

exact circumstances of the composition of the Letter. Nor need we worry about its genuineness in connection with its importance as a source for the history of Syracuse in the fourth century. By the middle of the century, the Greeks had become very sophisticated in the matter of historical writing and were well aware of the historical significance of political developments. There were many participants in the events of those years, and many

documents relating to them, to furnish the material used as sources in the biographies and historical fragments that have come down to us. The fact that we do not know just what they were and do not have them at hand to study should not make us put on Plato's shoulders a burden which is not his.

ELIZABETH GWYN CASKEY

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE

A NEW CRITICAL EDITION OF THE *ETYMOLOGIAE* (*ORIGINES*) OF ISIDORE OF SEVILLE

The new edition of the *Etymologiae* will appear in twenty volumes, each volume containing one of the books in which the work appears in its last seventh-century edition. Each volume will contain a critical text, based on the state of the manuscript tradition, according to the norms fixed by the Isidorian colloquy held at the Sorbonne on 23 June 1970 (see *RHT*, II [1972], 282–88). The text will be accompanied by a selective apparatus of variants and sources, by a translation into the language of the editor (English, Spanish, French, Italian, or German), and by an introduction, which will be aimed to place the particular book into the contexts of the *Etymologiae* and of Isidore's other works, of the Greco-Roman cultural tradition, and of the language and style of Isidore and of the manuscript tradition in general.

The detailed presentation of the manuscripts and the exposition of critical problems in general will be reserved for a separate volume. The edition will be supervised and revised by the International Committee of Isidorian Studies (B. Bischoff, M. C. Díaz, J. Fontaine, J. N. Hillgarth). It will be published at León (Spain) by the Editorial San Isidoro. Ten out of the twenty books are already "reserved" by individual French, Spanish, or Italian scholars. Those interested in editing a particular book are invited to write to Prof. J. Fontaine, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1 rue Victor-Cousin, Paris (V^e), or to Prof. J. N. Hillgarth, Boston College, Dept. of History, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167.

J. N. HILLGARTH

BOSTON COLLEGE

SENECA *AGAMEMNON* 766–68 (LEO)

et ossa vasti corporis
corrupta longinquo situ
palude limosa iacent.

Friedrich Leo *ad loc.* first detected a difficulty: *quid significant obscurum*. Moricca repeats his verdict. F. J. Miller elaborates: "If Seneca wrote lines 766–768, he may have had some definite reference in his mind unknown to us, or he may have meant merely to add further gruesome detail to the picture." Richter transposed the offending verses to follow 772 and referred them ineptly to Tantalus. A simple explanation exists. The lines refer to Priam and more precisely recall *Aeneid* 2. 557–58:

"iacet ingens litore truncus / avulsumque umeriscaput et sine nomine corpus." *Iacent* and *corporis* are the Vergilian words. His *ingens* (cf. *Il.* 24. 477) becomes *vasti*; *litore* becomes *palude limosa*. By now the flesh is gone; *ossa* only remain. Seneca's *ossa* are "without a name."

The Furies (759–64) are those of Priam, not of Iphigenia, who is scarcely (162 ff.) an issue in Seneca's play. The unavenged and unburied bones of the king represent the curse about to be fulfilled and easily follow the Furies. The reference anticipates the equation Agamemnon = Priam explicit at 794 (*Et*