

## Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 659

According to LSJ, Aeschylus<sup>1</sup> in the *Oresteia* provides the only instances of the agent-nouns *κναφεύς*, *τροφεύς*, and *τοκεύς* used as feminines<sup>2</sup>. The first two are juxtaposed in Kilissa's pompous self-advertisement in *Choe.* 760<sup>3</sup>:

*κναφεύς τροφεύς τε ταύτῳ εἰχέτην τέλος.*

The third is found at the beginning of Apollo's embryological argument in *Eum.* 657-61:

*καὶ τοῦτο λέξω, καὶ μάθ' ὡς ὀρθῶς ἐρῶ·  
οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένη τέκνου  
τοκεύς, τροφός δὲ κύματος νεοσπόρου  
τίκτει δ' ὁ θρώσκων, ἢ δ' ἄπερ ξένω ξένη  
ἔσωσεν ἔργος, οἷσι μὴ βλάβη θεός.* 660

In comparing these two passages, I wonder whether *τροφός* is the second should not be altered to *τροφεύς*. Not only is the word feminine in *Choe.* 760 – if once in the trilogy, why not twice? – it is used there in a sort of rhyming jingle, and a similar effect might be in order here as well<sup>4</sup>:

*οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένη τέκνου  
τοκεύς, τροφεύς δὲ . . .*

The word *τροφός* is of course quite common as a feminine. Its appearance in *Eum.* 659 would be easily explicable as a banalization: masculine *τροφεύς* has been corrupted to *τροφός* at Soph. *Phil.* 344 in three mss. (Dawe's **G<sup>9</sup>RT**), and a feminine instance would have been that much more vulnerable. The sound of the following words *κύματος νεοσπόρου* will not have helped, either.

<sup>1</sup> Texts are quoted from D. PAGE (ed.), *Aeschyli septem quae supersunt tragoediae*, Oxford, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Some might wish to connect these usages to the reversal of gender rôles which is such a prominent theme in the trilogy. There seems to be nothing at all on genders in J.L. Perpillou, *Les substantifs grecs en -εύς*, Paris 1973.

<sup>3</sup> As A. F. Garvie (after Dumortier) notes on *κναφεύς*: «the Nurse displays a certain vanity in using the term to describe her own more menial task of washing the baby's *σπάργανα*» (*Aeschylus, Choephoroi*, Oxford 1986, *ad loc.*)

<sup>4</sup> The two passages are not precisely parallel: one is the equation of two *τέχναι*, the other the redefinition of a biological function. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of paired words in the first *metron* is striking.