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A TEXTUAL PROBLEM IN EURIPIDES

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At *Iphigenia in Aulis* lines 7-8 there is a reference to Sirius:

ΑΓ. Τίς ποτ' ἄρ' ἀστήρ ὄδε πορθμεύει;
ΠΡ. Σείριος ἐγγύς τῆς ἑπταπόρου
Πλειάδος ἄσσω ἔτι μεσσήρης.

The difficulties which are presented to us by these lines have been clearly set out by Prof. E. Calderón in his masterly edition¹. His argumentation has enabled me, I hope, to solve the problem.

The situation is as follows: both Sirius and the Pleiades are rising (μεσσήρης), the date being the end of July and the time before dawn (details in Calderón). The problem has been caused by the fact that ἐγγύς has been taken by scholars, beginning with Sealiger, to mean "near", which would be impossible here: Sirius is not "próximo a las Pleyades" (Calderón). Some interpreters (Paley) believe that Euripides used ἐγγύς improperly, in the sense "not far distant from", which is grammatically impossible. Others (cf. Paley, quoting Matthiae, and Calderón) surmise that Euripides either made an error, which would be improbable, given that astronomical data are, as a rule, mentioned with mathematical precision, or has used the name Σείριος loosely to denote another brilliant star situated near the Pleiades "en este momento" (Calderón), but this hypothesis is impossible because the specific question asked by Agamemnon is τίς ἀστήρ, a question which expects the precise name of a star in order to establish the time of the day: "momento del día" (Calderón).

The solution to the problem is simple. Euripides has used ἐγγύς² so as to denote not physical proximity but similarity (i.e. in the sense "like"). The old man

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¹ Cf. E. Calderón Dorda, Eurípides, *Tragedias*, V, *Heracles. Ifigenia en Áulide*, Madrid 2002, page 58.

² Cf. Thes. Gr. Ling., s.v. ἐγγύς: "De Similitudine... c. gen. Theophr. *H.Pl.* 6,6,6 – ἐγγύς εἶναι τῶν παππωδῶν σπερμάτων (= "like seeds which have a pappus")". Cf. Catullus

mentions Sirius and the Pleiades together because the rising of both was traditionally used in order to denote the time of year and the hour of the day. The sense of the passage is: "Which star is that proceeding (*scil.* in the sky)?" "It is Sirius, still moving in mid-sky, like the Pleiades".

66, 94 where the words *proximus Hydrochoi fulgeret Oarion* mean "let Orion shine like Aquarius": cf. my *New Chapters In Hellenistic Poetry* (Athens 1996), page 38.