CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

THE SECOND STASIMON OF EURIPIDES’ ELECTRA

Two striking odes in Euripides’ Electra, seemingly remote from the plot (and the persona of the singers), are given relevance by a concluding ‘moral’ addressed to Clytemnestra. In the First Stasimon (432–86), the theme of the famous god-given Arms of Achilles prompts the reflection that Clytemnestra’s adulterous husband-killing was particularly heinous in that Agamemnon was the royal commander of such glorious heroes. In the Second Stasimon (699–746), the legend of the Golden Lamb and the associated metastasis of the sun and stars serves (more obscurely) to remind Clytemnestra of what she had apparently forgotten in her impious conduct. Both odes, leaning on a single manuscript (L), are variously corrupt.

699–706

<long Greek text>

699. The combination of flawed responsion and defective sense, both here and in 713 (see below), points to the loss of syllables in both places.‡ (i) As things stand, we have –<long Greek text> in the strophe and –<long Greek text> in the antistrophe (… χρυσήλατοι there cannot be –<long Greek text>). As Kovacs agrees, the metre is likely to have been a longer enoplian verse (or dicolon) compounded of –<long Greek text> (T) and –<long Greek text> (D); cf. the dicolon T –– D with short linkage at Hipp. 757–8/769–70, Tro. 833–4/852–3, Or. 183–4/204–5,

etc., and similar sequences without the link (as T ith at A/λc. 400/412, Hec. 652–3, akin to T ϑ ith at Med. 647–8/656–7, Hipp. 755–6/767–8, etc.).

(ii) For the sense, Page’s ἀταλάν is certain, initiating the focus on the Lamb; the adjective (more apt to a young creature) all too easily corrupted to agree with the adjacent ματέρος—the more easily in the absence (apparently) of anything for ἀταλάν to agree with. For the rest, Kovacs’ ἦμικόδος is technically plausible, but needs two improvements: ‘from’ needs to be expressed with Αργείων ὀρέων, with such a long wait before the governing verb πορεύεσθαι in 706; and it is lambs, not their mothers, that are referred to as ἦμικόδος in Κυκ. 189 (ἡμικόδος ἄρνον). ἦμικάδ is otherwise needed here, in conjunction with ἀταλάν, which, without such early clarification, is intolerably remote from ἄρνοι in 705. It is a relevant consideration that ἦμικά can be either substantival or adjectival (see LSJ); the latter in Κυκ. 189, and also here with ἄρνοι following in 705.

700–1. ‘Α κληδόν remains in ancient φήματι is intelligible, but odd in that κληδόν and φήμη are virtually synonymous and interchangeable. More seriously, the metre is suspect, with the inequality at κληδόν ~ ἀκτὼ in the sequence ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ (the syntax strongly suggesting link-anceps rather than period-end). Elsewhere link-anceps before … ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ is always short (Andr. 827, 830, Hec. 1068, Hecr. 1018, 1030, 1033, Tro. 258, 267, Or. 1257/1277), usually but not always with diaeresis after this short syllable. At the same time Euripides had a penchant for sequences beginning with ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ, those with word-end after ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ (as Tro. 838–9/858–9, I. T. 396–7/411–12, Ion 458–9/478–9) being akin to, and sometimes indistinguishable from, sequences beginning with ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ … (as Hel. 1113–14/1128–9, I. A. 178–9/199–200, 1049–50/1071–2).

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2 See further on 700–1/714–15 below (also 711/725) for the unsymmetrical diaeresis, with ματέρος in responson with -ντο ἄρης. The sequence ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ ὁ is recurrent in this ode: cf. also 708/722, 727/737, 733/743.

3 One visualizes a skip from ματέρος (or μηματέρος to μη). Superscription of ματέρος then either effaces the word underneath or is mistaken as a correction of it.

4 There may be other possibilities, e. g. ἀταλάν (Page) ὑπὸ ματρός (Dindorf) ἦμικόδος (Murray) οἶκος ἄρπα (which has the merit of identifying the ‘mother’ as a sheep, while enabling us to postulate a skip from ἦμικόδος to ἦμικόδος). But, against Murray’s ἔρημην ἦμικόδος (ἵλικος) καλλιτελεσκόμενον in 705, cf. nn. 10–11 below.

5 700–1/714–15, printed uno versu as another long verse, may be best analysed as a telescoped combination of T and D — in which the eighth syllable (the strong monosyllable πῦρ in ant.) does double duty as the last syllable of T and the first of D.