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The Prelude of the *Agamemnon*

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THE PRELUDE OF THE AGAMEMNON.

I.

CLYTAEMNESTRA'S 'OLOLUGMOS.'

'GOD send an end of troubles,'¹ prays the Watchman, and the beacon seems to answer him. Yet something stops his rejoicing. 'The House, if it could find a voice, would tell a tale. . . .' Clytaemnestra's Ololugmos from the Palace is the answer.²

Aeschylus is working on a hint from Homer.³ The women raised the sacred Ololugmos over the victim sacrificed by Nestor to Athene, as the manifest protector of Telemachus. Penelope, in her chamber, sacrificed and prayed and raised the Ololugmos to Athene. The suitors heard it, and made uproar in the hall. They said, 'The Queen is preparing for marriage. She does not know we mean to kill her son.' They were to die themselves. In the sequel, when the suitors had all been killed, Eurykleia, 'seeing the bodies and the plenteous blood,' was eager to cry Halleluia (ὁλολύξιν). Odysseus stopped her: οὐχ ὅσῃ καταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι. χαίρουτ' ἂν εἰ χαίρουτ'—ἐγὼ δ' ἐπεύχομαι, says Clytaemnestra.⁴

But Aeschylus develops the theme. As the *Agamemnon* begins with the Watchman's prayer at night, with the beacons, and with Clytaemnestra's shout of triumph, the *Choephoroe* begins with the prayer of Orestes at night, the Queen's cry of terror, and the kindling of lights in the Palace.⁵ In the *Agamemnon* the immediate sequel is a sacrifice of incense and libations, ordered by the Queen, throughout the city. In the *Choephoroe*, libations, sent by Clytaemnestra to appease her husband, are used to rouse his spirit for revenge. In the *Eumenides* the morning prayer of the Priestess is followed by her cry of panic from the Temple; Apollo promises the end of troubles,⁶ and Clytaemnestra's spirit wakes the Furies.⁷

These echoes are deliberate. Cassandra's cry to Apollo is repeated by the Trojan women in their cry for vengeance, ὅτοτοτοτοτοτοῖ, as they summon Agamemnon's spirit.⁸ 'When the cry, ὅτοτοῖ, goes up for the dead man, the wrong-doer is discovered. The lament is like a hunter tracking his prey.'⁹ But the dirge shall be turned into a Paean,¹⁰ and the Ololugmos shall be raised over the bodies of the murderers.¹¹ It is not accident that gives ποποῖ δᾶ its own place in this terrific invocation,¹² and it is high dramatic art that makes Aegisthus cry ἐῖ ἐ, ὅτοτοῖ, when the blow falls.¹³ The triple οἶμοι of the servant recalls the death-cry of Agamemnon, and the ἰὸν ἰού, which summons Clytaemnestra to her death, is the shout with which the Watchman woke her to cry Halleluia.¹⁴ Thrice, in the scene which follows, Clytaemnestra's poignant οἶ γῶ is a warning to the critic not lightly to transfer her natural speech of sorrow for her son's death to Electra.¹⁵ In the end she dies without a cry. Only the Trojan women break the silence. ἐπολολύξατ' ὦ | δεσποσύνων δόμων | ἀναφυγαῖς κακῶν. . . .¹⁶ It is the Watchman's formula again.

But this triumph, like the others, ends in weeping. It is for Athens, in the final reconciliation, to combine the lights and the libations and the Ololugmos in a hymn of praise to Athene, who has brought the end of troubles.¹⁷

II.

THE WATCHMAN'S SPEECH.

This much must be said of the Trilogy as a whole, since in the study of this Prelude we are dealing not merely with the introduction of the heroine, but also with the first movement of a poem, not a patchwork. But the main purpose of the present essay is to suggest that an analysis of the first scenes of the *Agamemnon* may throw fresh light not only on the architecture of the *Oresteia*,

¹ *Ag.* I, 20.

² *Ag.* 27, 37.

³ *Od.* III. 450, IV. 772, XXII. 407.

⁴ *Ag.* 1393.

⁵ *Cho.* 32 ff., 533 ff.

⁶ *Eum.* 83, ὥστ' εἰς τὸ πᾶν σὲ τῶνδ' ἀπαλλάξαι πόνων, the Watchman's formula.

⁷ To appreciate the technique, cf. *Eum.* 106, 116, 155 ff.; and *Cho.* 31 ff., 49 ff., 376.

⁸ *Cho.* 158.

⁹ *Cho.* 325.

¹⁰ *Cho.* 341.

¹¹ *Cho.* 385.

¹² *Cho.* 406.

¹³ *Cho.* 867.

¹⁴ *Cho.* 874 ff.; *Ag.* 25, 1342.

¹⁵ *Cho.* 687, 886, 892, 927.

¹⁶ *Cho.* 941.

¹⁷ *Eum.* 1041.

but on the dramatist's conception of the character of Clytaemnestra.

As a piece of rhetoric, the first part of the Watchman's speech consists of one long paragraph (1-21), beginning with the assertion that 'throughout a whole year's watch' (μέν) this man has been praying for deliverance from trouble, and ending with the repeated prayer (νῦν δέ) that now, at last, deliverance may come, with the shining of the beacon-light.¹ The tension with which we await the beacon, and the mingled relief and apprehension with which we greet it, are partly due to the fact that the paragraph is thus composed. For the whole speech pivots, as it were, on the astonishing clause at its centre which describes the heroine. At the beginning is the prayer for release from trouble; at the end the same prayer, more urgent, and now coupled with the prayer for light: at the centre is 'the woman, masterful, with her man's will and her woman's sanguine heart.' It is not for the sake of the archaic symmetry, but for the tragic heroine's first impression on the audience, that the speech is made thus formal and exact. A literal prose version of Headlam's text may make the point clearer:

I have been praying to the Gods for Deliverance from this Trouble through the length of a whole year's watch:²

Couched, every night of it, aloft, on the roof of the Atreidae's palace, like a dog, I have made acquaintance with the assembly

¹ The technique is Homeric. Thus the *Iliad* begins, 'Sing, Goddess, of the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus,' and of all the griefs it caused, 'in the accomplishment of the will of Zeus,' beginning 'when first the son of Atreus quarrelled with the glorious Achilles.'

² V. 1. Wilamowitz (following Hermann and others) prints a comma at πόνων. But the sense is, 'I have been praying for a whole year.' μέν co-ordinates the sentence, not the first word only, to v. 8 and v. 20. For the order of the words and the use of καὶ νῦν cf. *Ag.* 592-603 ἀνωλόμυζα μὲν πάλαι . . . καὶ νῦν τὰ μάσσω. . . . See also *Ag.* 40-67 (normal order, but a similar period), and *Ag.* 801-845, where the μέν clause is reinforced at 812 and 820, and answered, first partially at 821 τὰ δ' ἐς τὸ σὸν φρόνημα, and again at 835 τὰ δ' ἄλλα, then wholly at 842 νῦν δ' ἐς μέλαθρα. . . . Clytaemnestra's speech repeats this effect, 878 ἐμοίγε μὲν δὴ . . . , 886 νῦν, 896 νῦν δέ μοι, φίλον κάρη, and finally, with terrible irony, τὰ δ' ἄλλα φροντίς οὐχ ὑπὸν νικωμένη | θήσκει δικαίως . . . 903 f. The same trick of order occurs with μέν-καὶ-νῦν δέ at 1330 ff.

of the Stars of night, and with those particular bright potentates that bring men summer and storm-season, the constellations that shine pre-eminent in the firmament, their rising and their time of waning:

And I am still watching for the flame-signal, a flash of Fire, bringing a message from Troy—report of capture—

Because the sanguine spirit of a woman with a man's will is so masterful:

And when I couch here through the restless night, in the dew, on a bed that no dreams visit—no dreams visit mine—

Because Fear, not Sleep, stands by me, keeping me from closing fast my eyes—

Well, when I think to sing or hum a tune, cutting that herb of comfort as it were for my lack of sleep;³

Then I find myself in tears for what is happening to this household—not managed well as it once used to be:

Yet I pray that now the Fire may shine on the night with its good news, bringing good luck and the Deliverance from Trouble.

This monologue, in fact, is like a piece of goldsmith's work, not less carefully designed than, for example, are the strophe and antistrophe of a choral ode:

Prayer, and a year's watch, stars that bring storm and summer:

Still watching; for the light of victory;

Because this woman . . .

Watch at night—sleepless; dreamless; kept awake by fear;

Song on watch, as medicine . . . which turns to weeping:

Because the house is not well managed . . .

Still, I pray for light and deliverance.

[*The Beacon shines.*]

Every theme will be repeated in the sequel. The several themes will be modified, heightened, and combined with other themes, in the dramatic symphony to which this is the prelude. Again and again, with more and more intense emotion, we shall hear the prayer for deliverance from trouble, and shall hail the light that seems to bring

³ V. 12. Wilamowitz denies that εἴτ' ἄν can be caught up by δταν δέ (after the digression φόβος γάρ . . .), and speaks of the *philologische Unsittlichkeit* of Headlam for defending this construction by quotations from late authors. But see *Ag.* 193 ff. καὶ τόδ' ἡγεμὼν ὁ πρέσβυς . . . εἴτ' ἀπλοία . . . βαρύνοντο (πνοαὶ δέ . . . κατέβαινον) . . . ἐπεὶ δέ καὶ . . . ἄλλο μῆχαρ μάντις ἐκλαγξεν . . . ἀναξ δ' ὁ πρέσβυς τότ' (τόδ', corr. Stanley) εἶπε. Here is 'resumptive δέ' twice illustrated, once with the main verb, once with the temporal ἐπεὶ following εἶπε, and in a composition which recalls the structures of the prologue (beginning δέκατον μὲν ἔτος, etc., and ending τὰ δ' ἔνθε, etc.).

deliverance, but brings only fresh calamity. Many songs will turn to lamentation. Many cures will be tried in vain. Many restless sleepers will wake from dreams to terrors which are worse than any dreaming. And through all, this woman, with a man's strong purpose and a woman's sanguine spirit, will be dominant . . . until at last the Furies, who are Clytaemnestra's representatives, shall be converted into spirits of good will and of good hope by the goddess whose Persuasion is the instrument of reason, not of vengeance.

III.

THE BEACON AND THE QUEEN'S
HALLELUIA.

We need not labour the contention that we have here an arrangement remarkably formal in structure, spontaneous in effect, and highly dramatic. Is it deliberate or accidental? Anyhow, it is repeated.

'Hail Beacon, showing a dayspring in the night, a sign for many dances. . . . Ho! Agamemnon's wife I call to rise up from her bed and lift a pious Alleluia. Troy is taken, as the Beacon tells us. And I myself will dance: my master's luck is good and I shall benefit: a hand of trumps for me, this Beacon.'

That is the pattern of the second paragraph: the Beacon, dances, Agamemnon's wife, the Beacon, dances, my Master's luck, the Beacon.

He dances a few steps, then stops. Something depresses him.

'Well anyhow, I hope the Master will come home, and I shall clasp his hand again. For the rest—I am silent—a great ox on my tongue. The House itself, if it could find a voice, would tell a plain tale. . . .'

Then Clytaemnestra's Halleluia from the Palace, The House has found a voice. What does this Ololugmos, this ambiguous cry of triumph, mean?

The pattern is continued. The chorus enters, chanting.

A year of watching and of prayer—and Clytaemnestra, expectant, planning: then the watch and prayer continued, and the answering Beacon.

The joyful Beacon, and the wife of Agamemnon, summoned to her ritual

of triumph and thanksgiving, and again the Beacon.

'The rest is silence.' If the House could speak. . . . And then the cry. Then this:

It is the tenth year now since the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon, and King Menelaus, Zeus-honoured princes, started on their expedition—with a dread war-cry, like the cry of eagles, robbed of their young, robbed of the labour that kept them to the nest. . . . And some God, Pan or Zeus, or perhaps Apollo, hears the cry, and sends a Fury to avenge them. . . . So the sons of Atreus went for vengeance upon Paris, sent by a greater Zeus, the Zeus of Hospitality. The sinner pays in the end. No burnt-sacrifice, no libation of a fireless offering,¹ can appease the stubborn wrath of Zeus.

We know, as the Elders do not know, that Clytaemnestra means to kill her husband. And we know that her motive—if the poet choses—will be vengeance for a murdered child. The Princes clamoured for the loss of Helen with a cry like the cry of eagles 'robbed of their young.' We have heard the cry of Clytaemnestra. When she enters (on the word 'Ερινύν), and begins to pour her oils and light her sacrifice, we know that she is praying for the death of Agamemnon. And we know her motive. Her Ololugmos was a mother's

¹ V. 69. I accept Casaubon's ὑποκαίων, and regard οὔτε δακρύων as probably a gloss on οὔθ' ὑποκαίων (though Willamowitz reads οὔτε δι' ἄγνων: 'θυμιάματα accedunt ad ἔμπυρα et σπονδάς'). In view of *Eum.* 106-9 (ἦ πολλὰ μὲν δὴ τῶν ἐμῶν ἐλεῖσθε | χοάς τ' δόλους, νηφάλια μελίγματα, | καὶ νυκτίσμενα δέπν' ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ πυρός | ἔθουσ κ.τ.λ.). I think that the right reading here is ὑπολείβων ἀπύρων ἱερῶν (ὑπο- conveying a suggestion of the vain attempt to escape consequences). The genitive denotes the substance of the offering (see Headlam on *Ag.* 1394). The sense is 'neither by burnt sacrifice, nor by libation of fireless offerings.' Fireless offerings were normally offered to the chthonic powers, but sometimes in propitiation to the Olympians. Here the phrase glances at the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. Headlam's (posthumous) note appears to be made up of two inconsistent collections of material. In *Ag.* 1394, 'if it were possible to pour a libation of the appropriate material over this body,' Headlam is right in insisting that libation over the dead is in fact the normal practice. He is wrong, however, in his interpretation of τὰ δ' in v. 1395. It means 'blood,' and catches up the thought of 1388 f.

The dramatic sequel of all this is the fatal offering to the dead in the *Choephores*, sent by Clytaemnestra because she hoped it would be ἀκὸς τομαίων πῆματος (*Cho.* 518-19, 537).

cry for vengeance. The sequel of her prayer and sacrificial rite is this:

Zeû, Zeû, τέλειε, τὰς ἐμὰς εὐχὰς τέλει . . .

For the present, she performs her rite in silence. In an interlude of gentle pathos, which relieves our sense of tragic urgency—or, rather, gives it time to sink into our consciousness, making us fitter subjects for the poet's purpose, the old men sing: 'We are old, we could not go to war. We are old and weak, like children. Our leaf is fading. We walk with faltering steps, like dreams abroad by day.'

Then this third paragraph, which draws its tragic meaning from the first: 'Queen Clytaemnestra, why this sacrifice and these libations? These flames that leap to heaven from the altars, these fires of sacrifice, medicined by the soft innocent Persuasion of your own royal unguent? I pray that this may mean good news, the shining of a light of hope—and yet—I am always anxious!'

IV.

THE CHORAL ODE AND THE QUEEN'S FIRST WORDS.

The choral ode begins with a reference to the theme of the central paragraph of the anapaests: 'We are old, like dreams.' The Queen has not given an answer to the question of the Elders. She has proceeded on her way to other altars in the city. And the old men sing:

We are still competent to sing: we may be old, but still heaven lets our old age inspire us with the Impulse—Peitho—the desire to sing, which is strength for singing.

The theme they choose for their comfort is the sign of victory which the Achaean leaders saw near the Palace when they started, the omen of two eagles devouring a pregnant hare.

Sing woe for Linos! (Woe for youth dead, that is.) But may the good prevail.

The poem falls, like the anapaests, and like the paragraphs of the Watchman's speech, into three well-defined divisions:

First, the sign of victory, the omen of the eagles and the pregnant hare, with its interpretation by the prophet.

Then the central panel, Zeus the only com-

fort, the establisher of the stern law, wisdom must come by suffering . . . by chastening in the night season.

Then the fulfilment of the omen, the fatal sacrifice of Iphigeneia.

The central panel, Zeus and the sinner, chastened in sleep, is again an interlude, marking a pause between two chapters of the old men's story. And each chapter is a poem, shaped by the artist in the mould with which we are now growing familiar, a period beginning *κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν ὄδιον τέρας*, and finding its conclusion in the musical recurrence of the phrase (*μόρσιμ' ἀπ' ὀρνίθων ὀδίων κ.τ.λ.*). The attitude of Aeschylus to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia has, I think, been needlessly debated. For the audience, the omen has a very clear and simple meaning. The eagles are, as Calchas says, the sons of Atreus. But the young hare in the womb, on which they feast—*θυομένοισι*, like sacrificers—is the child of Clytaemnestra. That impious sacrifice, not merely Troy's destruction, invokes heaven's vengeance. The omen was a warning. Calchas read it skilfully enough, but he read it ill. And Agamemnon, who 'criticised no prophet,' was wicked when he yielded to the clamour for a human victim.

Calchas perceived that the eagles were the sons of Atreus, and he said, interpreting the portent: 'In time Troy is your prey—not without sacrifices, which shall consume the substance of the Trojans: only I fear some stroke may fall on our own army because Artemis is angry with the eagles, the sacrificers of the timorous creature's unborn brood. . . . Sing woe for Linos, yet may the good prevail.'

He does not really understand. He knows the eagles as the sons of Atreus. That is obvious. But this pregnant hare? What is it? Troy, perhaps? Yes, and the brood? Perhaps the Trojan cattle to be sacrificed by Priam and by Hector—it is a recurrent theme of the *Iliad*. And yet the thing is disquieting. This hunting of a pregnant hare is not sportsmanlike.¹ What if Artemis be angry? What if she need placation . . . a sacrifice in kind . . . a child?

That is his process of divination. Is he right? For Aeschylus, of course not. But presently, when the fleet is held up at Aulis, Calchas will be certain.

¹ See Lucas, *Class. Rev.* XXXV., p. 28.

He will openly demand the victim, and the army will support him, and the King will yield. For the present Calchas prays :

Though so tender, lovely goddess, to the suckling young of all wild creatures, including the young whelps of the fierce lions . . . grant the fulfilment of this omen—because it means victory at any rate—with its mixture of good and ill.

His reference to the whelps of lions is meant to placate Artemis, to remind her that the sons of Atreus are throned between the Lions of Mycenae. But the effect is one of tragic irony. She is, indeed, on the side of the young lions—not of the old. Calchas proceeds :

And I call to Paeon, the Healer, the god of the cry lê, prevent her from sending us contrary winds that will hold back the fleet and delay us, in her zeal for another sacrifice, lawless, without a feast, a maker of quarrels in the family, with no fear of a husband, leaving behind to lurk in the house Wrath, always remembering, crafty—of child-vengeance.

Then the period is rounded off, as we have said, by a recurrence of the opening phrase. Then the central panel :

Zeus, whosoe'er he be, if by this name it please him to be called, this name I give him : I have none to liken to him, though I weigh all things in the balance, save Zeus alone, if I am to throw off this weight of care.

There was one who ruled of old : he waxed fat, he was strong and overweening : he shall not even be spoken of as having been. And he who followed is gone too : he met a wrestler who outwrestled him, and he is gone. To Zeus alone sing victorious Alleluia, and ye shall not fail of wisdom.

The threefold pattern again, and now the epilogue :

Zeus, who hath set men's feet in the path of wisdom : who hath decreed, it shall be law, by suffering alone comes knowledge : when in the time of sleep the pain that brings the memory of the old wrong trickles at the heart, then to unwilling learners comes modesty of mind : it is a mercy forced on men by spirits seated on the holy bench.

That is a new development of the old *motif* of the restless night and the dreams.

Now the third panel, answering the first—not metrically, but in content . . .

So then the captain of the ships—he would not ever criticise a prophet—he was one who yielded to the wind of fortune when it blew against him . . . when the fleet could not sail and the people were distressed at Aulis, and the winds came down from Thrace, with hunger, wearisome . . . and when the prophet cried aloud for a strange medicine, more cruel than

the tempest for the chieftains, alleging Artemis, so that the sons of Atreus beat their staves upon the ground and wept, then the King spoke . . .

Hard to disobey, and hard to sacrifice my daughter . . . well, may all end in good. . . . And once he had shouldered this yoke of '*needs must*' his heart veered round, set full for sin. So distraction drives men to their ruin.

Let us not lose sight of the structure. First the omen and the grim interpretation. Then the central prayer to Zeus. Then the application to the son of Atreus, and this picture of the sacrifice—it is a new and wonderful development of the old themes, anxiety and dayspring after darkness, singing that turns to sorrow, sacrifices and libations :

Her veil of saffron dye falling to the ground about her, with a glance of her piteous eye she smote each of her sacrificers, showing as in a picture, ready to speak to them, as often in her father's hospitable hall she had sung : and the clear voice of that unspotted virgin lovingly had graced the Paeon of good fortune at the third libation for the father of her love. What came afterwards I did not see, and do not tell. The arts of Calchas were not without fulfilment. Justice in the turning of her scale brings to the sufferer knowledge. The future you will hear when it has come. Till then farewell to it . . . It will come clear enough with the early rays of morning. . . . May the issue end in good, as is the wish of this . . . the guardian, sole regent, closest in her kinship. . . .

I am come, Clytaemnestra, in deference to your command and rule.

Can we doubt that the 'sole guardian' is Clytaemnestra, not the chorus? This woman, masked and beautiful, is a mother, robbed of her child by Agamemnon . . . the eagle, who devoured the hare, quick in the womb.

That is why the first chorus treats of Iphigeneia. Clytaemnestra is a mother.

We feel it, not in spite of, but because of the archaic symmetry of the composition, which has made the poet, for example, begin his Watchman's speech with 'A year of watching and of praying for the end of troubles,' and conclude it with 'The rest is silence . . . if the House could speak,' and then begin his choral anapaests with 'Ten years of war . . .' and end his ode with this : 'The rest I did not see, nor do I tell . . . I pray the sequel may be good, as is the wish of this—the Nearest . . .' Clytaemnestra speaks.

She speaks, and, thanks to the Prelude, every phrase is instinct with her tragedy.

With good news, as the proverb says, may Morning come to birth from her Mother Night. You shall hear a joy, greater than any hope. The Greeks have taken Troy.

I cannot understand—it is so incredible. . . .
Troy in Achaean hands. Is that clear enough?

Joy steals over me. I weep. . . .

Yes, your eye betrays your loyalty.

What makes you sure? Have you any proof of it?

Of course, if the god has not cheated me.

That is death to Agamemnon.

Is it some dream that you believe?

I am not one to talk about the fancies of a sleepy mind.

Is it some rumour perhaps that has gladdened you?

You think I am as foolish as—a young girl.

How long ago is it that Troy was captured?

I tell you, in the Night that was the Mother of this Day.

That, for the moment, is the culmination of these periods, each ending with the repetition, in a new and heightened form, of its first phrase. Their purpose, as we said at the outset, is not simply rhetorical, but dramatic. Clytaemnestra is a mother, robbed of her child. It is because she is a mother that she greets this day of triumph as a child new-born from the womb of a tragic night.

V.

THE PATTERN OF THE SEQUEL.

The Beacon speech, which Wilamowitz thinks quite undramatic, is instinct with Clytaemnestra's hatred for her husband. 'Hephaistos sent from Ida a bright flame,' and when the fire has swept across the Aegean, and has swooped at last upon 'the Spider's Crag near home'—Clytaemnestra is the spider (1493)—we understand, because the paragraph is duly ended by the repetition, the tragic meaning of the phrase 'So it alights upon the Atreidae's roof, this light whose ancestor was the fire on Ida.' The flame that was lit at Troy shall be lit again in Argos. That is her thought.

Again, the Herald's storm-speech balances in the design the beacon-speech of Clytaemnestra, just as his speech about the hardships of campaigning and the long sleep of the dead responds—in a rhetorical chiasmus—to Clytaemnestra's speech

about the captured city and the dangerous wrath of the fallen. First the fiery beacons—baneful fires, lit in Ilion, now coming home to Argos—then the description of the careless conquerors, and of their danger from the wrathful dead. Then the Herald's story, and his talk of the sleeping dead, whom he tries in vain to forget while he praises Agamemnon's greatness. Then this: 'Even we survivors did not all escape. Menelaus was cut off by a conspiracy of fire and sea, two ancient enemies, now reconciled.'

That is the pattern. Is it not dramatic? Athene and Poseidon joined, as everyone knows, in this conspiracy. But more than that is implied for our imagination. The plot against King Agamemnon is a plot of fire and water, Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. With the sacrifices and libations, the incense and the unguents, the fire that heats the cauldron, the waters of the marriage bath, the oil of the anointing of the radiant victim, play their part in the symbolism of this poem. When Agamemnon steps upon the purple, we shall hear the cry of Clytaemnestra: 'There is the sea, and who shall dry it? Breeding much purple, precious as silver, still oozing and still fresh. . . .' The sea of purple is a sea of blood, breeding fresh blood.

That, in the tragedy, is the chief function of the Herald's speech about the sea. But it has another function, also relevant to our discussion. By making Menelaus the last theme of this poor Herald's gloomy news-bringing, Aeschylus makes it natural that his chorus should revert to thoughts of Helen.

Look back to the whole design, and you will find that Aeschylus does not treat his choral odes as independent poems, but as vital and connected parts of one dramatic composition.

In their first anapaests, the Elders, in an interlude between their talk about the vengeance of the Zeus of Hospitality on Paris and their appeal to Clytaemnestra, spoke of themselves as old men, weak as children, dreams abroad by day. Then, in a greater interlude, between their song about the omen and their story of its grim fulfilment, they cried to Zeus,

who chastens men in the night seasons, sending wisdom through the dreams of stricken conscience. The second choral ode—a song of triumph that turned to lamentation—began by taking up again this central theme of the first poem: ‘Praise Zeus, who punishes the sinner, Paris,’ and it ended—‘alas, we fear for the sons of Atreus also.’

But its central panel was a picture of the deserted Menelaus, dreaming of Helen.

The third chorus in its turn takes up this central theme and makes it the main theme of a fresh song.

Helen, so beautiful, and in the end so terrible, a bride turned to a Fury.

Then, for a central panel, the apologue of the lion’s whelp.

Then Helen again, the fatal bride, so charming, and so deadly.

Then, as an epilogue, the moral: Sin breeds sin, and a *daemon* is at last begotten.

Clytaemnestra is the second Helen, the second fatal Bride and Fury, Peitho incarnate. The Prelude is completed. It is time for Agamemnon to arrive—anapaests greet him as they greeted Clytaemnestra on her first appearance.

J. T. SHEPPARD.

THE DITHYRAMB—AN ANATOLIAN DIRGE.

THE earliest references to the Dithyrambos in Greek literature preserve a hint of the direction from which this obviously foreign word reached the shores of Greece. Herodotus says explicitly that the name *διθύραμβος* was brought to Corinth by Arion of Lesbos;¹ and Naxos and Paros, which lay on the reat-route from south-western Asia Minor to the Saronic Gulf, are brought into the story by Pindar and Archilochus respectively.² The dithyramb was regularly set to Phrygian music, and sung to the flute; Aristotle records the failure of an attempt to set it to Dorian music.³ It has often been surmised that the dithyramb and its name were Asiatic. Haigh made the suggestion, without adducing any evidence in support, that both *διθύραμβος* and *θρίαμβος* were of Phrygian origin.⁴ The efforts to explain *διθύραμβος* as a Greek word—beginning with Euripides’ and Plato’s derivation from the ‘double birth’ of Dionysus⁵ and culminating in

Mr. A. B. Cook’s *Δι-θορ-αμβος* (‘Zeus-leap-song’⁶)—have all failed to satisfy either grammar or common sense.

Aristotle’s statement that tragedy originated *ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον* makes the question of the origin and earliest form of the dithyramb itself one of the most important problems in literary history. The interest of the problem is reflected in recent controversy: *Θρίαμβο-Διθύραμβε* has become the slogan in a literary *γυγαντομαχία*, waged by champions who command every resource of European, Asiatic, and African anthropology. If I presume to enter this formidable arena in the light equipment of a pair of Phrygian gravestones, it is only because I agree with Haigh that the obvious place in which to look for the origin of the dithyramb is the Phrygian hinterland of Ionia and Aeolis. If the following derivation of the word *διθύραμβος* suggests an origin in Anatolian grave-ritual, the fault lies with no preconceived theory, but with the evidence. The evidence is comparatively new; it would no doubt have been used earlier, had it been available.

In 1898, J. G. C. Anderson published a Phrygian inscription⁷ from Tyriaion

dithyramb had for its subject the birth of Dionysos. Plato is merely alluding—and sceptically at that—to the current etymology.

⁶ Quoted approvingly by Miss Jane Harrison in *Themis*, p. 204. See Ridgeway, *Dramas and Dramatic Dances*, p. 44.

⁷ *J.H.S.*, 1898, p. 121. See also *J.H.S.*, 1911, p. 214, on the text of this inscription.

¹ I. 23: ‘Ἀρίωνα τὸν Μηθυμναῖον . . . διθύραμβον πρῶτον ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν ποιήσαντά τε καὶ οὐνομάσαντα καὶ διδάξαντα ἐν Κορίνθῳ.

² Pindar (see Schol. in *Ol.* XIII. 19) derived the dithyramb from Naxos and from Thebes as well as from Corinth (see last note). Archilochus of Paros is the earliest writer who uses the word *διθύραμβος*. Later, Simonides of Ceos composed a dithyramb on the hero Memnon.

³ *Politics*, VIII. 7.

⁴ *Tragic Drama*, p. 16.

⁵ Eur. *Bacchae*, 526 ff.; Plato, *Legg.* 700B: καὶ ἄλλο (ᾧδῃς εἶδος), Διονύσου γένεσις οἶμαι, διθύραμβος λεγόμενος. Note the sceptical οἶμαι. This passage is usually read as meaning that the