An unnoticed Greek tragic fragment

In the doxographico-medical work *de natura hominis* of Meletius Monachus (9th century A.D.), the etymology of ὀῶλον, “gum,” is treated; this leads to a discussion of various roots in οὐλ-, among them ὀῶλος:

καὶ ὀῶλος ὁ ὀὐλόθριος, παρὰ τὸ ὀὐλόν — ὀῦλοτο κεῖνος ἐξ ἀνθρώπῳ κτλ. ¹)

The ultimate source for Meletius’ etymological passages is the treatise *Περὶ ἑτυμολογῶν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* by the great Greek physician Soranus, *methodicorum princeps*, who practised under Trajan and Hadrian. This work was remarkable for its wide learning; even quotations from the poets abounded in it. ²) The words cited above (ὁλοκτόνος — αὐτήριον) are clearly such a quotation; ³) the use of ὄλλυμι for ἀπόλλυμι and κεῖνος for εὐκεῖνος both belong to poetic vocabulary. The meter is the iambic trimeter (Χ—ὁλοκτόνος κεῖνος ἐξ ἀνθρώπῳ ὁ—), and this suggests the drama. More specifically, we should think of tragedy, since ὄλλυμι is a very common tragic word. It occurs about 50 and 70 times respectively in Aeschylus and Sophocles, and over 200 times in Euripides. ⁴) By contrast, it appears only twice in Aristophanes (as against almost 200 instances of ἀπόλλυμι) and never in Menander. The index to Meineke’s collection of comic fragments cites four instances; of these, one may be corrupt and another is a quotation from Euripides. Furthermore, this use of the aorist middle of ὄλλυμι in an imprecation is almost a vox technica of the tragic vocabulary (nine instances in Aeschylus, eleven in Sophocles, and about thirty in Euripides). ⁵)

1) *PG* 64. 1193 D ff; also in J. Cramer, *Anecdota Oxon.* III. 82. 29 ff.

2) The editors print the impossible form ὀὐλοκτόνος, a corruption that seems due to the immediately preceding ὀὐλόν; the aorist is the tense used in such imprecations.


4) To my knowledge, the only scholar who discusses these words is Fr. Ritschl (*Opuscula Philologica* I. 699), who merely observes “Laceri senarii reliquiae videri possunt: ὀὐλοκτόνος — Ο ἐξ ἀνθρώπῳ Ο—.” It is not clear to me why he divided the words so.

5) Exact figures cannot be given because of some doubtful readings; they are unnecessary for the argument.

6) Professor Bruno Snell has called my attention to the fact that the adjective ὀὐλόμενος is applied to a person or thing to or of whom it may be said ὀῦλον or ὀῦλοτο (cf. J. Classen, *Beobachtungen über den Homerischen Sprachgebrauch*, p. 60 ff) and that the οὐ— of this adjective agrees well the οὐ— of ὀῦλος in Meletius.
De versu, ut videtur, tragoico apud Philostratum latente

Philostratus senior in Imaginum lib. I, cap. xviii ita enarrat tabulam pictam, seu potius fietam, in qua Penthei mors fuerat delineata: \( \text{καὶ ἐάν σοι ἡ ἐλάτη χαμάλ γυναικῶν ἔρχον ἐκ Διονύσου μέγα, πέπτωκε δὲ τῶν Πενθέων ὀποσειμάζεν ταῖς Βάκχαις ἐν εἴδει λέοντος, αἱ δὲ καὶ ξαίρονται τὸ θήραμα, μήτηρ ἐκείνη καὶ ἀδελφαὶ μητρῶς, αἱ μὲν ἄποροι τὰς χεῖρας, ἢ δὲ ἐπισώσα τὸν οἶνον τῆς χαίτης. }\)

Huius sententiae prior in particula et verborum ordo, a soluta oratione alienis, et verba ipsa tragicum sapiunt. Nam si unum tantum vocabulum \( \text{Διονύσου} \) commutare licuerit, trimetrum habebimus purum putum,

\( \text{χαμάλ, γυναικῶν ἔρχον ἐκ θεοῦ μέγα:} \)

quem trimetrum ne Philostrati ipsius calamo forte fortuna excidisse credamus obstat illud, quod post quintum saeculum a. Chr. n. vix quemquam invenies scriptorem cui unius atque eisdem facinoris simul homon simul deus, veluti hoc loco mulieres atque Bacchus, in causa esse videantur. Inde ab Homero ita plerumque ratiocinabantur homines (ut puta illud \( \text{ηματί τῷ, ὅτε κὼς σὺ Πάρις καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων ἐσθήλων ἐντ} \) \( \text{δέσων, II. xxii, 339 sq.} \); post Euripidem vero, quod sciamus, nemo.

Porro si fas est credere etiam circumiacentia Philostrati verba ex eodem, quo hunc versiculum, esse fonte deducta, apparebit interesse nos narrationi tragicae ab illa Euripidea, \( \text{Bacch.} \) 1095–1136, haeque admodum dissimili. De fabulis illis Dionysiacis Aeschyli cogitare possis; quid, quod eadem hunc Philostrati locum plurimis abhincannis ad \( \text{Xantrias} \) revocavit Elmsleius (ed. \( \text{Bacch.} \), pag. 15)? Sed profecto in re dubia plura disputare non prodest. Equidem hoc unum viris doctis suadere ausim, ut frustulum quod supra demonstravero inter \( \text{ἀδέσποτα} \) tragica recipiant.

Scriptum apud Torontonenses

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