Εὐναία at Euripides' *Hippolytus* 160

Borimir Jordan

IN HIS FINE COMMENTARY on *Hippolytus* Barrett says of the *parodos* (lines 121–69): "these topics are spun out over five stanzas...with great elegance and much felicity of phrase, but no more—high poetry there is none."[1] Not all will agree, and many will applaud whenever Barrett rises to the defense of the ode's poetical qualities. Barrett does so on p.192, where he makes a considerable effort on behalf of lines 159–60:

$$\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\ \delta\text{'}\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\grave{\epsilon}\rho\ \pi\alpha\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\nu$$
$$\epsilon\grave{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\delta\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha};$$

These lines have always been taken to mean that Phaedra is represented by the chorus as lying in bed, ill over the troubles that have befallen her. I cite several explications from the pens of the more important commentators on the play: "atque aegritudo hac orta caussa cubili illam secreto clausam tenet?" (Rataller); "aufs Bett" (Hartung); "but, confined to her bed, has she her mind engrossed with grief for her sufferings?" (Mahaffy–Bury); "she is confined to her bed" (Hadley); "dass sie also im kämmerlein leidend liegt und kummervoll" (Wilamowitz); "εὐναία für ἐν εὐνῇ" (Wecklein); "une douleur qui la retient au lit" (Weil).[2]

Barrett discusses much more fully than any of his predecessors the problems of text, grammatical construction and interpretation that this passage presents. Like all scholars before him except Beck, to whom I shall presently return, Barrett interprets Euripides as saying that "the spirit (of Phaedra) is bound fast abed." From the possible variant readings of the manuscripts εὐναία, εὐναίαι, ψυχά, ψυχάν, Barrett selects εὐναία ψυχά and, construing the words with δέδεται,

[1] W. S. Barrett, ed. *Euripides, Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) 192.

[2] *Apud* L. C. Valckenaer, ed. *Euripidis Tragoedia, Hippolytus* (Leiden 1768) 25; J. A. Hartung, ed. *Euripides' Werke* III, *Hippolytos* (Leipzig 1848) 17; J. P. Mahaffy and J. B. Bury, edd. *The Hippolytos of Euripides* (London 1881) 62; W. S. Hadley, ed. *The Hippolytos of Euripides* (Cambridge 1889) 61; U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, ed. *Euripides Hippolytos* (Berlin 1891) transl. of lines 159–60; N. Wecklein, ed. *Ausgewählte Tragödien des Euripides* (Leipzig/Berlin 1908) 36; H. Weil, ed. *Euripides, Hippolyte*, rev. G. Dalmeyda (Paris 1914) 22.

argues that line 160 has unity only if εὐναία is taken as predicative of δέδεται. In this he is likely to be right; but the standard interpretation of the line which he follows does not tell the whole story. Barrett is aware that this interpretation may be wide of the mark, for he takes considerable trouble to justify it and his choice of the nominative εὐναία: "'is bound fast so as to be kept abed'; she is so paralysed mentally that she can do nothing but lie there in a torpor. An effective phrase, and to object that a ψυχά cannot be in bed would be pettifogging; ψυχά becomes almost synonymous with Ph(aedra) herself. . . The εὐναία of the mss. might equally be intended as the dat. εὐναίαι . . . But εὐναίαι goes ill with λύπαι both in word order and in sense: her being in bed belongs not with the suggested cause (λύπα) but with the known consequences (δέδεται). . . her being in bed is no longer explicitly a consequence of her grief."

The choice between nominative and dative presents no difficulty. As Barrett says, palaeographically either is possible, since the mss. often represent the dative without *iota*-adscript or subscript; either reading can also be construed. The real problem of the line is the nature of the expression—is it literal or metaphorical? If a metaphor is intended, what is it?

Now it is certainly true that earlier in the ode the chorus had mentioned a report that Phaedra remains within the palace because of an illness which keeps her in bed (lines 130–32). But may it not be the case that the phrase εὐναία δέδεται ψυχά refers both to Phaedra's person lying abed and to the paralysis of her spirit that has overpowered her upon the arrival of bad news from Crete? Paley had already noted in his remark on line 160: "the malady was rather mental than bodily,"[3] and there is an interesting parallel in Plato's *Phaedo* (83D): Οὐκοῦν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ πάθει μάλιστα καταδεῖται ψυχὴ ὑπὸ cώματος; Πῶc δή; "Ὅτι ἑκάcτη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥcπερ ἧλον ἔχουcα προcηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸc τὸ cῶμα . . . "And in this affliction, is not the soul completely tied down by the body? How so? Because each pleasure or pain nails it, so to speak, with a nail to the body. . ."

I intend to argue that εὐναία in line 160 has the additional connotation 'anchored' and that it represents a nautical metaphor which Euripides may have used deliberately to create a conscious ambiguity. The evidence for this interpretation is as follows.

---

[3] F. A. Paley, ed. *Euripides* I (London 1872) 178.

In both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* Homer uses εὐνή (-αί) in the sense of 'anchor', or more precisely, 'anchor stones', with which ships anchored on open beaches and in harbors.[4] An example of this procedure is the Homeric verse (*e.g. Il.* 1.436=*Od.* 15.498):

ἐκ δ᾽ εὐνὰς ἔβαλον, κατὰ δὲ πρυμνήϲι᾽ ἔδηϲαν.

Here is how J. S. Morrison explains the technique that Homer describes: "the ship is moving towards the beach stern first. Out of the bows perforated stones are dropped with cables attached, known suitably as 'sleepers', and referred to elsewhere as 'holdfasts of swift ships'. Lines are then run out astern and made fast on the beach." In a note Morrison quotes from Knight's *Modern Seamanship*, where "a method of mooring a ship using shore lines to secure the stern and two anchors to hold the bow in position is called the 'Mediterranean Moor'."[5]

Although Homer's and Euripides' words are related, we cannot of course assume that they mean the same thing. However, εὐναία too means anchor. It is the word for 'anchor' in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, who uses it twice (1.955, 1.1277); and it also appears, in the plural, in a fragment probably belonging to the *oeuvre* of Callimachus (fr.727 Pfeiffer), where it certainly means 'anchor'. This meaning finally is guaranteed by the ancient lexica. In a gloss of the *Etymologicum Magnum* (*s.v.* εὐνάς) which defines εὐνή (-αί) as 'anchor', εὐναία is said to have the same meaning, while Hesychius in his *Lexicon* (*s.v.* εὐναῖαι) has the entry αἱ ἄγκυραι, ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐνάζεϲθαι.

Εὐναία, furthermore, was a good tragic word for 'anchor'. There is explicit and incontrovertible evidence for this usage. First, εὐναία forms the single word of an unattributed tragic fragment (*fr.adesp.* 587 Nauck, quoted by Eustathius). Eustathius' gloss leaves no doubt at all as to the meaning; he says that it was a tragic word for 'anchor': εὐνὴ εὐναία τραγικῶς ἡ ἄγκυρα. As a noun εὐναία occurs only here in all of extant tragedy. This fact raises the possibility—admittedly remote, but nonetheless real—that Eustathius or his source may have had precisely the present passage of *Hippolytus* before him when he wrote the gloss. I would also point out that as perceptive and erudite a scholar as Pfeiffer could flatly assert (in his comments on the Callimachean passage referred to *supra*) that Callimachus took the word

---

[4] Hom. *Il.* 1.436=*Od.* 15.498; *Il.* 14.77; *Od.* 9.136–37.
[5] J. S. Morrison and R. T. Williams, *Greek Oared Ships 900–322 B.C.* (Cambridge 1968) 56.

from tragedy, precisely because the form εὐναία, unlike the synonymous εὐναί, was not epic. For such doublets compare Ἀθήνη (epic) and Ἀθηναία (tragedy); θύρη (epic, common Greek) and θυραία (Menander and in Attic inscriptions; see LSJ s.v. θυραῖος III). Homer himself has both ἀνάγκη and ἀναγκαίη.

Secondly, Euripides uses the adjective εὐναῖος once again with a nautical meaning in *Iphigenia in Tauris* (line 432). The passage is not entirely free of difficulty,[6] but the meaning of the word here is clear. The chorus speaks of rudders hissing as the ship moves through the water. The rudders (πηδάλια) are said to be εὐναία. That is to say, the rudders are 'well-bedded', 'firmly anchored' in their grooves or row-locks and thus keep the ship on a steady course as it sails before the wind.

Keeping the meaning 'anchor' in mind we may construe the passage in several ways. Reading the dative εὐναίᾳ we can translate "because of her grief over her troubles, Phaedra's soul is bound to an anchor stone." So taken, the metaphor makes satisfactory sense: the poet is saying that Phaedra's soul is so weighed down with grief that she is paralyzed mentally and incapable of activity. We may, however, also treat εὐναία as an adjective and translate "because of her grief, as it was anchoring [as it came to anchor], Phaedra's soul is bound fast," or "her soul is bound fast to her anchored grief." The poet means to say that Phaedra's soul became paralyzed with grief the moment when the ship from Crete, having reached port, dropped its anchor and the bad news was announced. *Εὐναίᾳ* with a nautical sense can be an adjective, as we noted above. But it really makes little difference whether we regard εὐναίᾳ as noun or adjective, although the latter makes for a smoother construction. The dative forms of both noun and adjective were homophone so that the audience themselves could not have decided which it was when they heard the word spoken.

The simplest way, perhaps, of construing the passage is Barrett's. As he points out, the word order εὐναία δέδεται ψυχά suggests that εὐναία is predicate adjective with ψυχά. The metrical cola too suggest much the same thing. Strictly speaking, εὐναῖος is neither active nor passive; the voice, as often, has to be inferred from context. Here it

---

[6] On the problems of this line and proposed emendations see N. Wecklein, ed. *Euripidis Iphigenia Taurica* (Leipzig 1848) 70, App.; I. Flagg, ed. *Euripides, Iphigenia among the Taurians* (New York 1889) 90; M. Platnauer, ed. *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford 1938) 97; Morrison and Williams, *op.cit. (supra* n.5) 199.

may go either with λύπη, 'anchoring grief', or with ψυχή, 'anchored soul'. But in any case there is a strict cause-and-effect relationship: Phaedra has troubles because a ship has brought them, and these troubles are the reason for the paralysis of her soul.

There remains to stress what is in any case obvious: εὐναία with this nautical meaning is particularly apt in the account of the messenger's sea voyage which the chorus begin to recite at line 155. In such a context it is only natural to interpret the word as 'anchored', and in fact the eighteenth-century commentator Christian Beck recognized that this is the fundamental meaning of the word in our passage. This meaning was so self-evident to Beck that, hardly bothering to support it, he simply noted "anima illigata est ancorae moeroris ob casus adversos qui illi contigere."[7]

It is important for the understanding of the image to keep in mind that εὐναί and εὐναία are not synonymous with ἄγκυρα, a word which has acquired a traditional and different set of metaphorical connotations. The two former words refer specifically to *stones*, heavy weights. Apollonius of Rhodes is explicit: εὐναίης λίθος (1.955). Oppian (*Hal.* 3.373) has εὐναστήρ λίθος. See LSJ *s.v.* βαρύνω for the connotations of being 'weighed down' metaphorically in Greek. It is perhaps pertinent to call to mind the comparable 'mill stone' of the New Testament: ὃς δ' ἂν σκανδαλίσῃ ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, συμφέρει αὐτῷ ἵνα κρεμασθῇ μύλος ὀνικὸς περὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ καταποντισθῇ ἐν τῷ πελάγει θαλάσσης (*Matt.* 18.6; cf. *Marc.* 9.42). It should be noted too that the stone anchors designated by the terms εὐναί, εὐναία were actually in common use, especially during the Bronze Age (the setting of the present passage). Numerous specimens have now been recovered from the sea bottom by marine archaeologists. Some of these weigh as much as 700 kilograms; moreover, they do not at all resemble the shape of traditional anchors but are simply large stones, exactly as the image of Euripides' passage suggests.[8]

[7] Christianus Daniel Beckius, *Euripidis Tragoediae Fragmenta Epistolae ex Editione Iosuae Barnesii nunc recusa Tomus III continens Samueli Musgravii notas integras in Euripidem* (Leipzig 1788) 257. Beck's interpretation is cited with approval in *Euripidis Opera Omnia*, ed. J. M. Duncan, III (Glasgow/London 1821) p.65 *ad loc.*

[8] See Honor Frost, "Anchors, the Potsherds of Marine Archaeology," in *Marine Archaeology*, ed. D. J. Blackman (Colston Papers 23, Hamden [Conn.] 1973) 397–406. The connection between 'bed' and 'anchor, anchorage' is present in Latin as well. At Plaut. *Cas.* 557 Alcesimus refers to his wife as a 'battleship' (*navis*) and says: *ibo intro, ut subducam navim rusum*

Although one fundamental meaning of our word and the metaphor which it carries are nautical, there is no denying that themes of illness and of the sickbed are also present in the ode[9]—a fact which very likely (and naturally enough) led the commentators to take the adjective in its literal sense. It is quite possible, therefore, that Euripides intends a conscious ambiguity here. He has contrived to use a word which would suggest both 'bed' and 'anchor-stone', since both, after all, are appropriate and fit his purpose. Such deliberate ambiguities are not unknown elsewhere in tragedy and in Greek poetry in general; the present instance therefore would hardly be unique or even extraordinary.[10]

If the interpretation here offered is right, it affords a glimpse into the marvellous dramatic skill of Euripides. The speculations of the chorus in these few short lines about what ails Phaedra's soul form a miniature play within the play. In the imaginary account of the chorus Euripides has painted a vivid tableau packed with compressed and intense action. On the island of Crete an emissary of King Minos, Phaedra's father, goes aboard a ship (ναυβάτας ἔπλευcεν). The ship straightway weighs anchor (ἔξορμος)[11] and sets course for the harbor of Athens which "receives all seafarers gladly" (λιμένα εὐξεινότατον ναύταις). But, unlike the ordinary sailor putting into port, the Cretan is the bearer of an ominous report (φήμαν πέμπων).[12] The ship drops its

---

in pulvinaria. At Livy 21.62 *pulvinarium* means 'seat, couch'; *cf.* also *pulvinar* 'couch, sofa, marriage bed'. In the present line from *Casina, pulvinaria* must refer to the berthing, securing or anchoring of the metaphorical warship. *Cf.* also Engl. 'berth', used both of ships and of beds.

[9] Line 131 νοcερᾷ κοίτᾳ (coupled with δέμας, not ψυχῇ); line 154 κοίτα λεχέων.

[10] For deliberate ambiguities in tragedy see E. R. Dodds, ed. *Bacchae*[2] (Oxford 1974) *ad* 367; E. Fraenkel, ed. *Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) *ad* 22, 300, 471; also *ibid.* III p.514 n.2 (*ad Eum.* 460); III p.671 n.1. See also Aesch. fr.700 (Mette); R. F. Renehan, "Conscious Ambiguities in Pindar and Bacchylides," *GRBS* 10 (1969) 218; Aesch. *Agam.* 438–44 with H. W. Smyth's comments in his Loeb ed. (1926). For ambiguities in comedy see the scholiast on Ar. *Nub.* 225 and on Ar. *Vesp.* 1465; M. Platnauer, *Aristophanes, Peace* (Oxford 1970) *ad* 124–26. A nautical metaphor containing an ambiguity may possibly be present in Eur. *Hec.* 939–41, *cf.* Paley's note *ad loc.*; and also in Soph. *Phil.* 271–73, *cf.* the scholium and the comments of Webster, and Campbell and Abbott *ad loc.* For conscious ambiguities in choral poetry see Renehan, *op.cit.*

[11] There is no good reason for asserting, as Barrett does (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.1] 191), that in an account of a sea voyage such as this ἔξορμος must be from ἐξορμᾶν 'set forth', not from ὅρμος 'anchorage, haven'. Besides, ἐξορμᾶν too is used of ships: Thuc. 7.14.1.

[12] For φήμη as a significant saying connected with omens, dreams and portents see LSJ i.(1) *s.v. Cf.* R. Renehan, *Greek Lexicographical Notes* (Göttingen 1975) *s.v.*

anchor in Mounychia—and now the poet transforms the straight-forward, factual account of the messenger's sea voyage into an elaborate nautical image illustrating the sudden, ineluctable and grievous change which the news from Crete has brought into Phaedra's life: even as the anchor-stones are cast off binding the ship to its mooring, Phaedra's soul too becomes bound fast and oppressed by grief. She takes to her bed, incapable of action. With one word Euripides unites two different themes running through the ode in the last line of the *parodos*. I may add too that εὐναία corresponds to ἔπλευcεν and ἔξορμοc in lines 155–56: the departure of the ship from Crete and its arrival in Mounychia serve as boundaries for this section of the antistrophe and give it formal unity.[13]

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA
January, 1978

---

[13] Barrett, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 191, explains why the ship first came to Mounychia. I wish to thank my colleague R. Renehan for reading a draft of this paper and offering suggestions and criticism.