

# ‘O ANCIENT ARGOS OF THE LAND’: EURIPIDES, *ELECTRA* 1

Eur. *El.* 1 ff.

ὦ γῆς παλαιὸν Ἄργος, Ἰνάχου ῥοαί,  
 ὄθεν ποτ' ἄρας ναυσὶ χιλίαις Ἄρη  
 ἐς γῆν ἐπλευσε Τρωάδ' Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ,  
 κτείνας δὲ τὸν κρατοῦντ' ἐν Ἰλιάδι χθονὶ  
 Πρίαμον, ἐλών τε Δαρδάνου κλεινὴν πόλιν,  
 ἀφίκετ' ἐς τόδ' Ἄργος, ὑψηλῶν δ' ἐπὶ  
 ναῶν ἔθηκε σκύλα πλεῖστα βαρβάρων.

1 Ἄργος (ἄργος) *vexatum*: ἄργος *probant nonnulli, alii alia tempt.*

Neither Ἄργος nor ἄργος can stand. ‘Argos of the land’ (or, ‘of land’) is nonsense, and even if it were not, is absurd as an apostrophe of the River Inachus. ἄργος ‘a plain’, indistinguishable from Ἄργος, is similarly impossible: the audience would be baffled; ἐς τόδ' Ἄργος in 6 has to be the first occurrence of the *vox*; ‘streams’ cannot be apposed to a ‘plain’, even if ἄργος could have been understood as meaning this.<sup>1</sup>

What is wanted is a word that describes the role or function of the Inachus in relation to the land. And what rivers do to the land is water it: cf. e.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 487 Σπερχειὸς ἄρδει πεδῖον εὐμενεὶ ποτῶ, 805–6 πεδῖον Ἀσωπὸς ῥοαῖς | ἄρδει, φίλον πιάσμα Βοιωτῶν χθονί, *P. V.* 851–2 Ἐπαφον, ὃς καρπώσεται | ὄσην πλατύρρους Νεῖλος ἀρδεύει χθόνα, Eur. *Hel.* 1–3 Νεῖλου μὲν αἶδε καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί, | ὃς . . . Αἰγύπτου πέδον | . . . ὑγραίνει (v.l. ἀρδεύει), *Antiope* xlviii 85 Kambitsis = iv B 57 Arn. = 79 Page (πεδιά . . . ἐξάρδων), xlviii 114 Kamb. = iv B 87 Arn. = 107 Page, *Tro.* 224–9, *Phoen.* 645–8.

Read: ὦ γῆς παλαιὸς ἀρδμός, Ἰνάχου ῥοαί. ἀρδμός is not attested in tragedy, in fact it is otherwise found only in epic (Homer onwards), but it is the noun from ἀρδω and quite unexceptionable.

The suggestion, I discover, has been foreshadowed by Wyse, who proposed the *vox nihili* ἄρδος (reported with glowing approval by Platt in *CQ* 10, 1916, 84), and in a different way by Murray, who comments in his O.C.T. apparatus, ‘suspicio id vocabulum [sc. ἄργος] quasi ab ἀρδω dictum intellegi’(!). Wyse, Platt, and Murray all saw what was needed, but were led into more or less fantastic straits in order to achieve it. Perhaps what deterred them or anyone else from putting forward ἀρδμός was its unambiguously nominative form. I cannot here mend the deficiencies of grammarians’ treatments of what is baldly and misleadingly known as ‘nominative for vocative’, but will simply invite recognition of the fact that in Eur. *El.* 1 a nominative is perfectly acceptable (as a vocative would not be): cf. e.g. Aesch. *P. V.* 88, Soph. *Aj.* 992–4, *Ant.* 891–2, *Trach.* 993, Eur. fr. 443N<sup>2</sup> (first *Hipp.*), fr. sine num. ap. Men. *Sam.* 326 (*Oed.*), *Med.* 1075, *Hipp.* 1127, *Hel.* 623, 1399.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These objections are in substance almost identical to those made by G. Zuntz in *RbMus* 113 (1970), 276–8, which I had not read when the above was written.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these, like Eur. *El.* 1, are

‘hanging’: so too the initia of the *Alcestis* and the *Andromache* (where read πόλις with VP and Hermann). A semantic distinction is to be made between ὦ + nom. and ὦ + voc. in tragedy (despite the evident

In almost any tragic context, it would not be all that surprising if ἀρδμός got corrupted into Ἄργος. In a line which identifies the location as Argos, it was practically inevitable.

*University College London*

M.W. HASLAM

metrical expediency of the nom.). It is true that nom. is occasionally found where voc. might have been expected (e.g. with χαῖρε, Aesch. Ag. 508-9, fr. 144N<sup>2</sup>, Soph. Phil. 1453-5; not vice versa); but transition from exclamation to address is to be recognized in such places as Soph. El. 1354-5, Ant.

1284-5, Trach. 1040-1, Phil. 530-1, 1348, Eur. Alc. 568-70, Andr. 1186-7, cf. Aesch. P. V. 88-92. The voc. at Eur. El. 54, ὦ νύξ μέλαινα, χρυσέων ἄστρων τροφέ, | ἐν ᾗ τόδ' ἄγγος κτλ, is I think unparalleled: I hesitate to propose τροφός, but τροφέ must be acknowledged to be anomalous.