

EURIPIDES, *HELEN* 115–123

- E.L.* ἡ καὶ γυναῖκα Σπαρτιάτιν εἴλετε; (115)  
*TE.* Μενέλαος αὐτὴν ἦγ' ἐπισπάσας κόμης.  
*E.L.* εἶδες σὺ τὴν δύστηνον; ἡ κλύων λέγεις;  
*TE.* ὥσπερ σέ γ', οὐδὲν ἦσσον, ὀφθαλμοῖς ὀρώ.  
*E.L.* σκοπεῖτε μὴ δόκησιν εἴχεται ἐκ θεῶν.  
*TE.* ἄλλου λόγου μέμνησο, μὴ κείνης ἔτι. (120)  
*E.L.* οὕτω δοκεῖτε τὴν δόκησιν ἀσφαλῆ;  
*TE.* αὐτὸς γὰρ ὅσσοις εἰδόμην· καὶ νοὺς ὀρά.  
*E.L.* ἦδη δ' ἐν οἴκοις σὺν δάμαρτι Μενέλεως;

W. Ribbeck<sup>1</sup> objected to Helen's continuing the questioning after Teucer had so emphatically requested that she change the subject, and he suggested that lines 121–2 be deleted as an interpolation. In this Ribbeck was followed by Nauck, van Herwerden and Wecklein. A. M. Dale<sup>2</sup> added further objections to the couplet: the 'absurdity' of the apparent reference to Epicharmus 23 B 12 (Diels-Kranz) νοὺς ὀρή καὶ νοὺς ἀκούει· τᾶλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά, and the uniqueness of the form εἰδόμην in Euripides' trimeters. R. Kannicht<sup>3</sup> satisfactorily disposes of Dale's objections and he, like Murray, Grégoire and Alt, retains the manuscript reading. But Helen is still conspicuously – and uncharacteristically – impolite ('provocierend' is Kannicht's word for it), and the only parallels cited<sup>4</sup> for this egregious breach of the etiquette of stichomythia in fact confirm one's suspicion that 121 cannot follow 120. For the emotional scene in *I.T.* between Iphigeneia and Orestes is entirely different, inasmuch as the latter's reluctance and the former's insistence have a dramatic purpose. Euripides wishes to tease his audience with the possibility that brother and sister will not effect a mutual recognition; hence Orestes' refusal to reveal his name (499 ff.) and his otherwise evasive and enigmatic replies (496, 506, 512, 528, 544). When finally Iphigeneia brings herself to ask about the fate of her father and her question is met with a request that she change the subject, we can scarcely brand her as impolite when she continues (547) μὴ πρὸς θεῶν, ἀλλ' εἴφ', ἵν' εὐφρανθῶ, ξένε. For the words πρὸς θεῶν mean, after all, 'Please', and Orestes was in any case patently prevaricating when he claimed to know nothing about Agamemnon, after he had answered questions about Calchas, Helen, Odysseus, Achilles et al. The same considerations serve to mitigate Iphigeneia's insistence on learning about her mother, after her interlocutor once again demands that she cease the interrogation: τοσόνδε γ', εἰ ζῇ τοῦ ταλαιπώρου δάμαρ (555). Typical, rather, is *P.V.* 522, where Prometheus' use of the same formula (ἄλλου λόγου μέμνησθε) closes not only the subject but the episode.<sup>5</sup>

The impoliteness of Helen's speaking 121 after Teucer's 120 consists not only in her persistence in the same subject – a subject, it should be noted, that she drops in any case in the very next couplet – but in her use of the words τὴν δόκησιν. For, after δόκησιν 119, the article can only be anaphoric, and Teucer implicitly denies that he

<sup>1</sup> *In Euripidis Helenam coniectanea* (Berlin, 1865), pp. 7 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Euripides, Helen* (Oxford, 1967), ad loc.

<sup>3</sup> *Euripides, Helena* (Heidelberg, 1969), ad loc.

<sup>4</sup> W. Ludwig, *Sapheneia* (Diss. Tübingen, 1954), p. 56 note 2, referring only to *I.T.* 546 and 554.

<sup>5</sup> Examples in D. J. Mastronarde, 'Contact and Discontinuity. Some conventions of speech and action on the Greek tragic stage', *Univ. of California Publ., Class. Studies* 21 (1979), 38, 83 f.

has been the victim of mere δόκησις. In addition, the entire train of thought and the awkwardness of expression are so absurd that no amount of explanation<sup>6</sup> can palliate them: HELEN. ‘Beware of the possibility that you (Greeks) were deluded by the gods.’ TEUCER. ‘Let’s not talk about Helen any more.’ HELEN. ‘Do you (pl.!) consider that delusion so trustworthy (?) that you (sg.!) wish to change the subject?’<sup>7</sup> TEUCER. ‘Yes, for (γὰρ) I saw with my own eyes...’ While we may agree with Kannicht that the case for regarding 121–2 as an interpolation is weak, we cannot help admiring with Ribbeck how appropriately 123 would follow 120. As long as we regard this as an either/or proposition we will have difficulty arriving at a decision. There is, I think, an alternative. We should read 121–2 before 119:

- EΛ. εἶδες σὺ τὴν δύστηνον; ἢ κλύων λέγεις;  
 TE. ὥσπερ σέ γ’, οὐδὲν ἤσσαν, ὀφθαλμοῖς ὀρώ. (118)  
 EΛ. οὕτω δοκεῖτε τὴν δόκησιν ἀσφαλῆ;  
 TE. αὐτὸς γὰρ ὅσσοις εἰδόμην· καὶ νοῦς ὀρά. (121)  
 EΛ. σκοπεῖτε μὴ δόκησιν εἶχετ’ ἐκ θεῶν. (122)  
 TE. ἄλλου λόγου μέμνησο, μὴ κείνης ἔτι. (120)

There is an easy mechanical explanation for the dislocation in our manuscript. The couplet 117 f. ends with ὀρώ, 121 f. with ὀρά. These two words will have appeared one above the other in one of the ancestors of L which, like L itself, was written with the odd-numbered lines in the left-hand column and the even-numbered lines in the right.<sup>8</sup> Thus 121–2 were omitted in copying as a result of the most common cause of lipography, and were subsequently inserted in the wrong place.

We can now follow the connection of thought in these lines. The line of questioning is introduced by 115, ‘Did you (pl.) capture Helen when you took Troy?’ Teucer answers by saying that Menelaus dragged her away by the hair. Helen wishes to know whether Teucer has this information by hearsay, or has he seen ‘Helen’ himself? Teucer’s (unwittingly) ironic answer is, ‘Yes, I saw her just as clearly as I see you now.’ In other words, what Helen has just learned from Teucer is that the phantom was so successful that it deceived the entire Greek army, of which Teucer is a representative (εἰς τῶν Ἀχαιῶν 84). Helen’s next question is prompted by the wording of Teucer’s reply, for he has just reminded her that he has been deceived not only by the phantom but by the real Helen as well: ‘Was the entire army (δοκεῖτε, pl.) so convinced what they thought they saw<sup>9</sup> was real (that they believe they have captured Helen)?’ Helen’s original question was ‘Has the army captured Helen?’ and Teucer thought that he had already answered it affirmatively. In the face of his interlocutor’s apparent scepticism he can only repeat his answer in stronger terms: ‘(It was not, as you suggest, a matter of mere δόκησις) for I myself saw her with my eyes, and<sup>10</sup> seeing involves

<sup>6</sup> In addition to Kannicht’s commentary see E.-R. Schwinge, *Die Verwendung der Stichomythie in den Dramen des Euripides* (Heidelberg, 1968), pp. 323–6.

<sup>7</sup> I am not making any of this up. Here is Kannicht’s version: ‘so sicher ist also der Wahn, den ihr da wähnt, daß du nicht einmal mehr von dieser Frau reden willst?’ Kannicht does not comment on the implied variation in number.

<sup>8</sup> cf. my edition of *I.T.* (Leipzig, 1981), p. vi. For other examples of transposition of lines in tragedy see J. Jackson, *Marginalia Scaenica* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 1 ff. No importance should be attached to the marginal note in L (on line 122) ἐπίστησον. It is apparently equivalent to σημείωσαι and is in the hand of Simon Atumanus (for whom see A. Turyn, *The Byzantine Manuscript Tradition of the Tragedies of Euripides* (Urbana, 1957), pp. 226 f., with full bibliography).

<sup>9</sup> τὴν δόκησιν = ταῦτα ἃ ἐδόκει ὑμῖν. The article thus has the same function as in *Ion* 1602 and *Or.* 636.

<sup>10</sup> Here Teucer apparently thinks he is clinching the matter by using a learned allusion. I am not entirely convinced that this is intended as a reference to Epicharmus. At any rate it is a perversion of the critical method first to identify obscure allusions and then condemn them (as

the operation of the critical intelligence.' Nothing could be more appropriate than Helen's rejoinder, for σκοπεῖτε is both an intellectual and a visual term: 'Watch out! I fear you (pl.) may have been the victims of a delusion<sup>11</sup> (*sent*) by the gods.' This is the point at which Teucer insists upon dropping the subject, for no Greek could argue with the proposition that the gods are capable of deceiving not only the eyes, but the minds as well, of men.<sup>12</sup> Helen, careful as she has been throughout this scene not to arouse the ire of the man who, on his entrance, had threatened to kill her (75 ff.), obligingly asks no more about 'Helen'.

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A. M. Dale does) for their obscurity. Alternatively, Euripides might intend an allusion to the proverbial expression, known to us from Hdt. 1. 8. 2 and from a paraphrase of Heraclitus (22 B 101 a (Diels-Kranz)), that eyes are a more reliable witness than ears. F. Solmsen (*CR* 48 (1934), 119–21) shows that this passage is one of the many that 'testify to the special interest Euripides shows, in this play more than in any other, in the questions of perception and cognition'.

<sup>11</sup> No article, as in line 36.

<sup>12</sup> Semon. 42 West: ῥεῖα θεοὶ κλέπτουσιν ἀνθρώπων νόον. See also *Il.* 6. 234, 7. 360 (= 12. 234), 9. 377, 12. 255, 15. 724, 17. 469 f., 18. 311, 19. 137, *Od.* 14. 178, 19. 479, 20. 345 f., 23. 11 ff., Archil. 130 West, *A. Pers.* 472, 724 f. and Ajax in Sophocles, Heracles in Euripides; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 3 ff.