

EURIPIDES, TROADES 435

οὐ̄ δὴ στενὸν δίαυλον ᾤκισται πέτρας
δεινὴ Χάρυβδις

The word *δίαυλος* here has not been adequately explained. LSJ give simply “strait”, quoting only this line as evidence. But *αὐλὸν* itself can mean “strait”¹⁾, as even the scholiast had remarked. The metaphor in *δίαυλος* is from the *double* course of the stadium, and whenever the word is used in tragedy this force is felt. At Aesch. Agam. 344 the homecoming from Troy is referred to as the second leg of the *δίαυλος*, the first leg having been the outward journey. The chorus at Eur. H. F. 662 envision a kind of reincarnation in which the good are rewarded by being given a second opportunity to run the course of their lives. Later in the same play (line 1102) the dazed Heracles wonders if he has made a return journey to Hades’. Finally, the ghost of Polydorus (Hec. 29) refers to his sea-washed body *πολλοῖς διαύλοις κυμάτων φορούμενος* which, as Weil notes, designates “le va-et-vient des vagues”²⁾. In the light of this, Paley is mistaken to note, of the phrase at Tro. 435, that it “is borrowed from *one* limb of the double stadium, and not with reference to the eddy or swell described in the *Odyssey*”. In the recent edition of the play by K. H. Lee³⁾ we read the following: “a special type of strait is meant, perhaps one in which the current rapidly flows backward and forward. There may also be a reference to the sucking and blowing of Charybdis.”

Attentive readers of the *Odyssey*, however, will remember that Odysseus passed through the strait of Scylla and Charybdis twice, once (presumably) in each direction. The strait is, then, for Odysseus, a course which must be run, like that at the stadium, once in each direction, and it is, after all, the wanderings of Odysseus which are described in these lines. In Cassandra’s compressed narrative Scylla is ignored and the strait is referred to as the place where Charybdis dwells, just as characters in Euripides speak of Castor alone when they mean “the Dioscuri”⁴⁾. Indeed, the word *δίαυλος* itself makes mention of Scylla superfluous, as it reminds the audience of Odysseus’ double course through the strait, once on the side of Scylla (Od. 12, 234ff.), once on the side of Charybdis (429ff.).

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1) E.g. Aesch. P.V. 731, Soph. Tr. 100.

2) The literal signification of the word is found at Soph. El. 691 (a difficult, and perhaps interpolated, line) and Eur. El. 825.

3) London 1976. Lee ought to have cited Hec. 29 in support of his interpretation.

4) Tr. 132, El. 1064.