 1863 (inconsistency in E); *Her.O.* before 1940, 1944, 1963, 1977, and 1983. There are also omissions of a character, probably by mistake – e.g., *Tro.* before 203 (A); *Tro.* before 524 (E) – and cases where a character is accidentally substituted by another one, see *Her.F.* before 895 and 1032 (E).

<sup>10</sup>According to Friedrich 1933: 37–38.

<sup>11</sup>These are: F (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale; Lat. 11855), M (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, D 276 inf.) and N (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 1769). So far, the most comprehensive analysis of FMN has been carried out by Zwielerin (1984: 60–130); cf. also Tarrant 1976: 63–71 and the bibliography there. Zwielerin has convincingly demonstrated that FNM were based on the same source ( $\Sigma$ ) – a copy of Etruscus – and that this common source had been corrected on the basis of A before FNM were produced; later, the same manuscript ( $\Sigma$ ) may have been consulted again with A by the scribes of N and M. Below I present the arguments that I consider crucial in this respect, together with an extended list of examples (based on my own research). 1) There are traces that the scribes of FMN used a source based on E that included alternative A-readings; existing gaps were filled on the basis of A in a way that lacked clarity, and confusing notes with corrections were added after Etruscus, cf. in particular the concurrence of the E reading and the A reading at some points in FMN, resulting in a broken logical sequence,

case<sup>12</sup> – attribute lines 404–405 to the Chorus (as in E), include the same heading as in EPTSV, and add the name of the Nurse at line 409 (nu.); according to this notation, lines 406–408 are spoken by Hippolytus. When we now turn to the same passage in Etruscus, at both lines 406 and 409 we can see traces of the marginal notation introduced by the rubricator for the identification of characters. These marks were later removed, as was a longer note, whose traces can be seen in the margin (similar traces left by rubbed-out notes can be found on many pages in Etruscus<sup>13</sup>). The marks may still have been legible to the copyist of Σ, which would explain their presence in MN. Thus, MN reading lends credence to the order in the heading before line 406, the same in E and in most representatives of A. They also show that the E reading is coherent and point to the discrepancies in A:<sup>14</sup> apart from the inconsistency between the order of characters in the heading and the marginal notation, attested in most representatives of A, there is also the problem of the placement of line 405, which ends the scene but in PT occurs after line 359, that is, at the end of the previous scene; in CSV, in turn, lines 359 and 405 are transferred to the middle of the previous scene (cf. above). These inconsistencies may have resulted from corrections, which are very likely to have occurred, considering the fact that A is generally fraught with a large number of deliberately introduced interpolations.<sup>15</sup> Thus, E may in this case correspond to ω.

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and the incorrect placement of the added or corrected text (e.g., *Her.F.* 90–91: F; 1304: MN; *Tro.* 205: FN; *Phaed.* 642: FN; 783–784: FMN; 968–978: N; *Oed.* 123: MN; *Thy.* 1012–1014: FMN; *Her.O.* 182–226: FM; 318: M; 446: F; 916: F; 973: F; 996–997: FN; 1754–1755: NM; 1887: M) (cf. also Zwierlein 1984: 69–71, 84–86, 97–100). 2.1) It is possible to notice a somewhat greater similarity between E and F than between E and MN, while there are no common errors in MN that would suggest that MN were based on a single intermediate source. 2.2) It is possible to discern a bigger similarity between E and N than between E and FM in terms of the layout, cf. in particular: *Oed.* 882–914: in E, the text below the heading is placed in two columns; in N, the layout is similar, but because the heading is shifted, one of the columns is raised, which disturbs the order of the lines throughout the passage (cf. also Zwierlein 1984: 86–87); *Oed.* 473–476: in E, the three originally omitted monometers were added next to the text in the wrong order and with repetition; N only slightly simplifies this notation (it omits the rubricator's markings), M retains the wrong order but separates the individual elements (cf. also Zwierlein 1984: 72); *Med.* 849–878: in E, one of the odes is partially (860–877) placed in two columns, and the layout changes with a new page; N preserves this arrangement even though the ode fits a single page. 3) The scribes of FNM used A when they copied *Phoenissae* and later *Medea* (in FN, the text shows dependence on A approximately up to line 700; in M, almost the entire text of *Medea*, apart from the final lines, is copied from A); the order of the plays was also changed in N (*Phoenissae*) and F (*Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, and *Oedipus*), which may suggest that in the common source of FNM (it cannot have been Etruscus), part of the text was damaged (cf. also Zwierlein 1984: 73–74, 87–88).

<sup>12</sup>In F, the headings are copied from the main source, so they usually follow E, but the marginal notation for characters is normally copied from an A source.

<sup>13</sup>See also Tarrant 1976: 25–26.

<sup>14</sup>The implausibility of A at this point is also noticed by Fitch 2004: 113 n. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Tarrant 1976: 60–62.

This conclusion is not contradicted by the semantic analysis of the text. Having finished her own prayers (409–423), the Nurse notices Hippolytus, who is praying, presumably at the altar of Diana:<sup>16</sup> *ipsum intuor sollemne venerantem sacrum / nullo latus comitante* (424–425). One could interpret her words non-literally and assume that the young man is approaching the place to start praying, but the literal sense of the utterance is that Hippolytus is “right now” engaged in worship. It is also plausible that the Nurse is currently praying at the altar rather than approaching it, which means that both are praying at the same time, on two sides of the same altar/place of worship, initially without seeing each other. This fits nicely with the structure of the scene, in which we first hear Hippolytus’ prayer and then the prayer of the Nurse, who finally notices the young man, approaches him, and starts a conversation. Formally, the structure brings to mind the epic solution for presenting simultaneous or partly simultaneous events and is a variation of the pattern known from, e.g., *Her.F.*: Megara talks with Amphitryon and notices Lycus (*Her.F.* 329–331); next, there is a longer internal monologue by Lycus, which closes with a remark that he has noticed Megara (*Her.F.* 332–357); Megara expresses her concern to Amphitryon or to herself, still without being heard by Lycus (*Her.F.* 358–359a); Lycus starts a conversation with Megara (*Her.F.* 359b–361).

It is worth noting that when Hippolytus pronounces the invocation formulas – *Regina nemorum, sola quae montes colis / et una solis montibus coleris ...* (406–407) – he emphasises the solitude of the goddess in mountain retreats,<sup>17</sup> thus bringing out her role as the patroness of the lifestyle that he considers perfect and leads by choice: in the mountains, away from the urban community (483–525), and free from *iugum Veneris* (por. 559–579). By contrast, the Nurse mentions the woods as the domicile of the goddess, but her main focus is on identifying Diana with Luna and Hecate. She asks Diana as the patroness of magic to persuade

<sup>16</sup>The play does not explicitly refer to the altar, but its presence seems implied: it is a conventional element, often present in Greek tragedies and also known from some plays by Seneca (cf. Coffey, Mayer 1990: 127, and Tarrant 1976: 249); in this case, it makes the situation of prayer more believable. Kragelund’s suggestion (1999: 239–243; supported by Fitch 2004: 114) that the altar may be situated in the forest outside the city is interesting but rather speculative.

<sup>17</sup>Coffey and Mayer (1990: 128) have aptly compared these words with a passage in Propertius: *Sola eris et solos spectabis, Cynthia, montes ...* (Prop. 2, 19, 7), demonstrating that the emphasis has been placed here on the solitude of the goddess. The claim made by Davis (1983: 115–117) and later by Mayer (2002: 47–48) – that Hippolytus as *caelebs* in Seneca does not associate his life attitude with Diana’s virginity – seems incorrect. The fact that the Nurse and the Chorus allude to Endymion (*Phaed.* 309–311; 422) and that later the Chorus ridicules the possibility of Diana falling in love with Hippolytus (*Phaed.* 785–794) does not seem to be an important counterargument: the Nurse and the Chorus refer to the image of Diana as a goddess concerned with magic, especially love magic; Hippolytus does not associate her with this domain. Also, Theseus’ later words of accusation (... *pietas nefandum [celat] ...* – *Phaed.* 921) may suggest that Hippolytus justified his way of life by his devotion to the goddess.

Hippolytus to give up his independence: ... *mutuos ignes ferat ... in iura Veneris redeat* (415–417). Thus, both Hippolytus and the Nurse address Diana, but their images of the goddess are clearly in conflict, which seems to add to the ironic impact of the scene. The irony emerging from this passage was already noted by Fantham (1991: 331), who suggests, however, that Phaedra and the Nurse take turns in the prayer (see above), juxtaposes their pleas with Hippolytus' earlier prayer (in the prologue),<sup>18</sup> and also highlights their mistake in choosing Diana as the addressee of their requests. It is worth noting that the scene that emerges from the consistent reading of E augments this ironic effect. It emphasises not only the futility of the Nurse's prayer to Diana-Luna-Hecate,<sup>19</sup> but also the fruitlessness of Hippolytus' appeal to Diana the Huntress, the patroness of his solitary life, to appease the *tristes ominum ... minae* (408). The repetition of the invocation to Diana in this prayer was noticed by Heldmann (1974: 163 n. 462), who suggests that it consists of two parts: in the first one (406–408), the Nurse follows the recommendation of the Chorus (*sepone questus ... agreste placā ... numen ...*, 404–405), and in the second one (from 409), she expresses her own request, in both cases addressing Diana-Hecate. According to his interpretation, the sinister *omina* can be taken to refer to Hippolytus' unpromising attitude or perhaps to the growing amorous obsession of Phaedra; the goddess's grace would avert imminent danger. By contrast, Coffey and Mayer (1990: 128) take the *omina* to refer to some disturbing state of the moon; they infer<sup>20</sup> that since there is no mention of that earlier in the play, Seneca may have borrowed this motif from Euripides without motivating it properly in the plot. However, when attributing lines 406–408 to Hippolytus (following E), we should perhaps not assume that the author had inadvertently failed to introduce relevant information earlier in the text. Given the context – the hero *sollemne venerat sacrum* (424) – the audience, culturally close to Seneca, might have taken it as self-evident that the young man was offering some sacrifice and interpreting the circumstances of this act or perhaps of earlier hunting. In this case, they would understand that Hippolytus' prayer to avert the *omina* was a result of his recognition that there was some anomaly heralding danger, and they would not look for another justification in the text. His prayer does not seem to have been answered; the receiver's conclusion must be that the “solitary” goddess shows no signs of commitment

<sup>18</sup>The two prayers have also been juxtaposed by Davis (1983: 115) and Mayer (2002: 23), among others, who interpret them as appeals for a successful hunt: Hippolytus' hunt for game, on the one hand, and Phaedra's hunt for Hippolytus, on the other; however, this interpretation is poorly supported by the text, since apart from a general remark on the woods as Diana's home in this second prayer (409–430), there is no mention of Diana being the goddess of animals and the patroness of hunting; instead, there are references to her as Hecate, which stands in contrast to the prologue speech by Hippolytus (54–77).

<sup>19</sup>This aspect is also emphasised by Coffey, Mayer 1990: 128.

<sup>20</sup>After Fredrich 1933: 38.

to the fate of her solitary worshipper and, on a more general level, that any attempts to prevent misfortunes through expiation are futile. Finally, it does not seem coincidental that the effect of this scene – the double disappointment or letdown (experienced by Hippolytus and the Nurse/Phaedra) – is then reiterated in the Chorus' commentary on the temporary success of the Nurse and Phaedra's intrigue: the gods do not engage in interventions in human affairs (972–988). It also comes to the fore when one considers the effects of Theseus' appeal (941–958) to Neptune to ensure justice, Phaedra's futile pleas to Neptune to send punishment (1159–1163), and the ruler's comment (*non movent divos preces; / at, si rogarem scelera, quam proni forent* – 1242–1243; cf. also 1271–1272). There are reasons to assume that this is an important thematic line in this play<sup>21</sup> (and one that corresponds with the themes taken up by Seneca in his philosophical texts on numerous occasions<sup>22</sup>), whose significance for the next generations of readers and commentators has been significantly reduced as a result of the text in codex Etruscus being rubbed off. Given the above arguments (the formal consistency of E as contrasted with the inconsistencies in A, suggestive of interpolations, and the fact that the E reading makes satisfactory sense), it seems reasonable to conclude that the E reading, here probably correctly reconstructed on the basis of M and N, should be taken into consideration in the next editions of Seneca's *Phaedra*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>In previous studies of the play, selected aspects of this problem have already been taken up by, e.g., Mayer (2002: 45–49; the scholar draws attention to the absence of gods in *Phaedra* – a feature that distinguishes Seneca's play from Euripides' – and the fact that here the problem of morality is transferred to the purely human plane) and Armstrong (2006, 294–298; the author refers to the problem of human actions being determined by the gods, a question raised by Seneca, but left unanswered).

<sup>22</sup>Cf., e.g., Seneca on religious rituals, divine intervention in human actions, and gods' ability to do evil (*Ep.* 95, 47–50; *V.B.* 26, 6; *Ira* 2, 27, 1–2) and the dispensable nature of prayer (*Ep.* 31, 5), propitiatory offerings, and divination (*N.Q.* 2, 32, 1–51).

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SENECA'S *PHAEDRA* 406–430 AND THE E-BRANCH OF THE MS TRADITION

## Summary

The article aims to revise previous findings regarding the manuscript tradition of Seneca's *Phaedra* 406–430 and consequently to postulate a change in the editorial practice. Editors and commentators assign these lines to particular characters either accepting one of the manuscript readings or departing from this tradition and adopting solutions based on their preferred interpretations of this passage. Their decisions are justified insofar as significant inconsistencies can be noticed here in both of the two manuscript branches of Seneca's plays. What is problematic in codex Etruscus, the main representative of the E-branch, is the lack of correspondence between the order of characters in the scene heading and the marginal notation. In the A-branch, represented by four or five manuscripts, there are also differences between individual codices (starting from line 404), which seem to be the result of scribal deliberate adjustments. However, when determining the attribution of the verses in question, the reading of the  $\Sigma$ -branch, derived from the E-branch, but contaminated with A, have not been taken into account so far. In codices  $\Sigma$ , an additional marginal notation has been preserved, the adopting of which allows to remove the inconsistency of the E reading. Moreover, this notation could also have been originally present in the Etruscus, but was later almost completely removed along with other notes written in the margin of this codex. Considering that the E reading reconstructed in this way is also convincing in terms of interpretation, which increases the probability that we are dealing here with the  $\omega$  reading, we should expect that it will be included in subsequent editions of Seneca's dramas.