

- 255 φίλοι γυναῖκες, τίνι πότμῳ συνεζύγην;
 ἄρ' ἢ τεκοῦσά μ' ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας;
 [γυνὴ γὰρ οὐδ' Ἑλληνίς οὔτε βάρβαρος
 τεῦχος νεοσσῶν λευκὸν ἐκλογεύεται,
 ἐν ᾧ με Λήδαν φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς τεκεῖν.]
 260 τέρας γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματ' ἐστὶ μου.
 vv. 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 γὰρ 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 Τρωάδ' οὐδ' Ἑλληνίς οὐδὲ βάρβαρος | γυνὴ τεκοῦσα κομπάσειεν ἄν ποτε. The verb ἐκλογεύειν 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 φίλοι γυναῖκες, τίνι πότμῳ συνεζύγην;
 257 γυνὴ γὰρ οὐδ' Ἑλληνίς οὔτε βάρβαρος
 258 τεῦχος νεοσσῶν λευκὸν ἐκλογεύεται,
 259 ἐν ᾧ με Λήδαν φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς τεκεῖν.
 256 ἄρ' ἢ τεκοῦσά μ' ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας;
 260 τέρας γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ πράγματ' ἐστὶ μου.

Each γὰρ 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 γὰρ. Kirchhoff conjectured δ' ὁ βίος for γὰρ ὁ βίος.

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

3) v. 1458.

4) This type of error has been well discussed by W. Clausen in *AJP* LXXXVI (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.

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