

EURIPIDES, *MEDEA* 926–31

- αὔτη, τί χλωροῖς δακρύοις τέγγεις κόρας,
 στρέψασα λευκὴν ἔμπαλιν παρηίδα,
 κοῦκ ἀσμένη τόνδ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ δέχῃ λόγον;
 Μη. οὐδέν· τέκνων τῶνδ' ἐννοουμένη πέρι. 925
 Ια. θάρρει νυν· εὖ γὰρ τῶνδ' ἐγὼ θήσω πέρι.
 Μη. δράσω τὰδ'· οὗτοι σοῖς ἀπιστήσω λόγοις.
 γυνὴ δὲ θήλυ καπὶ δακρύοις ἔφν.
 Ια. τί δῆτα λίαν τοῖδ' ἐπιστένεις τέκνοις;
 Μη. ἔτικτον αὐτοῦς· ζῆν δ' ὅτ' ἐξήνχου τέκνα, 930
 ἐσῆλθέ μ' οἶκος εἰ γενήσεται τάδε.
 ἀλλ' ὥνπερ οὐνεκ' εἰς ἐμοὺς ἦκει λόγους,
 τὰ μὲν λέλεκται, τῶν δ' ἐγὼ μνησθήσομαι.

codd.: Ω = BOCDEAV; LP

926 τῶνδ' ἐγὼ θήσω EAVL (θήσομαι V³, θήσω V^{39p}) et Chr. Pat. 926: τῶνδε θήσομαι D et Nv, fort. recte: τῶνδε νῦν θήσομαι BO: νῦν τῶνδ' ἐγὼ θήσω P 929 δῆτα λίαν LP (cf. Chr. Pat. 737 δῆτα λοιπόν): δῆ τάλαινα Ω

The above is the text of *Medea* 922–33 and a selection of the critical apparatus from the Oxford text edited by J. Diggle.¹ In his discussion of the variant readings at 926 Diggle leaves open the choice between *θήσομαι* and *θήσω*.² It seems to me worth noticing that an old proposal of Theodor Ladewig to transpose 926–8 and 929–31, which has in any case much to commend it, has a bearing on the solution of this problem.³

In the above text the connection of thought between 928 and 929 is imperfect. Ladewig made the crucial criticism of the order of lines in noting that, after *Medea* has answered Jason's initial question, accepted his reassurance and appealed to a natural womanly tendency in explanation of her tears, one expects the topic of her tears to be closed, and it is astonishing to find Jason returning to his question.⁴ Ladewig read *τί δῆ τάλαινα* in 929, which makes the sequence harsh indeed, but even with *τί δῆτα λίαν* it is still unsatisfactory. It is odd that, when *Medea* has excused her tears in the way she does, Jason should go on to ask: 'Why *then* are you crying so much over these children?' *δῆτα* 'denotes that the question springs out of something which another person ... has just said.'⁵ Here its typical force should be: 'In that case

¹ *Euripidis Fabulae* i (Oxford, 1984), pp. 132–3.

² *CQ* 33 (1983), 349–51.

³ *N. Jahr. f. Phil.* 99 (1869), 192.

⁴ Ladewig in his brief note confines his criticism of the traditional order to the point that one expects a new topic to follow *Medea*'s remarks about womanly weakness, and that Jason's return to the earlier question is striking. I quote the relevant paragraph: 'Da Iason also hört, der Gedanke an die Kinder bringe die Medeia zu Thränen, nimmt er die Sache leicht und beruhigt die Trauernde durch die Versicherung, er werde für die Kleinen sorgen. Medeia erklärt sich dadurch völlig zufrieden gestellt und entschuldigt sich wegen ihre Schwäche. Man sollte meinen, dieser Gegenstand sei nun gänzlich abgemacht und das Gespräch werde auf ein anderes Thema übergehen. Um so mehr wird man überrascht, wenn man sieht dass Iason im Gegenteil auf sein frühere Frage zurückkommt.' This is of course the crucial observation. Ladewig makes no comment on particles or on the source of the corruption.

⁵ J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1966), p. 269.

why...?', and it can only serve as a response to 928 if more weight is placed on *λίαν* than it can comfortably bear in this context. We are obliged to understand: 'Why then (*sc.* given that women are inclined to weep) are you crying *so much*...?', i.e. more than is explained by the preceding generalisation. However, quantification is hardly the central interest of the passage, and *τοῖσδ'*...*τέκνοις* is a surprisingly late, if not unwanted, definition of the object of her tears at this point. The line is somewhat better if it is taken as a response to 927 rather than to 928, yet even here, since Medea's concessions are couched in the future tense, Jason's 'Why then are you crying...?' is a far from natural rejoinder to 'I shall cheer up, I won't doubt your words.' In any case, since weeping is the subject of 928, it is very difficult to believe that this line is to be ignored by Jason's response, because 929 concerns precisely her tears.

Thus the continuation of the questions about the cause of Medea's tears is odd after she has replied in the way she has, and the connection of ideas implied by *δῆτα* proves to be impossible if 929 is a response to 928, and to be at the best strained if it is a response to 927. These difficulties are removed if 929–31 are transposed to follow 925 as follows:

	αὐτη, τί χλωροῖς δακρύοις τέγγεις κόρας,	922
	στρέψασα λευκὴν ἔμπαλιν παρηίδα,	
	κοῦκ ἀσμένη τόνδ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ δέχῃ λόγον;	
Μη.	οὐδέν· τέκνων τώνδ' ἐννοουμένη πέρι.	925
Ια.	τί δὴ τάλαινα τοῖσδ' ἐπιστένεις τέκνοις;	929
Μη.	ἔτικτον αὐτούς· ζῆν δ' ὅτ' ἐξηύχου τέκνα,	930
	ἐσῆλθε μ' οἶκος εἰ γενήσεται τάδε.	931
Ια.	θάρσει νυν· εὐ γὰρ τώνδε θήσομαι πέρι.	926
Μη.	δράσω τάδ'· οὔτοι σοῖς ἀπιστήσω λόγοις.	927
	γυνὴ δὲ θῆλυ κατὰ δακρύοις ἔφυ.	928
	ἀλλ' ὥνπερ οὔνεκ' εἰς ἐμούς ἦκεις λόγους,	932
	τὰ μὲν λέλεκται, τῶν δ' ἐγὼ μνησθήσομαι.	

This order of lines was proposed by Ladewig and the above text printed, with different punctuation, by Weil. The same order appears, with some textual variants in 926 and 929, in the editions of Verrall, Wecklein and Prinz-Wecklein. In view of this support it is remarkable that it is not discussed in Page's commentary, for its advantage in coherence over the manuscript order is apparent.⁶ Jason has asked for an explanation of Medea's tears. The exchange runs: 'It's nothing. I was thinking about these children.' 'What is it that makes you cry over these children?' 'I bore them, and when you prayed for their future life, I felt sad and wondered if that would come to pass.' 'Cheer up; I'll take good care of *that*.' 'I shall, I won't doubt your words, but a woman is by nature inclined to tears. However, as for my proposal...'. The sequence runs naturally and every detail is telling. The first question (922) is general, the second (929) is particular. Medea's answer to the latter leads into the subject of the future of the children, and Jason's reassurances on this score, together with her ostensible acquiescence, are heavy with tragic irony, since we know that the

⁶ This text is in H. Weil, *Sept tragédies d'Euripide* (Paris, 1879), pp. 168–9. This order of lines is in A. W. Verrall, *The Medea of Euripides* (London, 1881); N. Wecklein, *Ausgewählte Tragödien* i, 3rd. ed. (Leipzig, 1891), pp. 101–2, with reference to earlier discussions on p. 148; and R. Prinz and N. Wecklein, *Euripidis Fabulae* i, 2nd. ed. (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 42–3. The transposition is not discussed by D. L. Page, *Euripides Medea* (Oxford, 1938).

children have no future. Thus this exchange, by contrast with the order of lines in the manuscripts, forms a suitable climax to the episode of Medea's tears, before she rounds off the whole effectively with her disarming generalisation and moves on to her next topic.

With this order, *τί δῆτα λίαν* would be more at home, picking up 'It's nothing...' with 'Why then (*sc.* if it's nothing)...?' But the alternative *τί δὴ τάλαινα* is much superior as a response to the second part of 925, and the adjective adds a suitable touch of remonstrance to Jason's reaction to Medea's unexpected tears. *τί δῆ* is exactly right for introducing a request for more precise information, especially with overtones of surprise.⁷ That it is the second part of 925 that prompts his response is clear from *τοῖσδ'...τέκνοις*, a repetition from the preceding line which might elsewhere seem clumsy but here is perfect as a repetition of that part of her answer which elicits his surprise: the enhanced prospects of the children after the reconciliation should rather be, he thinks, a matter for joy, cf. 914–17. Thus we have: 'What is it that makes you cry over these children?'

On this basis let us consider the choice between *θήσω* and *θήσομαι*. Diggle's survey of the relevant material shows that, with *εὖ*, *τίθεσθαι* is well attested, whereas *τιθέναι* occurs in only two passages elsewhere.⁸ If the standard middle form is correct here, then the variant in the active needs explanation. Ladewig's transposition has an important contribution to make here, and this is the justification for resurrecting his old, but never (so far as I know) refuted, proposal.

Supposing that the original text of 926 read *θάρσει νυν· εὖ γὰρ τῶνδε θήσομαι πέρι*, then once the incorrect order of lines has arisen in the manuscripts the pronoun *τῶνδε* merely picks up *τῶνδ'* in the previous line and carries no stress, there being nothing with which it can form a contrast. This leaves 926 slightly but unpleasantly unemphatic as an answer to 925, and one may readily understand why the middle might be altered to the active in order to accommodate an emphatic contrasting pronoun and give the line some bite: Medea cannot now look after the children herself, so Jason is made to attempt to calm her anxieties by reassuring her that *he* will look after them well, *τῶνδ' ἐγὼ θήσω πέρι*. Other variants with *νῦν* may be explained as similar but less successful expedients. Of course, with its true position restored by the transposition, *τῶνδε* (926) refers not to the children but to their future, for this is the reference of *εἰ γενήσεται τάδε* (931) which now precedes it. Thus *τῶνδε* properly carries stress, being that particular aspect of the matter of the children which Medea herself has just acknowledged as the cause of her tears. Jason reassures her with 'I'll see to *that*', and *ἐγὼ* is not wanted, leaving the field to the regular *θήσομαι*. However, while a good explanation is available to account for the intrusion of the active as a variant, there is nothing comparable to explain the reverse process from *ἐγὼ θήσω* if that was original, and the transposition therefore, if accepted, provides a considerable argument in favour of the middle. Since *τί δῆτα λίαν* and *τί δὴ τάλαινα* are so similar either could have arisen from the other by miscopying, yet here too the former may have arisen after the line order became dislocated, as an

⁷ *τί δῆ* in tragedy in questions asking for further information: *ἰδοὺ· καλῶ θεοῦς. ἤ τί δῆ λέγεις, γέρον;* E. *El.* 566; cf. *Ion* 1332, A. *Pers.* 727, *P. V.* 118. Expressing surprise or something similar: *τί δὴ τὸ Νείλου μεμπτόν ἐστὶ σοι γάνος;* E. *Hel.* 462; cf. *I. A.* 1439 (*δῆτα* MSS.), A. *Cho.* 569, S. *Phil.* 730 (*τί δῆ ποθ'*), *Trach.* 403 (*εἰς τί δῆ*); E. *Ion* 525 (*ὥς τί δῆ*), cf. *I. T.* 557, *I. A.* 1342. The last two of these passages introduce follow-up questions as at *Medea* 929.

⁸ Diggle (above, n. 2), 350. See also E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* ii (Oxford, 1950), p. 414, and Page (above, n. 6), pp. 141–2.

attempted improvement on the latter which, while fully operative in its true place, is blatantly unsatisfactory after 928.⁹

The source of the major corruption itself may be found in the occurrence of the word *πέρι* at the end of both 925 and 926.¹⁰ It is not simply a question of the scribe thinking he has completed 926 and proceeding to copy 927, whereas he has in fact only completed 925, for this mechanical error would result in the omission of 926 as well as of 929–31. There is an identical omission of three lines at Euripides, *Held.* 945ff., where between 947 (ending in *ἐφ'ὕβρισαι*) and 948 (ending in *καθ'ὕβρισαι*) lines 950–2 were omitted and subsequently replaced at the first convenient place after the wrong *-ὕβρισαι*. The lines are restored to their proper place in Diggle's text and the passage discussed by J. Jackson,¹¹ who calls the error 'the trick of a flagging brain, which induced the scribe, on completing a line that ended with *-ὕβρισαι*, to append at once the similar line which he knew beforehand would have to be written.' The same explanation is applicable to our passage: the magnetic attraction of *τῶνδε...πέρι* after *τῶνδ'...πέρι* leads to the omission of 929–31, which are later replaced at a convenient but incorrect position after the wrong *πέρι*.¹²

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⁹ Additional corruption intended to accommodate disturbed lines in an alien location is a feature of *Held.* 945ff.: see J. Jackson, *Marginalia Scaenica* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 6–9, whose conjecture *ἀξιώσας* for the manuscript reading *ῥξίωσας* is printed by Diggle.

¹⁰ Since the repetition is necessary in order to explain the corruption, a consequence of accepting the transposition is that *πέρι* (926) should not be emended. Thus acceptance of the transposition entails toleration of the intransitive use of *εὖ τιθεσθαι*, which (as with *τιθέναι* also) is not found elsewhere.

¹¹ See n. 9 above.

¹² I wish to thank my colleague Dr M. J. Apthorp and the *CQ* referee for comments on earlier drafts of this article.