

CASTOR IN EURIPIDES' *ELECTRA* (*EL.* 307–13 AND 1292–1307)

This paper presents evidence, in the form of two passages from the *Electra*, that the editor of Euripides will do well not to resign himself too easily to pointless illogicality or violations of the formal regularities of tragedy or to comfort himself with the idea that illogic and meandering are 'human' touches, while formal incongruities are Euripides' incipient *verismo*.

Electra 307–13

310

αὐτὴ μὲν ἐκμοχθοῦσα κερκίσιν πέπλους,
ἣ γυμνὸν ἔξω σῶμα κάστερήσομαι,
αὐτὴ δὲ πηγὰς ποταμίους φορουμένη,
ἀνέορτος ἱερῶν καὶ χορῶν τητωμένη.
ἀναίνομαι γυναῖκας οὐσα παρθένος,
ἀναίνομαι δὲ Κάστορ', ᾧ πρὶν ἐς θεοὺς
ἐλθεῖν ἔμ' ἐμνήστευον, οὐσαν ἐγγενή.

311 γυναῖκας Barnes, cf. v. 44: δὲ γυμνὰς LP: suprascr. γυναῖκας L² vel L¹

The difficulties in this text (Murray's, who prints substantially the readings of L) are as follows: (1) There is a pointless asyndeton in either 310 or 311. Denniston defends this text by repunctuation, but unconvincingly. (2) Line 308 'is very flat, and στερήσομαι, "go without", would seem to need an object' (Denniston). It looks very much like a member of Wilamowitz's 'family' of ἡ-interpolations.¹ It also disturbs the anaphora of αὐτὴ μὲν/αὐτὴ δέ.

(3) In 312 it is difficult to see in what sense she 'shuns' or 'avoids' Castor, who, being among the gods, is no longer in a position to be shunned or avoided. Page's αἰσχύνομαι yields immediate relief to what might be called the problem of locale, though at the cost of losing what looks like another intentional anaphora. Yet we might still ask what her shame before Castor contributes to her speech, which is about the indignities inflicted on her by her father's murderers. Furthermore, why, out of all the people before whom she might have mentioned feeling shame, does she name Castor, who is no longer on the scene?²

(4) In the remainder of this line and the following one we have a choice between unpleasant alternatives. If we read ᾧ...ἐμνήστευον, we translate 'to whom my parents, before he joined the gods, betrothed me'. (To take the verb as first-person singular is a manifest impossibility: Greek girls do not betroth themselves.) But supplying 'my parents' is awkward; the verb does not mean 'betroth' but 'court, woo, seek in marriage' (*LSJ* cite only our passage for the sense 'betroth'); and furthermore

¹ See *Analecta Euripidea* (Berlin, 1875), 205–7. Throughout this paper I cite with author's name only J. D. Denniston, *Euripides: Electra* (Oxford, 1939), J. Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae*, ii (Oxford, 1981), and G. Murray, *Euripidis Fabulae*, ii³ (Oxford, 1913).

² A solution I have not seen in print but which is fully consistent with the way this passage is usually treated would be to assume a lacuna after 313, fill it *exempli gratia* as follows:

τί Κάστορ' εἶπον; τοῦδ' ἐπεμνήσθην ἐγώ,
οὗτον δ' ἔκατι, τοῦτ' ἀμνηχανῶ φράσαι,

and translate 'Why did I mention Castor? Why indeed? I have no notion why'.

the subject of ἐλθεῖν, being unexpressed, should be the same as that of ἐμνήστευον, on which the πρίν depends, which is not the case. If we read Nauck's ὅς . . . ἐμνήστευεν, the sense is plain sailing, but we are hard put to explain the corruption of ὅς to ᾧ, even supposing (what is far from certain) that once this happened the second corruption would follow as its natural result.

(5) Next come the suspicions raised by 311. It is a psychologically interesting idea that Electra, whose marriage with the farmer is unconsummated, 'feels instinctively "out of it"' in the company of married women (Denniston). It is a further interesting idea that 'she feels equally ill at ease among unmarried girls' (Denniston) and thus has no natural society. But Electra nowhere mentions her avoidance of unmarried girls, so that the second part of her supposed dilemma rests on nothing in the text. As for its first part, why is it self-evident that as a virgin she must avoid the company of married women? Do married women, in Euripides' view, talk of nothing but sex? And, more important, why not give the audience some explicit hint that this is the reason for Electra's avoidance? Why rush on to Castor, a subject tangential to the matter at hand?

(6) A further embarrassment is that it is hard to see why Electra's own choice in shunning the society of other women should be mentioned in the same breath with the indignities imposed by Clytemestra and Aegisthus. The latter increase our sympathy with her, while the former tends to do the opposite. It is as if she were to say to Orestes, 'My mother and her paramour have married me far below my station and made me live in galling poverty, and I, to complete their work, have cut myself off from even such society as my circumstances allow'.

There are many who write about this play who think that this perverse character, who complains of miseries she has inflicted on herself, is the one Euripides meant to draw. (Denniston's word is 'self-martyrdom'.) But we might note that it is asking rather much of the audience to expect them both to catch the meaning of 311 without any further help and to see that this meaning works subtly at cross purposes to the professed aim of her speech, which is to describe fully the indignities inflicted on her by Agamemnon's murderers. At the very least it makes us ask why Euripides forbore to introduce similar ironic touches into the other parts of her speech, parts which seem, to anyone not defending a thesis, to describe real and not imaginary or self-inflicted injuries.

If, with these misgivings on our minds, we reflect that γυναικας is Triclinius' correction for δὲ γυμνάς, that it is assignable by its ink-colour and its absence from P to his second set of corrections, which appear to be almost exclusively conjectural,³ and that this change is responsible for the asyndeton of which we complained above, confidence in the text vanishes. We may have this perverse Electra if we wish but at a cost: we must understand this part of her speech with an irony that is not applicable to the rest, we must introduce several by no means trifling alterations, both modern and Byzantine, into the text, and we must, even so, expend considerable effort to induce in ourselves the belief that this argument, which wanders without any discernible plan from poverty and toil to religious festivals, to female companionship, to Castor, represents what the most argumentative of the poets looked on with satisfaction when the ink was drying on his papyrus roll. Can we do better?

³ See G. Zuntz, *An Inquiry into the Transmission of the Plays of Euripides* (Cambridge, 1965). In his discussion of this passage on p. 107 Zuntz assigns the change to Triclinius' second set of corrections, but since he thinks γυναικας is correct he posits a MS. source for it, without sufficient reason, as I indicate below.

An archaic Indo-European use of the dual number, rare but well attested in Greek and (indirectly) in Latin, furnishes part of the answer to the difficulties of *El.* 307–13. It has long been recognised that the dual may represent not only two things of the same nature (χεῖρε, Ἀτρεΐδα), but also two things of different nature, where the dual of one of the words stands for the pair, e.g. the Indic *pitārāu* or *mātārāu* for 'father and mother' or *āhanī* for 'day and night', properly 'the day and what forms a pair with it'.⁴ On this basis Wackernagel showed that by *Αἴαντε* Homer means not the greater and lesser Ajax (who do not really form a pair) but Ajax and his brother Teucer, 'Ajax and he who forms a pair with him'.⁵ We might antecedently expect that the language of cult, like that of epic, would preserve traces of this usage, and in fact Θεσμοφόρῳ means Demeter and Kore, even though the latter is not called Θεσμοφόρος by herself.⁶ *Quirini* (= Romulus and Remus) and *Castores* (= Castor and Pollux) are reflexes in the dual-less Latin language of the same usage. Behind this second it is not unreasonable to assume, as suggested by Wackernagel and Meillet-Vendryes, that there lies an (unattested) *Κάστορε*.

More important than these facts (unknown in Scaliger's day as in Kirchhoff's) for the solution of our difficulties is a prejudice in favour of sense over nonsense. Instead of joining Diggle in purchasing, at the expense of Triclinius' γυναικας, Page's αἰσχύνομαι, and Nauck's δς... ἐμνήστευεν, a text that meanders in the all too 'human' way described above, we could assume that each verse is related to the preceding one in some intelligible fashion.⁷ The cost of having an Electra whose logic and grammar are both faultless, and whose words make the strongest case her dramatic situation allows,⁸ is trifling. The elements of the solution have all been in the public domain for more than a century, and the youngest name in my apparatus, apart from a minor and perhaps unnecessary alteration of my own, is that of Adolf Kirchhoff, as the oldest is that of Scaliger (confirmed by Wackernagel's evidence).⁹ Were it not for a prejudice in favour of incoherence, *El.* 307–13 might look like this in our modern editions:

αὐτὴ μὲν ἐκμοχθοῦσα κερκίσιν πέπλους,
[ἢ γυμνὸν ἔξω σῶμα καὶ στερήσομαι]
αὐτὴ δὲ πηγὰς ποταμίους φορουμένη,
ἀνέορτος ἱερῶν καὶ χορῶν τητωμένη. 310
ἀναίνομαι γὰρ γυμνὰς οὔσα παρθένους,
ἀναίνομαι δὲ Κάστορ(ε), ὦ πρὶν ἐς θεοὺς
ἐλθεῖν ἔμ' ἐμνήστευον οὔσαν ἐγγενή.

308 del. Camper 311 γὰρ scripsi: δὲ L παρθένους Kirchhoff, qui vocem γυμνὰς nominativam esse vidit: παρθένος L 312 Κάστορε, ὦ Scaliger: Κάστορ' ὦ L
(I live in terrible poverty,) myself weaving my own clothing, myself fetching water from the spring,

⁴ See A. Meillet and J. Vendryes, *Traité de grammaire comparée des langues classiques*⁴ (Paris, 1966), p. 530 and Schwyzler-Debrunner, *Griechische Grammatik* ii. 50 with literature cited.

⁵ See J. Wackernagel, 'Zum homerischen Dual', *KZ* 23 (1877), 302–10, rpt. in *Kleine Schriften* i. 538–46; D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley, 1959), 235–8; P. Chantraine, *Grammaire Homérique* ii. 29; and R. Merkelbach, 'Αἴαντε', *Glotta* 38 (1959), 268–70.

⁶ Cf. also the similar use of the plural, cited by Schwyzler-Debrunner: *Δαμάτρεσιν* (= Demeter and Kore), *Δεσποίνῃσιν* (= the *Δέσποινα* [Kore] and Demeter).

⁷ More than a century ago F. A. Paley complained that Euripidean speeches 'are often construed without any regard to the logical sequence of one verse with another'.

⁸ See A. M. Dale, *Euripides: Alcestis* (Oxford, 1954), xxii–xxix on the rhetoric of Euripidean speeches.

⁹ See R. Prinz and N. Wecklein, *Euripidis Fabulae* (Leipzig, 1878–1902) with appendix. Scaliger's suggestion is quoted in vol. 7, p. 404 of the variorum edition (Glasgow, 1821) published by A. and J. M. Duncan.

bereft of rites and deprived of choruses. For since I am naked I shun (the choruses of) maidens, shun likewise (the rites of) Castor and Pollux, who before their translation to the skies were my kinsmen and suitors for my hand.

That she is naked is, of course, not true *au pied de la lettre* (her weaving has seen to that), but it is an exaggeration pardonable in a princess now dressed in clothing that allows her to be mistaken for a slave (107),¹⁰ and lack of clothing was precisely the reason she gave the Chorus in 175–9 for declining their invitation. That the *παρθένοι* she shuns are *choruses* of maidens, rather than maidens in general, is strongly suggested by the context (310 mentions and identifies 'rites' and 'choruses'), and the same identification of *παρθενικά* and *χοροί* occurs earlier in the play (174, 178) in the context of the Chorus's invitation to join in the worship of Hera. In fact 311 merely summarises Electra's rejection of the invitation in 171–89. The argument thus continues in a straight line from the preceding verse, and it has to do not with Electra's mistreatment of herself but with indignities inflicted on Electra by her father's murderers: poverty means shabby dress, which in turn means – for a princess, at any rate – exclusion from the festivals.

In the next line the anaphora, which we supposed might be genuine, has a function in continuing the argument. Anaphora frequently indicates a carrying over of ideas from the first clause to the second, not only the repeated words themselves but others as well. Here Electra repeats *ἀναίνομαι*, and the motive for this shunning, the anaphora implies, is the same, shame at her shabby clothes. The general topic has been religious festivities, which also has not changed. What is different is only the object of her shunning, not – this time – her fellow-worshippers but instead *Κάστορε*, 'Castor and the one who forms a pair with him', language with cultic overtones which would have made it clear to Euripides' first audience, even if he had not specifically mentioned their apotheosis, that she was speaking of the *deified* Castor and Pollux.¹¹ The 'rites' and 'choruses' of 310 are thus picked up chiasmatically in 311 and 312.

The relative clause in 312–13 now has a relevance to the argument that will be apparent to anyone who considers the success-oriented values of Greek society, what we mean when we call it a 'shame culture'. On the Greek view it is natural after a great reversal of fortune to feel shame before those who had known one in prosperity.

¹⁰ Denniston says that *γυμνός* cannot mean 'without festal attire'. I would not disagree. But even though that is not what the word means it may be what the speaker means. It will rarely be of use to reply to a woman's 'I haven't a thing to wear', uttered before a closet of dowdy clothes, that this is *secundum litteram* untrue. It is noteworthy that *γυμνός* in Greek literature is frequently used to mean something less than total nakedness: Hes. *Op.* 391, Ar. *Nub.* 498, X. *Anab.* 4.4.12, and Pl. *Resp.* 474a. None of these is an exact parallel, but how often is Electra's situation depicted in our sources?

¹¹ Denniston cites Murray's translation (London, 1908), 22–3:

From all, from all
I am cut off. No portion hath my life
'Mid wives of Argos, being no true wife.
No portion where the maidens throng to praise
Castor – my Castor, whom in ancient days
Ere he passed from us and men worshipped him,
They named my bridegroom.

He claims that it is impossible to get from the Greek of Murray's text the idea that Electra shuns the worship of the deified Castor. This is probably true. Murray fudges, but it is instructive to see that in fudging he seems to be translating Kirchhoff's *παρθένους*, the one word which does the most to establish religious festivals as the context for both 311 and 312. Scaliger's *Κάστορε* also helps.

(This point is made explicitly in the false but plausible words of Hecuba to Polymestor at *Hec.* 968–72.) Electra shuns the festivals because not only the noble maidens of the choruses but even some of the divinities had known her in better days. Her isolation is thus the result of the poverty Clytemestra and Aegisthus have inflicted on her and functions as one of the incitements to Orestes (like Aegisthus' outrage of Agamemnon's tomb) to avenge his father's death, not as a subtle indication of Electra's 'self-martyrdom'.

The corrections are few and easy to explain. At some point *παρθένους* in 311 was corrupted to *παρθένος*. The corruption of *-ους* to *-ος* is not all that common (an example at *Alc.* 426) but the chief influence was surely the proximity of the feminine nominative participle. When this text reached Triclinius, it naturally did not occur to him that *οὔσα* and *παρθένος* did not go together or that *γυμνάς* was nominative.¹² Since *ἀναίνομαι* needed an object and *γυμνάς* seemed to occupy its place, he altered this word according to his lights. That he failed to correct the metre by deleting *δέ* is no cause for surprise (cf. *El.* 856, where he cheerfully accepts an anapaest to avoid a hiatus), and *pace* Zuntz there is nothing here to suggest that he had access to another MS. In 312 *Κάστορ* went unrecognised as a dual and *ῶ* was corrupted inevitably to *ὦ* (<ι>). Last, if *γάρ* in 311 is really necessary (see Denniston *GP* 169 for *δέ* used where *γάρ* could be expected), L's *δέ* can easily be put down to the influence of the next line. The changes thus come to this, the insertion of a single upsilon and the correction of an accent, with possibly the replacement of one connective by another.

Electra 1292–1307

The second passage shows how little Euripides' critics and editors are disturbed by violations of the formal regularities of tragedy, how low their expectations are. The implicit standard of comparison seems to be not other works in the highly stylised medium of Greek tragedy, but ordinary conversation caught on a tape recorder, so that the sufficient answer to the question why a speaker should ask permission to speak, receive it, but never succeed in making use of it, is 'It just happened that way'. Editors are also not disturbed in the slightest if the Chorus here are made to do something done by a chorus nowhere else. The passage provides us furthermore with the interesting spectacle of editors importing absurdities and contradictions into the text by conjecture and then inviting us to admire Euripides' satire. The text and apparatus below are Diggle's:

<i>Χο.</i>	<i>ὦ παῖδε Διός, θέμις ἐς φθογγὰς τὰς ὑμετέρας ἡμῖν πελάθειν;</i>	
<i>Κα.</i>	<i>θέμις, οὐ μυσαραῖς τοῖςδε σφαγίοις.</i>	1294
<i>Χο.</i>	<i>πῶς ὄντε θεῶ τῇδε τ' ἀδελφῶ τῆς καπθιμένης οὐκ ἠρκέσατο Κῆρας μελάρθοις;</i>	1298 1300
<i>Κα.</i>	<i>μοῖρά τ' ἀνάγκη τ' ἦγ' ἐς τὸ χρεὼν Φοῖβον τ' ἄσοφοι γλώσσης ἐνοπαί.</i>	1302
<i>Ηλ.</i>	<i>κάμοι μύθου μέτα, Τυνδαρίδαι;</i>	1295

¹² It should be noted, however, that Euripides shows some fondness for adjectives of one termination (usually feminine) in *-άς, -άδος*: *γυμνάς* at *Hip.* 1134, *Tro.* 448, fr. 105; *δρομάς* at *Hip.* 550, *Sup.* 1000, *Tro.* 42, *Hel.* 1301, *Pho.* 1125, *Or.* 317, 837, 1416, *Ba.* 731; *μαινάς* at *El.* 1032, *Tro.* 173, 307, 349, 415, *Ion* 552, *Pho.* 1753, *Ba.* passim; *μηκάς* at *Cycl.* 189; *τοκάς* at *Cycl.* 42, *Med.* 187, *Hip.* 559, *Hec.* 1157.

<i>Ka.</i>	καὶ οἱ Φοίβωι τήνδ' ἀναθήσω πράξιν φονίαν.	1296 1297
<Ηλ.>	τίς δ' ἔμ' Ἀπόλλων, ποῖοι χρησμοὶ φονίαν ἔδοσαν μητρὶ γενέσθαι;	1303
<i>Ka.</i>	κοινὰί πράξεις, κοινὸὶ δὲ πότμοι, μία δ' ἀμφοτέρους ἅτη πατέρων διέκναιεν.	1305

1292 *Xo.* Victorius: *Op.* L 1293 πλάθειν Nauck 1294 *μυσαραις* Orelli: -οῖς L
 1295-7 uide post 1302 1298 *Xo.* Victorius: paragr. L 1299 *καπθιμένης* Elmsley:
καταφθ- L ἡρκεάτην Elmsley: uide Fraenkel ad A. Ag. 1207 1301 *μοῖρά τ'*
 Murray: *μοῖρας* L ἀνάγκη τ' Diggle: ἀνάγκης L ἡγ' ἔς τὸ Tucker: ἡγείτο L:
 ἡγεν τὸ Seidler 1295-7 huc trai. Arnoldt: uide Winnington-Ingram, CR 51 (1937) 51-2
 1296 *Ka.*] *Δι.* P: notam om. L 1303 <Ηλ.> Victorius: notam om. L: paragr. P
 τίς δ' ἔμ' Seidler: τί δαί μ' L 1304 ἔθεσαν Dobree 1305 *Ka.* Victorius (*Δι.*): paragr. L
κοινὸι Victorius: -αὶ L

Diggle's text makes use of three major alterations, ranging in date from the Renaissance to the last century. None of them is necessary or probable. The first pair violate regularities of Greek tragic practice and create numerous other formal incongruities. The third, while proposed out of consistency with the first two, has been defended precisely because it creates logical contradiction.

(1) L assigns 1292-3 to Orestes and 1298-1300 to Electra. Victorius, the first editor of the play, assigned both to the Chorus. (2) Orelli then changed *μυσαραις* in 1294 to *μυσαραις* on the ground that a masculine plural adjective cannot be applied to a group consisting entirely of women. The chief reason for making these two changes is a pardonable unwillingness to believe that the Dioscuri could really mean that Orestes and Electra are not *μυσαροί*.¹³ How they could mean this I will make clear below. For the moment, consider the inconveniences and incongruities these two changes create.

(a) Choruses do not elsewhere engage in dialogue with gods from the machine. That is for the characters to do.¹⁴ It is, after all, for the benefit of the characters, not of their neighbours, friends, or well-wishers, that the *deus ex machina* appears. This chorus in particular, Argive women of conventional views and behaviour (see 190-7), are not at all likely to push themselves forward in order to put embarrassing or challenging questions to the Dioscuri. The Dioscuri for their part take no notice of the Chorus, as is entirely natural, either in what precedes or what follows our passage.

(b) Formally the questions in 1292-3 and 1295 are parallel, the second being a shortened version of the first. But if Victorius and Orelli are right, the formal parallelism belies a considerable dissimilarity of content. For not only is one speaker the representative of a group and the other a named individual, but of the two requests for permission to speak, one is made (presumably) because the speaker is conscious that she is a mortal addressing divinities (a scruple for which, incidentally, I know no parallel) and the other because the speaker has committed matricide. Still another curiosity is that the second speaker seems to derive encouragement (as *κάμωί* and the brevity of the question imply) from the answer the first received, despite the dissimilarity of their cases.

¹³ It has also been urged that a neuter dative plural should not be made to depend on a masculine dative plural because the similarity of endings would cause confusion. If this is really unexampled, which I doubt, there are other remedies. See below, n. 24.

¹⁴ *Rhes.* 904 ff. can scarcely serve as a parallel to our passage. Yet that is the only *prima facie* candidate.

(c) Lastly, why should only one of the two siblings address the gods, and at that the one not addressed by them? 'Numquam adloquitur Orestes deos; illa, ut solet, audacior', says Murray, as if that settled it, and as if a difference of characterisation should here take precedence over the formal symmetry we see elsewhere in this anapaestic section. It is also a little late in the play to be concerned with fine gradations of *audacia* between the principals, gradations which, after all, have very little to do with what happens to them.¹⁵

(3) Arnoldt and Winnington-Ingram transpose 1295–7 to follow 1302.¹⁶ This creates absurdities, some unintentional and some warmly embraced by the second proposer of this conjecture as evidence for its correctness. Here I must apologise for exposing the latent perversities of an article published in 1937. This would be a pointless exhumation were it not that the latest Oxford editor of Euripides cites this article in his apparatus as a defence of the transposition. My quarrel is therefore not with Winnington-Ingram *iuvenis* but with a tendency in Euripidean criticism that is still at large and that has misled an otherwise acute and learned editor.¹⁷

Among the unintentional absurdities are the following. As in the untransposed text, there is the same lack of parallelism between the two requests for permission to speak, though the inconcinnity is somewhat lessened by moving them farther apart. Such relief as this provides, however, to our sense of formality violated is more than offset by a fresh inconcinnity. For the first speaker asks permission to speak, receives it, and uses her permission to ask a question. The second speaker (Electra in Diggle's text) asks permission to speak, receives explicit absolution, disputes the absolution, is answered, and never succeeds in making substantive use of the permission granted.

If the speaker of 1295 is Orestes, as Winnington-Ingram suggests, that is scarcely any better, for then Orestes asks and receives permission to speak but says nothing. 'He does not get a chance', replies Winnington-Ingram, 'for Electra (ut solet, audacior) interposes. It is idle to enquire what he had in mind to ask.' And is it also idle to enquire what Euripides had in mind when he made him ask permission to speak? The poet is not transcribing an actual conversation but inventing dialogue with a formal structure. It is not enough to say 'It just happened that way'.¹⁸

The second category are *αὐθαίρετὰ κακά*, absurdities Winnington-Ingram welcomes. This scene is intentionally satirical, he says, appropriate to this 'highly satirical play'. There is an inconsistency between 1294, 'with its impressive moral frown', and 1296, which destroys the effect of 1294. The inconsistency should not be too crude, however. The transposition allows the Dioscuri to retreat by stages from their high moral position. 'May the Chorus speak? Yes, because they are not polluted. May Orestes? Yes, because of Apollo. May Electra? Yes, because of... fate, ἄτη πατέρων. Their original position has completely disintegrated.' (Dots are in the original.)

It will be interesting to see whether methods such as these could be applied to other disciplines as well and whether we can look forward to, let us say, an art historian

¹⁵ Some of these points have already been made by F. Stoessl, 'Die Elektra des Euripides', *RhM* 99 (1956), 82–5 and W. Steidle, *Studien zum antiken Drama* (Munich, 1968), 85–7.

¹⁶ I was unable to consult Arnoldt, named by Diggle as the first to propose this transposition. The conjecture was made again, without mention of Arnoldt, by R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Euripides, *Electra* 1292–1307', *CR* 51 (1937), 51–2.

¹⁷ See my review of Diggle in *AJP* for an appreciation of his services to Euripides.

¹⁸ I note further that if Orestes speaks 1295, of the three who address the Dioscuri, the first two, who have the least in common, are made formally the most parallel, while of the last two, who have the most in common, the first asks permission to speak while the second does not but simply bursts in.

drawing a moustache on *Ginevra de' Benci* and accompanying it with an essay on Leonardo's witty irreverence. However that may be, if we have no good reason to believe that Euripides at one and the same moment indulged in dull and pointless satire¹⁹ and perpetrated inexplicable formal incongruities, we might have a closer look at the text our MS. provides us, which is formally satisfying, logically consistent, and in the good taste proper to the ending of a tragic drama. Here, apart from minor corrections, is the text of L:

Op.	ὦ παῖδε Διός, θέμις ἐς φθογγὰς τὰς ὑμετέρας ἡμῖν πελάθειν;	
Ka.	θέμις, οὐ μυσαροῖς τοῖσδε σφαγίοις.	
Hl.	καὶ μοι μύθου μέτα, Τυνδαρίδαι;	1295
Ka.	καὶ σοί· Φοίβωι τήνδ' ἀναθήσω πρᾶξιν φονίαν.	
<Op.>	πῶς ὄντε θεῶ τῆσδέ τ' ἀδελφῶ τῆς καπθιμένης οὐκ ἠρκέσατον Κῆρας μελάθροισ;	1300
Ka.	μοῖρά τ' ἀνάγκη τ' ἡγ' ἐς τὸ χρεῶν, Φοίβου τ' ἄσοφοι γλώσσης ἐνοπαί.	
Hl.	τίς δ' ἔμ' Ἀπόλλων, ποῖοι χρησμοὶ φονίαν ἔδοσαν μητρὶ γενέσθαι;	
Ka.	κοινὰ πράξεις, κοινὸι δὲ πότμοι, μία δ' ἀμφοτέρους ἄτη πατέρων διέκναισεν.	1305

1294 fortasse *μυσαρῶ* vel *μυσαροί* scribendum: *τοῖνδε σφαγίοι* Musgrave
1298 lineolam L: Hl. p: Op. scripsi 1303 lineolam P: nulla nota in L: Hl. Victorius

The speech immediately preceding is entirely addressed to Orestes (second-person pronouns and verbs in 1238, 1243, 1244, 1246, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1252, 1255, 1256, 1257, 1264, 1265, 1273, 1275, 1276, 1278, 1286, 1288, 1289, 1291), which makes it almost unthinkable for anyone but Orestes to reply in 1292.²⁰ The Dioscuri tell him that the murder of Clytemestra, while justified, was not a just act for Orestes to perform, that Apollo's counsel to him had been unwise, but that the proper response now is acquiescence (*αἰνεῖν*) in what has happened. For the future, fate holds for him exile, pursuit by the *Keres*, a trial at Athens, but – at the end of his fated course – happiness and release from toil (1290–1). The speech is gracious, not condemnatory. Orestes' act was unjust, to be sure, and it will have consequences, but Apollo's part relieves him of full responsibility. The Dioscuri explicitly say (1290) that the murder was fated. They say too that Zeus was the cause of the Trojan War and imply that Zeus and fate will be directing Orestes' life in the future (1248). All this means that

¹⁹ The satire is exceedingly feeble. The Dioscuri change from the 'impressive moral frown' of 1294 to a more indulgent attitude and do not give any justification for it. Are they therefore contemptible? The worst indictment these facts suggest is feeble-mindedness, for this change of heart cannot be treated as evidence of base or unworthy passions in them. Does Euripides' meditation on the gods therefore come to this, that while some of the gods are heartless and unjust, others are simply witless fools who either do not know or do not care if they contradict themselves?

²⁰ Cf. *Ba.* 1344, where Cadmus, the last person addressed by Dionysus, replies, and *Hel.* 1680, where Theoclymenus replies to the Dioscuri.

the matricide, ruinous though it was, was somehow the will of heaven. Castor and Pollux have come to console, not to condemn, their kinsman.²¹

Then follows the interchange given above, which is in two parts. In the first, the two principals, who still feel defiled, are explicitly absolved of blame and given permission to address the divinities.²² Lines 1294 and 1296–7 show the same gracious tone as the preceding speech. The way to understand 1294 is to take it closely with 1296–7, as the transmitted order permits us to: ‘You are not polluted, for I will ascribe this bloody business to Apollo’. This ‘soft’ attitude toward pollution, in which responsibility plays a role, is in evidence in the passage on any showing since Electra, who held the sword, would normally be considered polluted. Precisely the same attitude is to be found in *Or.* 75–6 and 597–8: Orestes is not polluted since the responsibility lies with Apollo.²³ There is thus no reason to bridle at 1294 addressed to Orestes. It is in fact only thus that it escapes being trivial.²⁴

In the second part come the questions both were eager to ask and for whose sake permission to speak was requested: could the Dioscuri not have averted disaster from a house to which they were related by blood? This is the natural question to ask in misfortune: could it have been avoided? The desired response is ‘no’, for inevitability brings consolation. The Dioscuri give the desired response and name two sources of inevitability: fate and Apollo. But Electra is not satisfied. What consolation is Apollo to her since she has had no dealings with him? Must she bear the responsibility for her part in the murder? No, say the Dioscuri. As the actions of Orestes and Electra have been conjoint, so have the fates which determined them. A single ancestral *ἄτη* has crushed them both.

Inconsequential meandering has been cheerfully accepted in the first passage, and formal incongruity together with logical inconsistency borne with much more than cheerful acceptance in the second, because editors have been convinced that this is the kind of poet with whom they are dealing. It is an unmistakable case of the influence of literary upon textual criticism. I hope that in these two passages at least I have shown that to read them satirically is to make unfounded assumptions about Euripides’ art.*

University of Virginia

DAVID KOVACS

²¹ This fact makes it all the more unlikely that they should say to the chorus *θέμις, οὐ μυσσараῖς τοῖσδε σφαγίοις*, a gratuitous insult to Orestes.

²² Electra has as much reason as Orestes to ask permission to speak since she had her hand on the sword: cf. 1225.

²³ There is no contradiction with 1250–1. Orestes must leave Argos because he is going to be pursued by the *Keres*. They, like the Erinyes in Aeschylus, pursue murderers whether or not they have been cleansed of *miasma*: cf. *Cho.* 1059 f. and *Eu.* 282 f. and see R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983), 386–8 and, on the *Orestes* passage, p. 311.

²⁴ If the difficulty with the datives mentioned in n. 13 above is a real one, we can read *μυσσараῖς τοῖνδε σφαγίῳ* (Musgrave), *μυσσaroῖν τοῖσδε σφαγίοις*, or, simplest of all, *μυσσαρῶ*. With this last reading only Orestes is explicitly absolved and Electra’s question becomes more natural. The corruption in any case is easily explained as an anticipation of the ending of the next word.

* I would like to thank *CQ*’s anonymous reader for helpful references.