

255 φίλαι γυναικες, τίνι πότμῳ σινεξύγηρ;
 ἄρ' ή τεκοῦσά μ' ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας;
 [γυνὴ γὰρ οὕθ' Ἐλληνὶς οὔτε βάρβαρος
 τεῦχος νεοσσῶν λευκὸν ἐκλοχεύεται,
 ἐν φ' με Λήδαν φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς τεκεῖν.]
 260 τέρας γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματ' ἔστι μον.
 vvs. 257-59 *del.* Wieland, Badham

In this passage Helen, mistakenly thinking that Menelaus is dead, addresses in despair the chorus of Greek women. I reproduce above Gilbert Murray's Oxford text. The objection to vv. 257-59 is that, with them in the text, the *γάρ* of v. 260 is meaningless; indeed Pearson pronounced it "impossible"¹⁾. There is a very real difficulty here, but it is not at all apparent that the solution lies in deletion, for which no really cogent arguments have been adduced. Furthermore, there is *prima facie* evidence for the genuineness of these lines. Similar phraseology occurs in the *Troïades*, vv. 477-8: *οὐδὲ Τῷωδὲς οὐδὲ Ἐλληνὶς οὐδὲ βάρβαρος* / *γυνὴ τεκοῦσα κομπάσειν ἀν ποτε*. The verb *ἐκλοχεύειν* is rare²⁾; elsewhere in tragedy it occurs only in the *Ion*³⁾ of Euripides. Unless, therefore, we are to posit as interpolator some learned *piscator* of Euripidean diction, these lines should be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be by Euripides. I suggest, therefore, that the difficulty may be removed not by deletion, but by a transposition of v. 256:

255 φίλαι γυναικες, τίνι πότμῳ σινεξύγηρ;
 257 γυνὴ γάρ οὕθ' Ἐλληνὶς οὔτε βάρβαρος
 258 τεῦχος νεοσσῶν λευκὸν ἐκλοχεύεται,
 259 ἐν φ' με Λήδαν φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς τεκεῖν.
 256 ἄρ' ή τεκοῦσά μ' ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας;
 260 τέρας γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματ' ἔστι μον.

Each *γάρ* is now intelligible; vv. 257-259 are explanatory of v. 255 and v. 260 answers v. 256. The error is readily explainable: v. 259 ends ...τεκεῖν and v. 256 ...τερας, the eye of the copyist skipped over the second τε- and omitted v. 256⁴⁾. Afterwards, when the error was noticed, the missing verse was copied in the margin; in a later copy the verse was inserted in the text in the wrong position. The reason for this misplacement is clear.

1) *The Helena of Euripides*, ed. A.C. Pearson (Cambridge, 1903), note to v. 260. He suggests τ'ἄρ' for γάρ. Kirchhoff conjectured δ' ὁ βίοτος for γάρ ὁ βίος.

2) *LJ* s. v. cite five examples.

3) v. 1458.

4) This type of error has been well discussed by W. Clausen in *AJP* LXXVI (1955), pp. 47-49.

On a cursory reading v. 256 makes excellent sense after v. 255; indeed, if it were not for v. 260, there could be no objection to it there. The copyist, therefore, apparently because of an unclear or vanished marginal sign, was unsure where the verse written in the margin belonged. He read the opening lines of Helen's speech (which begins with v. 255), saw that v. 256 would fit before v. 257 and accordingly inserted it there)⁵.