CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

CRITICAL NOTES ON THE CANTICA OF EURIPIDES’ HERACLES*

Parodos (107–37). A relatively short entry-song, in line with the laboured progress of the elderly singers. The First Stasimon, by contrast, will be unusually long.

107–11 ~ 119–23. The opening sentences of both strophe and antistrophe are compoundly corrupt as transmitted in L, and still unsatisfactory in editions.¹ First as to the strophe:

ΧΟΡΟΣ
†υπόροφα μέλαθρατ καὶ γεραι-
ἀ δέμνι’ ἀμφὶ βάκτροις
ἐρειμα θέμενος ἐκτάλην
ιῆλεμον γόων ᾠοι-
δὸς ὡςτε πολιός ὀρνις, ...

107 υπόροφα Elmsley, υψ- Musgrave  110 ιῆλεμον Hermann γέρων Nauck

Prima facie, minimal emendation suffices to give sound iambic metre here: 2ia|2ia, (with a short-syllable overlap) || followed by 6ia, (2ia | 2ia|2ia, with another short-syllable overlap) || ... But response with 119 †μὴ προκάμπτε πόδατ † ... remains problematic (see below); at the same time, pace Bond, this is by no means the only problem in these sentences (quite apart from the obvious gibberish in L’s text of 121–3).

As things stand, we have somehow to understand μέλαθρα and δέμνια as accusatives of destination implausibly governed at a

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¹ Philologus 148 (2004), 197–221. Critical issues in Herc. 1016–86 were discussed in a previous article (ch. 7 above), which also touched on lines 355–8, 890, 893, 1190–7.— Apart from the older editions and those listed in n. 1 below, I refer (see Abbreviations at p. xvi above) to Breitenbach; Buijs; Denniston, GP; Diggle, Studies and Euripidea; Itsumi; Parker; Stinton; West, GM; also to West’s ‘Critical notes on Euripides’ Heracles’ in Philologus 118 (1973), 145–51; R. Renehan, ‘A new commentary on Euripides’ (CPh 80 (1985), 143–75); W. J. Verdenius, ‘Notes on Euripides’ Heracles vv. 1–522’ (Mnemosyne 40 (1987), 1–17); A. Gostoli, ‘Euripide, Eracle 637–700’ in CATPG, 133–41.

¹ The principal recent editions and/or commentaries are those of Diggle, Bond, Lee, Halleran, Barlow, Kovacs and Mirto. Kovacs (see his introduction) has accepted or reported some suggestions from me, but some of my present proposals supersede those credited to me in his apparatus.
distance by ἐκτάλην,² and also ♦ ineptly thus enunciated in that the προθυμία of the chorus is primarily directed towards Heracles’ children (114 ff.), not towards ‘buildings’ (whether ‘roofed’ or ‘high-roofed’) or γεραια δέμνια (to be understood as the pallet of Amphitryon). The sense ‘Do not tire … like (unlike?) …’ is also unsatisfactory in 119 ff. (see below).

The first need is to give a new look to the text as follows (still with 121–3 partly obelized):

ΧΟΡΟΣ

υπόροφα (μὲν λιπὼν) μέλαθρα καὶ γεραια δέμνια ἐκτάλην ἵππειμοι γόων ὀστίς ὀφθεὶ πολιός ὑριος, —


μῆ (τι) προκάμητε· πόδα (πρόβατε) βαρύ τε κῶλον, ὡστε πρὸς πετραῖον λέπας ζυγηφόρω τετούλον ἀνέντες ὡς† βάρος φέρον (τ’ ὅχου) τροχηλάτοι [πάλου]·

107 (λιπὼν) iam Scaliger 121 ζυγηφόρω [φόρον L. 122–3 (ὁχου) iam Hartung (olim etiam φέρον (τ’ ὅχου))

As Scaliger saw, but few subsequent editors have recognized, (λιπὼν) or an equivalent supplement is needed in order that the opening phrases may refer to the dwellings and beds from which these old men have come. It is their old age that will be a recurrent—indeed central—theme (cf. 124 ff., 436 ff., 637 ff., etc.); and for a similar ‘origin’ point at the beginning of a choral entry-song, cf. Pho. 202 Τύριον οἴδιμα λιπωύς ἔβαν, κτλ. Unhappily Scaliger’s γεραια (λιπὼν) failed to solve the metrical problem, so that editors proceeded to look elsewhere. (μὲν λιπὼν) (before μέλαθρα) is not open to that objection, with a different view of the metre as beginning with 5ia, —

² ἐκτάλην is surely ‘profectus sum’ (not, as Barlow takes it, ‘missus sum’; there is no suggestion anywhere that these old men have been sent for). ‘Destination’ with ἐκτάλην (and other parts of τέλεσθαι) in that sense may be either implied, as at Andr. 251 ἔκεινο λέξον, οὔπερ ούνεκ ἐκτάλην (sc. δεύρο), or expressed by a word or phrase, as at Med. 668 (ὄμφαλον γῆς), Hec. 115 (ποί), Tro. 1264 (οίκαδε), Hel. 1440 (πρὸς οίκους), 1527 (πρὸς θάλασσαν). When the destination is thus expressed with ἐκτάλην (etc.), the relevant word or phrase is always both straightforward and closely adjacent to the verb.