

When, at Eur. *Med.* 63, the Nurse asks the Tutor “τί δ’ ἔστιν, ὦ γεραιέ; μὴ φθόνει φράσαι”, a scholiast in the margin of ms. *Par. gr.* 2713 comments: “ἀντὶ τοῦ «ὦ γεραιά», ὡς τὸ «κλυτὸς Ἀμφιτρίτη»”. Clearly, this scholiast wanted γεραιός here to be taken as an adjective of two terminations (as κλυτός is at Hom. *Od.* 5.422), and the line to be addressed to the (female) Nurse. Other indications in his marginalia suggest that the scholiast consistently held the attribution of lines to be the reverse of what is printed in all modern editions. As Foti 2005 points out, however, the scholiast’s division faces an insurmountable problem at *Med.* 65, where one character pleads to the other “πρὸς γενείου”: throughout Greek literature, this phrase (often translated “by your beard”) is only ever addressed to men, which proves that the Nurse — not the Tutor, as the scholiast would have it — must speak the line.

In my paper I will discuss this and two more controversial cases of contested speaker-line attribution in Greek tragedy, with the overall goal of showing that greater attention needs to be paid to gendered forms of communication in the business of textual criticism. Although there is not often a tutor’s beard to conclusively settle problems, insights into the differences between male and female speech in Greek drama may offer crucial indications for the attribution of contested lines. In this respect, it is important to consider both what men and women ‘sounded like’ (formal linguistic differences, as identified by e.g. Bain 1984; McClure 1995; Willi 2003: ch. 6), and what they ‘talked about’ (broader thematic differences, as discussed by e.g. McClure 1999; Mossman 2001, 2005; Chong-Gossard 2008).

The distribution of Eur. *El.* 959-66 (part of the exchange between Electra and Orestes shortly before Clytemnestra’s arrival onstage) has been the subject of sustained controversy since Camper first proposed reversing the transmitted order in 1831 (for discussion, cf. Denniston, Cropp *ad loc.*; Steidle 1968: 75-6; Basta Donzelli 1991: 18-20). I will argue that the manuscript attributions should be maintained, primarily for two gender-related reasons: (i) women in tragedy do not give commands to servants if free men are present (thus 959-61 should be spoken by Orestes), and (ii) the discussion of clothing at 966 is typical of Electra’s status as a deprived woman.

In the first half of the ‘recognition duet’ between Helen and Menelaus at Eur. *Hel.* 625-59, the distribution of lines is perhaps even more deeply vexed (cf. e.g. Dale, Kannicht, Allan *ad loc.*; Zuntz 1965; Young 1974; Willink 1984). Without going into all the difficulties or offering a comprehensive solution, I will bring to bear the recent work of Chong-Gossard on male and female lyric (2008: chs. 2-3) to argue that 638-40, autobiographical in nature, should be assigned definitively to Helen, and that there is no need to take 654-5 from Menelaus as being ‘too emotional’ to be sung by a man.

In discussing these passages I seek to contribute to the growing understanding of the distinct characteristics of male and female language on the Greek stage, and to argue for the important role that the study of those characteristics can play in textual criticism.