Is *Orestes* 1503-36 an Interpolation?

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The encounter between Orestes and the Phrygian (Or. 1503–36) has been commonly recognized as one of the most remarkable scenes in Euripidean tragedy. Criticism of it by early scholarship is embedded in the remarks of the scholia (cf. Σ ad 1512 ἀνάξια καὶ τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς Ὀρέστου συμφορᾶς τὰ λεγόμενα, and ad 1521 ταῦτα κωμικῶτερα ἐστι καὶ πεζά), and it is presumably partly in reference to this scene that the pronouncement of Aristophanes is made (Hyp. 10) τὸ δρᾶμα κωμικώτερα ἔχει τὴν καταστροφὴν. The responses of modern scholarship to the uneasiness evidently felt by some in antiquity have been various.\(^1\)

Grüninger appears to have been one of the first commentators to examine the question of the authenticity of these verses (as a piece of evidence for the substantial reshaping of the text which he believed had taken place at the hands of actors), and, perhaps predictably, pronounced against their genuineness. In more recent times, however, there seems to have been a marked movement of opinion in their favour; Page appears to mark the beginning of reaction to Grüninger’s position. His defence of 1506–36 (pp.44ff) has, as the result, the appearance of a direct attempt to refute the arguments of his predecessor; by and large, it concerns itself with comparatively isolated difficulties in the scene, which are explained (or explained away) with varying degrees of success. What is absent from Page’s analysis is any attempt to consider what may be the positive, thematic relationship of these verses to their context or the implications of certain of the scene’s characteristics in juxtaposition to the dramatic conventions which Euripides is elsewhere agreed to have observed.

Such general considerations have been the preoccupation of more

\(^1\) Cf. e.g. A. Grüninger, *De Euripidis Oreste ab histrioniibus retractata* (diss. Basel 1894); D. L. Page, *Actors’ Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1934) 45–48; W. Biehl, *Textprobleme in Euripides Orestes* (Göttingen 1955) 84–85; id., ed. *Orestes* (Berlin 1965); V. di Benedetto, ed. *Orestes* (Firenze 1965). Other works which have proved of assistance include P. Maas, *Greek Metre*, trans. H. Lloyd-Jones (Oxford 1962); T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967). These works will be cited by author and page reference throughout this essay and the following notes.
recent commentaries. The attitude of Biehl (Textprobleme 84) is typical: “Die Konfrontierung Or.s mit dem von Natur aus weit unter ihm stehenden Gegner enthält innerhalb der Gesamthandlung wichtige dramat. Funktionen.” Di Benedetto (ad 1506ff) persuasively explains the passage as a product of Euripides’ desire ‘di ricercare sempre nuovi effeti di carattere spettacolare in questa ultima parte della tragedia.” While discussion of these points of view will be best deferred, it is perhaps worth noting that both these commentators feel obliged to offer, in the same way as Page, explanations of isolated inconsistencies in these verses, which seem to have diminished little as a result of their more abstract argumentation about the significance of the scene as a whole.

It is therefore certain that any judgement of these verses must proceed from considerations not only of their internal coherence but also from their relationship to what precedes and follows them and to the conventions normally observed by Euripides. The two are perhaps inevitably separate, but it is from their cumulative weight that the authenticity of this passage can best be assessed. It is the principal intention of what follows to suggest that there may be more solidity in the objections against its authenticity than has recently been allowed.

It is Euripides’ normal practice with ἀγγελοι (unless they have some sort of independent status within the drama) to confine interest in them to the strict limits of their expository function and to hurry them off stage the moment their narrative is completed.² There can scarcely be any doubt that Euripides has significantly extended his usual technique in composing the Phrygian’s narrative in lyrics (rather than in the otherwise universal iambic trimeters), and whatever the reason for this singular innovation,³ it is clearly intended to be an elaboration of the normal form of a ἄριστος ἀγγελευκή. It is, however, hardly possible by the same reasoning to justify the retention on stage of the Phrygian after the completion of this speech for a humorous dialogue with the enraged Orestes. Such a departure from the normal economy of Euripidean structure is, of course, not in itself any

² Account is here taken of such prima facie exceptions as Hel. 700ff, where the ἀγγελος is retained on stage after the end of his exposition (621). He emerges, however, in 700ff as a typical δούλος γενναίος, a class for which there are strict standards of treatment in Euripidean tragedy. His ῥῆσις is so short as to make him scarcely an ἀγγελος at all, and it is to be wondered whether the Mss rightly designate him so. Cf. the similar instance of the ἀγγελος in Phoën. 1067ff, whom Wecklein renamed θεράπων. Page (p.45) does not, I think, take Euripides’ departure from his normal practice in the case of the Phrygian seriously enough.

³ Cf. P. Maas, p.53 §76, “Characters of low social standing (except the Phrygian in the Orestes) are never given lines in sung metres, but are given instead anapaests . . .”
grounds for suspecting the scene, but it is, perhaps, bound to stimulate
a somewhat closer examination of the reason for its composition.

The episode as a whole is clearly not intended to make any con­tri­bution to the furtherance of the action; it forms a self-contained unit,
the avowed purpose of which is to prevent the Phrygian calling for
help from Menelaus (1510). This end is attained by forcing him back
inside the palace. Undeniably then, the scene is meant to exploit
further the comic possibilities inherent in the Phrygian and hinted at
in his lyric narrative. This admission likewise provides no evidence
against the authenticity of the dialogue, although a precise parallel in
Euripides to an episode so completely separate from the main thread
of the mythos does not readily come to mind. 4 If, however, the scene
can be shown to be actually at variance with the substance of the plot
and detrimental to its smooth progress, suspicion will, perhaps, be
justified.

It will be useful first to look at the motivation of these verses for
some indication of the way in which their author regarded them as in­
tegrated with the movement of the play as a whole. Orestes' alleged
reason for coming out of the palace is to prevent the Phrygian from
sending up a κραυγή to Menelaus (1510), 5 and this leads logically to the
core of the scene, which consists in the Phrygian's attempt to persuade
Orestes of his sympathy for his, and not Menelaus', cause (1511ff).
Such a motivation makes the entry of Menelaus at 1549, even with the
interposition of the choral ode at 1537ff, almost absurd in its im­
mediacy. The incongruity is emphasised by 1529, which is followed by

4 Di Benedetto (ed. ad 1506ff) is also of the opinion that the motivation of Orestes' exit is
subsequently undeveloped. He assumes that this motivation is to stop the Phrygian calling
to the Argives, a deduction from 1529ff. Di Benedetto does not consider the disparity be­ tween 1529ff and Orestes' stated intention at the beginning of the scene, which is discussed
below. Biehl (Textprobleme 84, v. supra) represents, on the other hand, a point of view anti­
thetic to that expressed here. He considers that the interpolation of such a long passage of
stichomythia is per se unlikely, and attempts to ascribe to the scene a positive and thematic
relationship to the latter part of the play. This hypothesis he supports with five contentions,
none of which seems to merit serious consideration; the fourth (85), for example, alleges
that the victory of Orestes over the Phrygian "entzündet bei Or. das für den Kampf gegen
Men. notwendige Stärkebewusstsein." 1531–36, however, show that the basis of Orestes' confidence against Menelaus is his possession of Hermione, and this remains the crux of his
dealings with Menelaus until the appearance of the deus. Orestes' alleged fear of Menelaus,
the basis of Biehl's inferential superstructure, is in fact a dramatic superfluity imported into
the drama precisely by the presence of this interpolation. Cf. for a view similar to that of
Biehl, N. A. Greenberg, HSCP 66 (1962) 187ff. Professor T. B. L. Webster (p.250 n.17) also
thinks it unlikely that this scene is interpolated, a view which he bases on metrical con­
considerations.

5 He appears to have heard 1500ff, which speak sympathetically of Menelaus.
the clumsy attempt made in 1530-36 to adapt the pretext of the scene in such a way as to minimize the strain which will be placed on the audience's belief in the probability of the dramatic sequence by Menelaus' arrival. In these verses, Orestes states that his fear was that the Argives, rather than Menelaus, would hear the cry and come to the rescue (1530-31), and then explicitly invites the latter to come (ἀλλ' ἵτω . . ., 1532), even with the Argives (1533ff).8

The clarity of thought in 1533-36 is extremely suspect. It is true that explanations of these verses may be made by reference to allusions elsewhere in the play (as, for example, 1621); such explanations rely heavily on unnecessary (if plausible) inferences about what may or should be Orestes' sequence of thought, and can in each case be matched by inverse suppositions of at least equal probability. Nevertheless, there are certain difficulties which seem to remain constant.

Within the limits of the information provided by this scene, the introduction of a third alternative which envisages a combination of Menelaus and the Argives is not only gratuitous (since Menelaus arrives only with attendants, cf. 1554ff, 1610f) but invalidates the mutually exclusive possibilities outlined in the preceding verses. If we omit the question of the suitability of γάρ as a particle introducing a third and disjunct alternative,7 a difficulty still remains in the interpretation of καὶ μὴ σωζέων θέλει (1534). Biehl (ad loc.) assumes that καὶ is epexegetic ('und somit'); this involves the improbable assumption that Menelaus' unwillingness to save Orestes will in some way be more likely if he is accompanied by Argives. Yet any other interpretation is scarcely possible, since Orestes' determination to kill Hermione can be governed only by the attitude Menelaus adopts towards him, and not by his accompaniment or otherwise by an Argive force. The connection Biehl draws between the two elements in the protasis tends to be further confirmed by the emphatic position accorded to the mention of the Argives in 1533.

Equally unfortunate is the tedious precision of 1535, and early

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8 Biehl's assertion (p.84) that Orestes' anxiety about Menelaus' retaliation "ist durchaus berechtigt, auch wenn sich Hel. bei den Argeiren keiner Sympathie erfreut," is scarcely supported by the tone of Orestes' reasoning in 1531-36.

7 The wide range of meanings which γάρ may bear and its sometimes rather imprecise connection with surrounding ideas are well known, and Biehl (ed. ad 1533) may be right to translate ei γάρ 'hypothetisch' as 'denn wenn . . .'. Certainly no satisfactory alternative reading has been proposed; Weil's ei δ' ἀρα supplies exactly the sense required, but is unparalleled in tragedy, cf. J. D. Denniston, Greek Particles (Oxford 1954) 37-38.
editors, such as Nauck and Paley, recommended its excision on metrical and what may be loosely termed aesthetic grounds. No weight attaches to the former objection, but Paley’s comment (ad loc.) still has general validity: “It is just such a verse as interpolators were fond of inserting to make the narrative agree accurately with some former statement,” as instances of which he cites 1178 ὁμηρίκων σοι τὰδὲ τ’ ἐκ τρίτων τ’ ἐμοί and 1192. ἦ τόνδε κὰμὲ—πᾶν γὰρ ἐν φίλοι τόδε. The deletion of a similar verse in the introductory monologue (33) was proposed by Herwerden.

The confusion created by 1529–36 requires but does not perhaps deserve explanation; what seems undeniable is that having stressed as the motivation for Orestes’ exit from the palace his anxiety about the κραυγή (1510, and the word is picked up in 1529), the author was compelled, towards the conclusion of the interlude, to adjust his attitude as far as possible to the glaring inconsistency of Menelaus’ arrival. He chose to do this by importing the superfluous idea of the Argives.

Nevertheless, Menelaus’ entry at 1549 remains unconvincing, and the question which inevitably suggests itself is the source of his information about events within the palace. Lines 1529–36, although they attempt to make it seem probable that he will appear, are prevented from offering any answer by the premise on which the scene is constructed (viz. Orestes’ successful mission to prevent the Phrygian from calling for help—cogently stated in 1529). The indisputable implication of 1554–59 is that someone has brought an account of events to Menelaus. The details known to him would otherwise presuppose that he had heard part or all of the Phrygian’s narrative while still in the πόλις!

At this point commentators are either mute or lack persuasion. Chapouthier suggests (Budé ed. ad loc.), “on peut penser que quelqu’une de ses (i.e. the Phrygian’s) déclarations a été entendue du dehors, ou que le poète ne s’est pas posé la question.” The latter lame expedient of criticism remains, of course, unanswerable; the former

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8 This led to such emendations of Πολυδήνη as τρίτων (Elmsley) and φίλων (Weil). Cf. di Benedetto, ed. ad loc. and also A. M. Dale, Glotta 37 (1958) 102–5 (cf. Lustrum 2 [1957] 40); F. Perusino, RivCultClassMed 4 (1962) 55ff. I am indebted to Professor E. W. Handley for these references.

9 Suggested, perhaps, by e.g. 1355–56, where, given Euripides’ intention to have Menelaus arrive at 1554, significantly he is not mentioned.

10 Similarly unanswerable is di Benedetto’s statement (ed. ad 1550), “Ma si tratta di cose che avverte il lettore moderno, non lo spettatore antico, il quale dopo il dialogo tra Oreste e il Frigio non poteva non aspettarsi l’arrivo di Menelao.” Cf. also Biehl (ed. ad 1556ff).
not only fails, I think, to account adequately for the description of Menelaus' informant as φόβω σφαλείς (1558), but is forced to assume the existence of some person apparently not on stage, and certainly not mentioned, who escapes to the city with information derived from the ἐγγελος, at about the same time as the chorus decides not to take the news. More promising at first sight is the hypothesis of Page (p.46), which does not involve the presupposition of an unmentioned anony: ‘. . . we know (from 1486 sqq.) that the slaves fled through the house this way and that, we know that one escaped from the house. This one lingered improvidently in a very dangerous place, and was caught by Orestes. Others climbed out of the palace at the back instead of the front, and went straight to Menelaos instead of waiting to be apprehended. So at least we are entitled to assume. We know that there were those who could and most naturally would have taken the news to Menelaos; we know that Menelaos has heard it. That is all we need to know.’ This is imaginative, but Page’s central assumption that other slaves have escaped is dangerous and unjustified surmise. While no certain inference may be made from 1550,11 the Phrygian uses the singular in 1369 and 1498, and the author of 1503–3612 evidently deduced from this that he was alone in his escape. 1486 δ’ μὲν οἰχόμενος φυγάς and 1488 ὑπὸ σκότων δ’ ἑφεύγομεν may suggest the reverse, but whatever deduction is made from them, they refer to activities which preceded the disappearance of Helen and are therefore irrelevant as far as the information subsequently brought to Menelaus is concerned. Had Euripides intended the inference drawn

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11 Line 1550 has been used as evidence that Euripides did not regard the question of Menelaus’ informant as important. ποιεί suggests that the coryphaeus makes the only reasonable assumption to account for his arrival. But I am by no means certain that Nauck was wrong in deleting this verse. 1549 makes sense by itself, but I am inclined to suspect that our 1550 is a revised version of what Euripides wrote, designed to minimize the improbability of Menelaus’ arrival which had been created by the re-entry of the Phrygian into the palace. Di Benedetto (ed. ad 1549) observes that this is the only place where ἄλλα μὴν to announce a character’s entrance. His explanation is that 1549–55 are to be taken closely with the preceding ‘intermezzo’ and the concluding allusion to the fate of the Atridae. ‘E l’arrivo di Menelao in questo momento, con le fiaccole che già sono accese, è sentito come una conferma di questo presentimento. ’سائر μὴν è quindi da intendere nel senso di ‘e appunto: si noti anche il καὶ, che presenta l’arrivo di Menelao come un altro anello di una serie negativa.’ This argument for a confirmatory sense is certainly more satisfactory than Denniston’s (op. cit. [supra n.7] 342) attribution to it of an adversative force; but the assumption of a direct link between these verses and the content of the choral ode which precedes them is open to objection. The conclusion of the antistrophe is general, and it is normal Euripidean practice that conventional choral announcements of this sort bear no such relation to their lyric utterances.

12 Cf. e.g. 1506.
by Page, it seems not unreasonable to expect that he would have taken the trouble to provide a hint of the existence of such a person (who forms a vital link in the dramatic sequence), as he had earlier suggested the escape of other dramatically unimportant persons.

If, then, the Phrygian had left the stage after the completion of his διήγησις (according to the normal Euripidean practice), the choral ode (1537–48) would, as often, mark a lapse of time allowing off-stage events to take place, and Menelaus would arrive informed by the ἀγγέλος. The final verses of his narrative (1500–02) imply that this is what will happen by directing attention to Menelaus. This would be a natural course for the Phrygian, who, having gathered his wits, might well take the news to his master and enjoy his protection. Presumably he would have done so at once, had not the unreality of the messenger-convention detained him to give an account to the chorus. This fact is in itself unusual, since the recipient of a ἔσος ἀγγέλια is normally an interested party commanding the ἐνοικία of the messenger. With such requirements Menelaus conforms. Certain statements made by Menelaus on his arrival tend to confirm the identification. His informant evidently used the word ἄφαντος (1557), as did the Phrygian (1495–96), and the description of him as φόβῳ σφαλείς (1558) suits perfectly the impression created of the Phrygian in the messenger scene. Admittedly, these words might apply to any informant, but they would gain in point significantly if intended to remind the audience of the Phrygian.¹³

At this point it may be worth considering briefly what is gained structurally if the episode is deleted.

After the illusion that Helen has actually been murdered has been carefully built up (1286–1310) and Hermione has been taken hostage within the palace (1323ff), the emotional excitement is heightened by the choral song (1353–65) which centres on the theme of Helen’s murder (treated as a fait accompli, cf. 1354 ὁ πράξθεις φῶνος) and prepares for the entrance of the Phrygian with a fuller account of τὰ ἔσοι δόμων. This account given, it is not until the closing verses of his lyrics (1493ff)

¹³ Professor R. P. Winnington-Ingram points out to me that a third point of contact may be the apparent recalling of the imagery used in 1401 in 1555. Di Benedetto (ed. ad loc.) notes all the similarities between the informant of Menelaus and the Phrygian which have been observed here, and explains them by supposing that Menelaus’ informant “è un duplicato del Frigio.” The extraordinary nature of such a procedure would be, as far as I know, unparalleled in Euripides, and is some indication of the implications of maintaining the authenticity of 1503–36.
that the disappearance of Helen is recounted. It would seem that
Euripides has deliberately created a false impression of Helen's mur­
der and suspended its refutation for over a hundred verses in order to
make the news of her disappearance the more unexpected and effec­
tive. If the Phrygian were to leave after 1502, i.e. immediately follow­
ing his account of Helen’s disappearance and his allusion to Menelaus,
the choral ode (1537–48) antistrophic to 1353–65 would fall (logically,
it seems) immediately after the Phrygian’s account, as the strophe
preceded it. Euripides clearly indicates the intended parallelism of
these two odes by constructing them as strophe and suspended anti­
strophe; and a similar parallelism is apparent in their tone and sub­
ject matter, the second dealing with the power of \( \tau\chi\) and its implica­
tions for the three conspirators as suggested by the thwarting of the
plan to murder Helen (which constitutes the \( \varepsilon\tau\rho\oslash \varepsilon\gamma\oslash\), cf. 1537–38),
as the first had dealt with her apparent murder.\(^{14}\) It is arguable that
this parallelism should by corollary extend to their place in the struc­
ture of these scenes, as the medium for heightening the emotional
tension before and after the crucial announcement of Helen's disap­
pearance. The structural symmetry and cumulative emotional effect
which such a sequence produces seems to me irreparably disturbed by
the intervention of the humorous dialogue between Orestes and the
Phrygian, between the lyric account of the disappearance and the
antistrophe crystallizing its impact.

Finally, a comparatively isolated phenomenon may be considered.
At the end of his account the Phrygian announces \( \pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha} \pi\rho\acute{\omicron}\sigma\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\) (1493ff)

\[\varepsilon\kappa \vartheta\alpha\lambda\acute{\mu}\omicron\nu\\]
\[\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{\epsilon} \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\rho\delta \vartheta\alpha\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\nu\\]
\[\acute{\alpha}\f\alpha\acute{\nu}\tau\omicron\oslash,\]

the importance of this revelation being confirmed by the elaborate
apostrophe which follows.\(^{15}\) This is what Menelaus has heard (1557),
and the point is subsequently stressed by Orestes (1579ff). Yet in the

\(^{14}\) Biehl (ed. \textit{ad} 1353–68) observes that strophe and antistrophe divide themselves into
"einen mehr 'dramatischen' (1353–60 bzw. 1357–44) und einen rein 'lyrischen' (1361–8 bzw.
1545–8) Teil."

\(^{15}\) I am unable to accept the view which suggests that the disappearance is left indefinite
at the end of the Phrygian's account (1499ff), relying on \( \tau\acute{\alpha} \vartheta\acute{\iota}\varepsilon\tau\rho\acute{\iota} \alpha\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\acute{\omicron}^\prime \omicron\delta\alpha\) (1498). This
means only "I didn't see what happened after that (because that was when I escaped)," and
cannot be used to impugn the finality of the announcement of her disappearance. Biehl
(ed. \textit{ad loc.}) is probably right to refer the words to the fate of Hermione.
course of 1506–36, there are two distinct statements which presuppose
that the murder has in fact taken place.\(^\text{16}\) In the first (1512–13) Orestes
asks the Phrygian whether Helen \(\varepsilon\nu\delta\iota\kappa\omega\) ... \(\delta\iota\omega\lambda\varepsilon\tau\omicron\);\(^\text{17}\) it is, of course,
particularly easy in stichomythic scenes, where the syntax is seg-
mented, to propose the expedient that these verses are interpolated
into a genuine context. A reason for any such insertion is difficult to
see, and the deletion of this couplet will further involve the removal
of 1514–15. Equally, it is possible to suppose that Orestes is ignorant of
the Phrygian’s knowledge of Helen’s disappearance; any such sugges-
tion must ultimately be judged by its own probability, but it is per-
haps worth mentioning here that 1536 (spoken after the Phrygian has
left the stage) also assumes the murder, and therefore that Orestes
himself actually believes in this fiction. That this is not his belief is
clear from 1579ff. Finally, we may with Page (p.46) suppose that
\(\delta\iota\omega\lambda\varepsilon\tau\omicron\) has an ambiguous force; but 1513 shows unmistakably that
the Phrygian at least interprets the word in its fully physical sense, al-
though this too may be excused as an example of the diplomacies to
which his self-preserving \(\sigma\nu\nu\varepsilon\omicron\sigma\varepsilon\omicron\) persuades him.\(^\text{18}\) In short, defence
of 1512–13 seems to create a maze of psychological intricacies, which
enjoy at most a dubious probability.

But if defence of 1512–13 is possible, the same may scarcely be said
for 1536, in which Helen is specifically referred to as a \(\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\sigma\) which
Menelaus \(\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\alpha\phi\omicron\tau\alpha\nu\). Lines 1579ff show that Orestes is aware of her
disappearance; there is only one scene in this play (211ff) in which he
suffers from hallucinations. From this verse, then, we are obliged to
conclude that Helen has actually been murdered and that her corpse
is within, ready for display to Menelaus when Hermione is killed.
Page’s explanation of this anomaly (p.45) is quite inadequate: “the
new point is the death of Hermione; a slight inaccuracy of language is
almost necessary to couple the similar fates of Hermione and Helen.”\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\) A third reference may be disregarded; of 1534 Page (p.45) rightly observes that it means
no more than that “Orestes assumes that Menelaos will think that Helen is dead.”

\(^{17}\) Biehl (ed. \textit{ad loc.}) cites Cic. 
\textit{Laelius} 26.98 for this characteristic of “die zustimmende
Antwort in der Form der ‘Übertreibung’” as being typical of the parasite in comedy.

\(^{18}\) Biehl’s hypothesis (Textprobleme 84) that the assumption that Helen is dead in 1512–13
is “nicht anstößig, weil sie den einfachsten Ausgangspunkt zum Diskutieren darbietet”
is extremely unsatisfactory.

\(^{19}\) Biehl (ed. \textit{ad loc.}) explains the linguistic inaccuracy as part of Orestes’ pose as \(\delta\lambda\alpha\zeta\omicron\omicron\). The inconsistency is too strong to be excused on any such grounds, but his contrast of
Orestes as \(\delta\lambda\alpha\zeta\omicron\omicron\) with the Phrygian as \(\kappa\omicron\lambda\alpha\xi\) is instructive as a further illustration of the
heavy debt of this scene to comedy.
Their fates are anything but similar; a glaring inconsistency remains which can be bypassed only by attributing a singular lack of clarity in thought and language to Euripides and by placing on his audience the intolerable necessity of seeing an idea contradicted by its expression. It is perhaps of interest that in the only other place where \textit{k碰到} is found in the text of Euripides (Hec. 45) it is preceded by \textit{δύο νεκρώ}, the phrase in this case being given rhetorical point by its association with \textit{δύο ϛε παιδων}.\footnote{It is possible, although not to be pressed, that the first half of 1536 παρθενον φ και δόμαρτα is suggested syntactically by Hec. 46 ἐμεν τῇς τε δυνάμενον κόρης. The contrast, as well as the possible comparison, between these two phrases is instructive. In the \textit{Hecuba} passage \textit{δυον δι παιδων . . . κτλ.} are genitives dependent on \textit{δυο νεκρώ}, whereas in our passage they are in apposition. Euripides elsewhere (as e.g. Hec. 671, 679) uses the dependent genitive construction, but I can find no other instance in the extant plays of nouns in apposition with \textit{νεκρός}. In Hec. 45–46, the use of apposition would seem to be at least as appropriate as of dependent genitives, but no conclusions are warranted as the incidence of \textit{νεκρός} is small. Biehl (ed. \textit{ad loc.}) compares also Or. 66 with Hec. 279.} Is it possible that the striking (and here strikingly misplaced) phrase is due to an interpolator’s memory of a verse in \textit{Hecuba}?\footnote{Cf. e.g. Ar.Byz. Hyp. 21; CIA II 973, 13 and 18; Philostr. VS p. 232. For references to evidence in comedy cf. E. W. Handley, \textit{BICS} 12 (1965) 42, 45. At first sight, \textit{Σ ad} 1366–68, which states that these verses are the insertion of actors ἧν μὴ κακοπαθῶν ἐπὶ τῶν βαυλεὼν δόμων καθαλόμενα, seems to bear out other testimony for the popularity of \textit{Orestes} and for the activity of actors on the text. Recent scholars have, however, strongly defended the passage, cf. A. M. Dale, \textit{WS} 69 (1956) 103–04; di Benedetto (ed. \textit{ad loc.}). A statement of the arguments supporting the scholiast’s suggestion is made by Biehl (\textit{Textprobleme} 79–81), and a similar position is taken by P. Arnott, \textit{Greek Scenic Conventions} (Oxford 1962) 119.}

The direction of the above arguments is clear, but no finality has been (or, perhaps, can be) achieved. Nor can anything approaching certainty be reached in guesses about the origin or nature of the suggested interpolation. The popularity of \textit{Orestes} is well known,\footnote{Cf. e.g. Arist. \textit{Rhet.} 3.1403b, \textit{μεῖν} διαναστάς \nu τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ὑποκριται.} and in view of the evidently increasing importance of the acting profession from the fourth century B.C. onwards, it is not impossible that the episode was inserted in the interests of a particular actor, in order to exploit more fully the comic possibilities of the Phrygian as outlined by Euripides in the lyric \textit{διήγησις}.\footnote{Cited by Stob. \textit{Flor.} 121.14=4.53.14 H. The inference which I have drawn seems supported by Tert. \textit{De Anim.} 279b, \textit{Comici Phrygias timidos induunt}, and more probable than the inverse supposition that Apollodorus is alluding to the scene in \textit{Orestes}. I am indebted to Miss C. Baratt for drawing my attention to this fragment.}

A possible \textit{terminus ante quem} for its insertion may be inferred from a fragment of Apollodorus (6K.),

\begin{quote}
\small
οὖ πανταχοῦ δρός εἰμι· τοῦ ζην ἀν ὀρώ
κρείττον τὸ μῆς ζην, χρήσομαι τῷ κρείττονι.
\end{quote}

\footnote{It is, perhaps, more probable that \textit{πανταχοῦ} is suggested syntactically by Or. 66 with Hec. 279. A similar position is taken by P. Arnott, \textit{Greek Scenic Conventions} (Oxford 1962) 119.}
The passing allusion to the Φρυγικα in this passage seems to imply that the tradition of Phrygian δειλία and its dramatic representatives were well established (at least in comedy) by Apollodorus’ time; and to judge from the uncomplimentary attentions which βαρβαροι in general enjoy in Aristophanes, the convention had probably been in existence for some time. If, then, the convention were one developed in comedy, and here imported into a popular tragedy which already contained an embryonic Φρυγικα, the comic tone of the interlude, which seems to be the basis of the criticism and anxieties of early commentators, is at once explained. 24

Here ideas must, in default of more specific evidence, remain conjectural, but even when more than due allowance has been made for the absence of realism evident on occasion in Euripidean tragedy, it seems that these verses create substantial difficulties, which have not hitherto been satisfactorily explained by those who support their authenticity.

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24 Di Benedetto (ed. ad. 1506ff), in perhaps the most convincing recent defence of these verses, attempts to explain them as an instance of Euripides’ tendency in his later plays to include elements of purely theatrical spectacle. He is conscious of their strongly comic tone, as parallels to which he cites the trochaics of Hel. 1627ff and Ion 517ff, which he describes as having “un tono poco aderente alla tradizione tragica.” But an examination of these passages reveals the similarity as superficial. The scene in Helen between Theoclymenus and the Θεράπτων has a valid dramatic function as a bridge preventing the former from taking action between the αγγελία and the following epiphany, and the gnomic conclusion (1639-41) is alone sufficient to mark its speaker as a genuine Euripidean δολος γενναιος. In the Ion passage, any suggestion of comedy is confined to 517-26, the rest of the scene (to 565) having an obvious and serious dramatic meaning as the false αναγνώρια. In neither of these parallels does the element of comedy seem as strong as in the Orestes passage, but on this individual opinion will differ. What invalidates di Benedetto’s comparison is rather that in both Helen and Ion the scenes in question can be seen to have a meaningful relationship to the whole, and it is this which separates them essentially from the intrinsic and irrelevant comedy of this interlude (which di Benedetto himself concedes). Likewise, his observation that αντιλαβή is common to all three scenes can be shown to have only a nominal value by an examination of the form which it takes in them. In Helen there are 10 instances, in Ion 33, all of bipartite division. In our passage, however, there is only one instance (1525), and here the division is tripartite.