

OVER TROUBLED WATERS: MEGARA 62-71¹⁾

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"Δαιμονίη παίδων, τί νύ τοι φρεσὶν ἔμπεσε τοῦτο
 πευκαλίμης; πῶς ἄμμ' ἐθέλεις ὀροθυνέμεν ἄμφω
 κήδε' ἄλαστα λέγουσα τὰ τ' οὐ νῦν πρῶτα κέκλαυται;
 65 ἢ οὐχ ἄλις, οἷς ἐχόμεσθα τὸ δεύτατον, αἶέν ἐπ' ἤμαρ
 γινομένοις; μάλα μὲν γε φιλοθρηνῆς κέ τις εἶη
 ὅστις ἀριθμήσειεν ἐφ' ἡμετέροις ἀχέεσσι.
 θάρσει· οὐκ ἴ<σ>ης γ' ἐκυρήσαμεν ἐκ θεοῦ αἴσης.
 καὶ δ' αὐτὴν ὀρόω σε, φίλον τέκος, ἀτρύτοισιν
 70 ἄλγεσι μοχθίζουσαν· ἐπιγνώμων δέ τοί εἰμι
 70a < - - - - - >
 71 ἀσχαλάαν, ὅτε δὴ γε καὶ εὐφροσύνης κόρος ἐστί..."

63 ἐθέλεις D S : ἐθέλης W Tr 64 τ' Gow (cf. v.18) : δ' codd.
 κέκλαυται D S : κέκλωνται W Tr, def. Giangrande : κέκλονται Vaughn :
 κέλονται Aldina altera (1495) 65 αἶέν Brunck (cf. v.40) : ατεῖ codd. :
 καί κεν Vaughn 66 τις D S : τ' ἄν W Tr 67 ἀριθμήσειεν et 68 θάρσει
 οὐ codd. : ἀριθμήσειεν ἔν et θαρσοίη G. Hermann, agn. Ahrens : ἀριθμηθεῖ-
 σιν et θαρσοίη Wilamowitz, agn. Gow 68 οὐκ ἴσης γ' scripsi : οὐ τοι-

1) See J.W. Vaughn, *The Megara (Moschus IV): Text, Translation and Commentary* (Noctes Romanae, 14), Bern and Stuttgart 1976. H. Beckby, *Die griechischen Bukoliker* (Beiträge zur klass. Philologie, 49), Meisenheim am Glan 1975, 294-301 and 550-53. G. Giangrande, "On Moschus' Megara," C.Q., N.S. 19 (1969) 181-84. Th. Breitenstein, *Recherches sur le poème Mégara*, Copenhagen 1966. A.S.F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (O.C.T.), Oxford 1952. Idem, *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, Cambridge 1953 (reprint, Hamden, Conn. 1972). Idem, C.R. 41 (1927) 169 (on Megara 65f.). C. Galavotti, *Theocritus quique feruntur bucolici Graeci*, Rome 1945. Ph.E. Legrand, *Bucoliques Grecs* (Budé), II, Paris 1927. J. Sitzler, *Wochenschrift f. klass. Philol.* 32 (1915) 454. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Bucolici Graeci* (O.C.T.), Oxford 1905.

ἦσδ' *codd.* : οὐ τοίης δ' Giangrande : γούν τοιῆσδ' Valckenaer : ἐπεὶ
 τοιῆσδ' Legrand *post v.70 lacunam unius versus suspicor: exspectes*
 ἀτλήτων ἀνιών· ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἔνι σῦνεχὲς αἰεὶ 71 ἄσχαλάαν *codd.* : ἀγαλάαν
 Sitzler, *agn.* Gow

[Alcmena:] "My poor child [Megara], what is this that has now come into your mind, usually so full of sense? Why do you want to upset us both with talk of those unforgettable sorrows, for which we have wept long ago? Are not those sorrows enough which have last befallen us, as they keep coming upon us day by day? Fond of bewailing surely would be he who would wish to find the sum of all our griefs! Be of good cheer: two of us do not have equal fate sent from heaven [i.e., my lot is much more ill-fated than yours]. And nevertheless, I see you yourself, dear child, toiling with endless sorrows. Now, believe me, I am well experienced <in unbearable griefs; and yet one cannot always, unremittingly> be grieved, for even of merriment there comes satiety [and much more so of grief]..."

We now have two recent doctoral dissertations on this Alexandrian *epyllion* of 125 lines (Breitenstein, Vaughn), and two fresh editions (Beckby, Vaughn), since Gow's O.C.T. text of 1952. And yet the old *crux* in the middle of the poem (lines 64, 68, 70f.) remains. My solution can be found in the text and translation printed above. Let us now discuss these four lines in the context of the *entire* poem.

(i) *Line* 64. Nobody seems to have pointed out that Alcmena opens her speech with a series of three questions (τί... πῶς... ἢ οὐχ, 62-66) in order to *reciprocate* Megara's own series of five questions at the beginning of her speech (τίφθ'... τί... ἢ ῥ'... τί... τί, 1-7). Such series of opening questions are an old epic device: e.g., Achilles produces five questions in a row while addressing Patroclus (*Iliad* 16.7-19), and Chalciope addresses her half-sister Medea with another series of five questions (A.R. *Arg.* 3.674-78). If that is true, then Gow's τ' (for the transmitted δ') must be correct (*contra* all editors), for δ' would interrupt the series.

What is more important, these series of questions is not the only deliberate parallelism between both speeches. An eight line long simile of Megara (21-28) is matched by a six line long simile of Alcmena (113-18); Megara's oath by Arte-

mis (29-35) finds its counterpart in Alcmena's oath by Demeter and Persephone (75-80); Megara's vivid description of Heracles' dreadful killing of his own sons—a happening τό τ' οὐδ' ὄναρ ἦλυθεν ἄλλῳ (13-20)—is balanced by Alcmena's equally vivid description of her "dreadful dream" about her own sons (91-113). In brief, the poet of *Megara* may rather slavishly borrow from Homeric diction (as Breitenstein, 70-86, and others have shown); and his poetic craftsmanship may be modest (compare, e.g., ἐκπάλως used three times in ninety lines, 2, 72, 93, as against eight times in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*). But he *did* have a clear idea about his design: to contrast both pathetic lamentations (Megara's and Alcmena's), to the clear advantage of the latter. More on the poet's design see under (iv).

Back to line 64: κέκλαυται of D and S (which offer better text most of the times) is to be preferred to κέκλωνται of W and Tr. Κέκλαυται is a *perfectum intensivum* (Schwyzer, G.G., II, 263): compare ἔολπα in lines 55 and 80. The point is that Alcmena here is referring to an *old wisdom*: παλαιὰ καινοῖς δακρύοις οὐ χορὴ στένειν (Euripides Fr. 43 N., *Alexandros*). Giangrande, however, defends κέκλωνται (from κλώθω): "these misfortunes (i.e. the misfortunes you are crying over) have not been spun to us just now..." (184). But the sense is weak: throughout Greek tragedy people bewail their *old* fate. In his turn, Vaughn reads κέκλονται (from κέλομαι) with reference to the scholion in Tr, κέκλωνται· καλοῦνται, ὀνομάζονται. But again, the sense thus obtained is weak ("Surely these are not brought up now for the first time").

(ii) *Line 68.* (a) Hermann, Ahrens, Wilamowitz, and Gow engaged in major surgery (ἀριθμήσειν ἔν or ἀριθμηθεῖσιν plus θαρσοίη for the transmitted ἀριθμήσειεν plus θάρσει· οὐ). Against their procedure it suffices to say that the imperative θάρσει, at the beginning of a line, meaning "be of good courage, fear not," is too firmly rooted in the epic tradition to be taken for a scribal error.

(b) Gallavotti, Breitenstein (51), Giangrande (181f.), Beckby, and Vaughn keep the text as transmitted, θάρσει· οὐ

τοιῆσδ' (or τοίης δ') ἐκυρήσαμεν ἐκ θεοῦ αἴσης, but at the expense of the sense. Breitenstein refers τοιῆσδ' to the two preceding lines only: "God has not allotted us the fate of *counting* all our misfortunes, new and old" ("Alcmène invite Mégara à prendre courage, pour le seul motif qu'elles ne sont pas obligées à compter tous leurs malheurs, tant les anciens que les actuels: Dieu ne leur a pas assigné un tel sort..."). Such an interpretation is *too narrow*: certainly αἴσα must refer to something much more important in human life than simply "counting one's misfortunes." The same goes against Vaughn's interpretation (62): "Alcmena makes a neat comparison between the lot apportioned by Zeus and Megara's self-imposed fate of endless lamentation. So she states: 'Be of good courage! we have not received such a fate as this from Zeus'." In addition, this interpretation contradicts the fact that Alcmena *herself* engages in endless lamentation (lines 1-3; 45f., "you pour yourself out like water with weeping each night and day god sends us;" 82, "though I weep more tears than fair-tressed Niobe"). Now, my point is: Alcmena is entitled to an endless crying, Megara is not. For Alcmena feels that her own lot is much more ill-fated than Megara's: see below, (ii, e).

(c) Giangrande recurs to a rather bizarre solution: "Alcmena says: 'Resign yourself, because we have not obtained an ἀγαθή αἴσα from the god'..." But, first, such a statement coming from Alcmena would serve as *no consolation* to Megara, who is expecting comfort from her beloved mother-in-law (45f.; 50f.). And, as a matter of fact, Alcmena is offering such a comfort to her daughter-in-law -- in lines 71 ("[Stop crying,] for even of merriment there comes satiety [and much more so of grieving]"); 75-80 ("By Demeter and the Maid, I love you in my heart no less than if you had been the fruit of my own womb, and you know it well!"); 81 ("So never tell me, my child, that I care not for you," rebutting Megara's complaint in lines 45-51). Second, if Alcmena in her statement "is pointedly referring to Megara's own words in line 7, τί νύ μ' ὄδε κακῆ γονέες τέκον αἴση;" --

as Giangrande takes it, -- what would be the point for Alcmena to repeat something that Megara already knows? Third, the sense of θάρσει, "resign yourself" (so already Legrand, reading θάρσει· ἐπεὶ τοιῆσδ' ..., "résigne-toi, puisque tel est le lot que le ciel nous a assigné"), can be paralleled nowhere (in late funeral inscriptions *C.I.G.* 4463; 5200b; 9789, the formula, θάρσει ψυχῇ, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος, means "Fear not, soul: nobody is immortal"). Finally, the sense of ἀγαθός for τοῖος is not at all likely here.

(d) Beckby tries to solve the problem with a sway of the Gordian sword: by simply printing a question mark. θάρσει. οὐ τοιῆσδ' ἐκυρήσαμεν ἐκ θεοῦ αἴσης; "Füg dich! Haben wir nicht dies Los vom Himmel bekommen?" Again, θάρσει nowhere means "füg dich!" and the sense obtained serves to no solace to Megara, who is crying for help.

(e) If, on the one hand, the epic imperative θάρσει· οὐ is sound (for break and hiatus at this position compare Theocritus 25.275, τυτηή οὐδέ, referred to lately by Gallavotti), and if, on the other hand, τοιῆσδ' does not yield a satisfactory sense, then the latter must be corrupt. Thus read οὐκ ἴ<σ>ης γ' for the transmitted οὐ τοιῆσδ', and compare ἴσην... αἴσαν ar *A.R. Arg.* 3.207f.; ἴση μοῖρα at *Iliad* 9.318. Palaeography. ΟΥΤΟΙΗΣΑ for ΟΥΙ<C>Η<C>Η<C>. The scribal mistake TO for K (and vice versa) need no explanation. And a dropped C may be paralleled by *Megara* 38, Ἡρης D S : ἦρα (i.e., Ἡρας) W Tr. After all, maybe the scribe wanted to write ἴης for ἴσης (compare *Iliad* 9.318f., ἴση μοῖρα... ἴη τιμῆ). Finally, as for the error Γ' > Τ' > Δ', compare *Megara* 81 μή μ' S : μήτ' D : μηδ' W Tr.

The sense thus obtained is: "My dear child, be of good cheer! You and I do not have equal fate from Heaven: *my* lot is much more ill-fated than yours: *I* should weep forever, not you (cf. 46, said of Alcmena, νύκτας τε κλαίουσα καὶ ἐκ Διὸς ἡμαθ' ὀπίσσω)." Why so? For Megara is still young and may have other children (by Heracles or by another husband); but Alcmena is old and may not: in case something happens to Heracles and Iphicles, if "the dreadful dream" (91-121)

proves true, she would remain childless. Moreover, her father was killed by her own husband; Zeus seduced her as a married woman; and Hera delayed the birth of her son bringing her to the threshold of Hades (83-87). Finally, Eurystheus (5; 123) is a real danger to her family.

This interpretation ("I should cry, not you!") goes well with the context of the poem. First, with the next line 69, "And nevertheless, I see you *too* (καί) toiling with endless sorrows [instead of me alone];" second, with the solace offered to Megara in line 71, "[Stop crying:] for even of merriment there comes satiety, [and much more so of grief]." Finally, the suggested interpretation finds its support in the next lines 72-74:

καί σε μάλ' ἐκπάγλως ὀλοφύρομαι ἠδ' ἔλεαίρω
οὔνεκεν ἡμετέροιο λυγροῦ μετὰ δαίμονος ἔσχεες
ὅς θ' ἡμῖν ἐφύπερθε κάρης βαρῦς αἰώρεϊται.

"Exceedingly do I grieve for thee and pity thee in that thou sharest the baleful fate which broods heavy over the heads of me and mine" (Gow's pointed translation, my italics). That is it: the fate of *the family of Alcmena* is grave and baleful (compare also the force of "our house" at 124, οἴκου ἄφ' ἡμετέροιο): her daughter-in-law Megara *shares only a small part of that fate*. No wonder then that Alcmena could say, while trying to comfort her daughter-in-law, "You and I do not have equal fate from Heaven: [mine is baleful, not yours]."

(iii) *Lines 70-71.* (a) Once more, as in line 64, Alcmena recurs to a *popular wisdom*: ὅτε δὴ γε καὶ εὐφροσύνης κῆρος ἐστί. This is a clear reference to *Iliad* 13.636-39, πάντων μὲν κῆρος ἐστί (e.g., of sleep, love, singing and dancing). This Homeric wisdom was referred to by many (Gregory of Nazianz, inspired by Euripides Fr. 213.1 N., put it this way, κῆρος δὲ πάντων, καὶ καλῶν καὶ χειρόνων), and it was criticized by Nonnus *Dionys.* 42.178-81 (cf. Breitenstein 52 n. 99).

(b) If the text of this adage is sound, then 71 ἀσχαλάαν, "be grieved," is untenable, and Sitzler may well be right in reading ἀγχαλάαν instead (with a μόχθον understood from

the preceding line), "to ease, relax." But the real problem is that 70 ἐπιγνώμων δέ τοί εἰμι can yield a satisfactory sense *neither* with ἀσχαλάαν *nor* with ἀγχαλάαν. For it cannot mean, "I counsel thee to rest" (as Gow has it); nor can it be rendered as "je conçois que tu t'en irrites" (Legrand, Breitenstein 51), or as "ich verstehe wirklich, dass deine Seele in Aufruhr geriet" (Beckby), "I can understand your being grieved."

Most scholars, however, take ἐπιγνώμων as being equal in sense to συγγνώμων, "pardoning," with reference to Hesychius, ἐπιγνώμη· συγγνώμη, διάγνωσις. This interpretation may be traced back to the Latin translation of *Megara* in W. Holtzmann's (Xylander's) edition of Theocritus of 1558 ("*ignosco vero tibi quod doles*"); and it may be found in Liddell-Scott-Jones (s.v., ii) too. Sitzler translated, "Ich gebe dir aber die Entscheidung, vom Leide abzulassen, da es ja auch in der Freude eine Sättigung gibt."

(c) But ἐπιγνώμων nowhere means "pardoning." Apart from the rather technical sense of the word ("arbiter, umpire, judge, appraiser, inspector"), its usual meaning is "be well acquainted with; be an expert." In this sense the word is used five times by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. math.* 7.56, τῆς γὰρ ἰδίας τέχνης ἐστὶν ἐπιγνώμων, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἀλλοτριάν ἰδιώτης καθέστηκεν. 7.348 ἐπιγνώμων τάληθοῦς. 2.67; 7.310; 7.353), and three times by Philo (*De opificio mundi* 124, Ἰπποκράτης ὁ τῆς φύσεως ἐπιγνώμων. *De spec. legg.* 3.52, ἄνθρωποι μὲν τῶν ἐμφανῶν ἐπιγνώμονες, θεὸς δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀδήλων. 2.24 τῶν δὲ γυναικῶν τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπιγνώμονας ἀποφήνας).

This is the most natural meaning here as well. Alcmena is saying to *Megara*: "Believe me, I am an expert in suffering. And yet, a mortal cannot endure in mourning forever, for—as the adage goes—'even of merriment there comes satiety,' [and much more so of grief]." Now as ἐπιγνώμων cannot be construed with ἀσχαλάαν, the safest way out seems to be to assume that one line is missing, comprising, for example: <ἀτλήτων ἀνιῶν· ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἔνι σὺνεχὲς αἰεὶ> (cf., e.g., *Odyssey* 9.74; *Arat.* 20; *Theocrit.* 20.12; *Iliad* 12.26). Possibly,

the line was mistakenly dropped because *three* lines in a row opened with an A (70 ἄλγεσι, 70a ἀτμήτων, 71 ἀσχαλάαν). With this line added, Megara's speech takes 55 lines, Alcmena's 65 lines (with two times three lines in the middle serving as a transition passage, 56-61).

(iv) In conclusion, the suggested text of this key passage of the *epyllion* (62-82) enhances the rôle of Alcmena as a caring and loving comforter of her young daughter-in-law. Alcmena displays wisdom (compare her references to "popular wisdom" in lines 64, 66f., 71, and perhaps Hesiod *Scutum* 5, νόον γε μὲν οὐ τις ἔριζε, said of Alcmena); she shows understanding and a warm humane love for Megara -- from the opening sentence, "Be of good cheer: you and I do not have equal fate from Heaven," (68) to the closing mild reproach, "So never tell me, my child, that I care not for you!" (81).

At a point in her hapless life, Megara at once feels desperately abandoned: far from her parents (36-40), far from the wandering husband (41-45), far from any kinsman (47-50); without the attention of her own sister (52-54) and, above all, without Alcmena's care (45f.). And she cries for help: "Nor have I, a hapless woman in my misery, somebody to whom I may look and seek comfort for my heart" (50f., οὐδέ μοί ἐστι πρὸς ὄντινά κε βλέψασα / οἷα γυνή πανάποτος ἀναψύξαιμι φίλον κῆρ).

Megara's effort was *not* in vain. Her love for Alcmena (1-3, Μητερ ἐμή -- τί μοι τόσον ἠνίησαι;) was warmly reciprocated (compare, e.g., Alcmena's diction expressing love, 62, 69 φίλον τέκος, 79 τηλυγέτη... παρθένος, 81 ἐμόν θάλος). Her call for comfort was heard and abundantly answered -- in this passage 62-82.

In brief, this compassionate mutual care and love between Alcmena and Megara, both stricken with grave personal tragedies, is what gives this well designed Alexandrian *epyllion* its unique aesthetic value. But this value had remained hidden from scholars because of a careless scribe.