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John Masson

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ON SOPHOCLES, *AJAX*, 839-842.

- l. 839. καὶ σφας κακοὺς κάκιστα καὶ πανωλέθρους
 ξυναρπάσειαν· ὥσπερ εἰσρωῶς' ἔμε
 αὐτοσφαγῇ πίπτοντα, τὼς αὐτοσφαγεῖς
 πρὸς τῶν φίλίστων ἐγγόνων ὀλοίατο.
 ἴτ', ὃ ταχεῖαι ποῖνιμοί τ' Ἑρινύες,
 γένεσθε, μὴ φείδεσθε, πανδήμου στρατοῦ.

Most of the editors, including Campbell, reject these four lines. Hermann, Jebb and one or two others retain the first two. Against the consensus of names of such weight one hesitates to form or express an opinion. It seems to me, however, that the proofs of spuriousness would require to be both different and stronger before we give up any part of the passage.

It is not absolutely necessary that ἐγγόνων above which there is an erasure in L should be wrong. Still we seem to have a right to expect Ajax's imprecation, uttered just before his death, to be, more or less, prophetic. So familiar to poet and his hearers was the tragic ending of the chief of Ajax's enemies, Agamemnon, who was not slain but revenged by his son.

Ought we not, instead of ἐγγόνων, to read ἐγγενῶν or, perhaps, ἐγγόνων, which would remove the difficulty? Agamemnon at least was slain by his nearest kindred. This cannot be said of Menelaus; yet the application of the statement is no more partial than that of l. 838 where Ajax says his life is blasted by the Atridae, never naming Odysseus. But there need be no difficulty as to the use of plural for singular in Greek tragedy. Of ἐγγενής used as a noun *O.T.* 1168 and *O.C.* 1167 (see also τοῖς ἐν γένει at *O.T.* 1430) are good instances which the analogy of συγγενής strengthens. The second reading ἐγγόνων is approved by Prof. Campbell who 'is inclined to think that ἐγγόνων rather than ἐγγενῶν is the true reading, whether the whole passage is interpolated or not.' The word ἐγγονος had been discarded by scholars as a mere MS. variant for ἔκγονος but the use of such substantives as ἀπόγονος, ἐπίγονος, ἔκγονος, πρόγονος, σύγγονος, seems to support its existence. The word is retained by Campbell and Jowett in Plato, Rep. 364 E. Its use seems somewhat vague, wavering between 'grand-child,' which is the meaning given by Hesychius, and 'blood-relation' of any kind.

The Scholiast in L says: τὼς αὐτοσφαγεῖς· ταῦτα νοθεύεσθαι φασιν ὑποβληθέντα πρὸς σαφήνειαν τῶν λεγομένων. The lemma τὼς

αὐτοσφαγεῖς would seem to show that the use of αὐτοσφαγεῖς twice in one line was what raised suspicion: I suppose these ancient critics intended to reject line 842 also.¹ It will be noted that the Scholiast himself expresses no opinion. I believe the Scholiast had ἐγγενῶν or ἐγγόνων in his text, for he remarks, τοῦτο ἀπέβη τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι· ὑπὸ γὰρ τῶν φιλάτων ἀπώλετο. He would certainly not have failed to comment on ἐγγόνων. Even the *Scholia recentiora* make no reference to it, but Triclinius, whose date is about 1300 A.D., does so, and defends ἐγγόνων as reasonable.

[Since this paper was written, I find that Blaydes mentions ἐγγενῶν as a conjecture adopted by Seyffert.]

As to the proofs of spuriousness from the language, (1) φίλιστος. There are too many ἀπαξ λεγόμενα in Sophocles (some fifty words in *Ajax* alone are peculiar to Sophocles or copied by later writers only²) to let this weigh much. Professor Campbell writes to me: 'There is no point in calling Clytemnestra and Aegisthus φίλιστοι ἐγγεῖς to Agamemnon.' Yet ἐγγενής is used of the nearest relatives and φίλιστος is naturally coupled with it as φίλτατος is, with express force, coupled with ἔκγονοι at *O.T.* 1474. Moreover Clytemnestra is always regarded as the principal figure in the murder of Agamemnon, and Aegisthus as a mere accomplice. (2) τὼς occurs in Aeschylus, both in lyrics and in trimeter. Why should an interpolator make choice of so many unusual words or uses? This is not the way of interpolators, whose boldness is less in language than in matter, which is detected by its own incongruity.

(3) The use of αὐτοσφαγῆς in two senses in the same line, though not without parallel in Sophocles, is bold indeed, too bold, I think, for an interpolator. It seems to me an audacity of genius which it would take a poet to strike out. The circumstances in which Ajax speaks must be borne in mind. 'The slayer' stands firm fixed in the ground: before hurling himself upon its point, the hero curses the enemies who

¹ Even had he quoted the name of Didymus, Διδυμὸς φησιν, as he does at *Ant.* 46, the verdict would hardly be final. The reason which led Didymus to reject *Ant.* 46 (see Jebb's excellent note) is instructive as an example of the Higher Criticism and its arbitrariness in the year 10 B.C.

² See list in Campbell's smaller edition. Vol. I. p. xlvii.

have brought him to this pass. May the Furies overtake them and may their lives come to like horror of sudden destruction with his own!

Jebb remarks regarding such compounds as *αὐθέντης*, *αὐτοκτόνος*, *αὐτοσφαγῆς*, *αὐτοφόνος*, 'the object of the deed may be one's own life or another's. This ambiguity of the compound is illustrated by *Antig.* 1175.

ΑΓ. αὐτόχειρ δ' αἰμάσσεται.
ΧΟ. πότερα πατρώας ἢ πρὸς οἰκείας χερὸς ;

In these compounds *αὐτός* bears also the special meaning 'done by kindred': so *αὐθέντης Eum.* 212: *αὐτοκτόνος Eur. Med.* 1254: *αὐτοφόνος Aesch. Theb.* 850, *Agam.* 1059: *αὐτουργία Eum.* 322, as well as many instances in Sophocles.

αὐτοσφαγῆς having the double meaning of (1) 'self-slain' and (2) 'slain by kindred,' it is apparent what force it gathers here by its immediate repetition in the second sense 'unnaturally slain.'

[Indeed, the pliancy of meaning of these compounds is remarkable, as seen in *αὐτοκτονούντε*, *Antig.* 56 which all scholars, except Prof. Jebb, render 'slaying each other.'¹ This meaning of *reciprocity* which might easily come as an extension of the second meaning, 'slain by kindred' (in case of mutual slaughter amounting to 'slain by each other') seems undoubted, e.g. *αὐτόχειρ* at *Antig.* 172.

παίσαντές τε καὶ
πληγέντες αὐτόχειρι σὺν μιάσματι :

also *αὐτοκτόνος* in *Aesch. Theb.* 681 and 805 and especially *ib.* 735

ἐπειδὴν αὐτοκτόνους δ'
αὐτοδαῖκτοι θάνωσιν.]

So much may be said for the appropriateness of *αὐτοσφαγῆς* here. Again, how characteristic of Sophocles (as it is, to some extent, of all tragic poets) is his fondness for repeating a word in order to gain emphasis or enforce contrast. Such instances as

θυτήρα καὶνῷ καὶνὸν ἐν πεπλώματι, *Trach.* 613,

or *El.* 742 or

¹ We may compare *Ant.* 145, καθ' αὐτοῖν | δικρατεῖς λόγχας στήσαντε, where αὐτοῖν stands for ἀλλήλοιν. The tragic poets had no need to strain the force of words formed with αὐτός for lack of ordinary compounds bearing this meaning: cf. *Aesch. Theb.* ἐτελεύτασαν ὅπ' ἀλλαλοφόνους χερσίν. The reciprocal force of αὐτοκτονούντε at l. 56 is further emphasized by the compound ἐπαλλήλοιν where ἐπι- intensifies the sense of mutuality.

δικάζει τὸν ἄγαμον γάμον πάλαι
τεκνούντα καὶ τεκνούμενον.—*O.T.* 867.

show how the tendency has fixed itself in his style. In Sophocles, says Professor Campbell (*Essay on L.* § 44) 'this tendency seems to have been unusually strong...A word once used is apt to be repeated in a different connexion and even with a different meaning.' We may refer to the instances given by Campbell *ibid.* under f and g. See also those in § 37 on Oxymoron and parallels from Shakespeare there quoted. Almost parallel to the instance we are discussing is *Antig.* 1266 νέος νέω ξὺν μόρῳ...ἔθaves, 'thou hast died young by a strange doom.' According to the usage of Sophocles *αὐτοσφαγῆς* is far more effective here than a participle clause would have been. How effective a repeated word in the same line may be we see from such a passage as Milton's

Seasons return but not to me returns
Day or the sweet approach of even or morn.

What other word would not have been less effective here?

4. Again, Prof. Jebb says 'The two verses, 841-2, confuse the construction since ὥσπερ εἰσορῶσ' ἐμε (sc. ξυναρπασθέντα) refers to what precedes while τῶς in 841 refers to ὥσπερ.' This criticism, in which all editors join, I venture to think superfluous. We ought to put a colon after ξυναρπάσειαν. Triclinius's criticism is just enough: διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ κομματικὸν καὶ ἀσύνδετον ἐποίησε τοῦτο, διὰ τὸ εἶναι εὐχρῆν. τὰς γὰρ εὐχὰς οὕτω ποιῆσθαι εἰώθαμεν. The so-called "asyndeton" is merely the apposition or co-ordination of clauses, not infrequent with ὥσπερ.² Moreover, the absence of a conjunction well suits the vehemence of the speaker: to read ὥσπερ, as Paley does, would greatly weaken the expression. (True asyndeta are frequent in *Ajax*, as at 115, 164, 581, 714, 811, 896, 1105). It is difficult to follow Hermann, Jebb and Palmer, who retain the first two lines, in understanding (with Jebb) ξυναρπασθέντα after ἐμέ, which is at best a strained use of language or (with Palmer) a proleptic πανώλεθρον. Is it like the proud self-righteousness of Ajax to compare the doom of shame and ruin (κακοὺς κάκιωστα,...πανωλέθρους) which he prays the Furies to bring on

² Two excellent instances are at *Republic*, p. 557 c, ὥσπερ ἰμάτιον πᾶσιν ἔνθεσι πεποικιλμένον, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὴ...καλλίστη ἐν φαίνοιτο, and 497 B, ὥσπερ ξενικὸν σπέρμα...φιλεῖ κρατούμενον ἱέναι, οὕτω καὶ κ.τ.λ.

his enemies with his own fate, terrible as he knows it to be? From his own lips would not such a coupling of himself, even in doom, with those whom he loathes, jar upon us? Besides, how feeble and frigid after that outburst (*κακούς... ξυναρπάσειαν*) and with how sudden a fall, like an arrow dropping to earth in mid flight, would come the conclusion *ὥσπερ εἰσορῶσ' ἔμε!* The Furies need not be asked to 'see' the ruin which their own hands are even now bringing *to pass*. And does not the dying passion of Ajax require from the gods some doom even more terrible than his own for his undoers?

The brief imprecation *καί σφας... ξυναρπάσειαν*, followed by the abrupt and even more bitter one, *ὥσπερ... ὀλοίατο*, is not only far stronger but also more in harmony with the deep resentment of Ajax against those who, he feels, have driven him to his death.

No! the four lines hang together. If the first two are to be rejected, so must the last two.

Not only is this last speech of Ajax's weakened by the loss of these lines but its connection is destroyed. To omit 839-842 makes Ajax pass at once from saying that 'his life is blasted by the Atridae,' of whom he says not a word, to the prayer to the Furies to glut their wrath on the whole army. It seems to me a psychological impossibility that Ajax should thus pass at once from the mere mention of the Atridae and their work to the curse on all his fellow-soldiers. Without the passionate and vindictive outburst in ll. 839-842 to lead up to it and excuse it, that curse becomes only

a weak and meaningless ferocity. I venture to think that Sophocles could not have so written.

Were we to omit 839-842 and accept the second invocation to the 'Erinyes swift and vengeful' immediately following the first to the 'Erinyes far-striding and dread,' to my feeling the address to the Sun would then follow the imprecation too abruptly. In fact, would not some expansion of the prayer, *μὴ φείδестθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ* be necessary to preserve the balance of the speech?

It is worth noting that Professor Campbell who rejects these lines in his edition and still thinks them unguanine, writes to me that he considers them 'spirited' and has 'often felt tempted to defend them.'

Both in language, in structure and in the whole colour of the style these lines are, I venture to think, thoroughly Sophoclean. Moreover, they are in harmony with Ajax's character;—noble, even too sensitive to his own honour and the shame of his downfall, yet unforgiving to his foes and deaf to friends entreating, he knows and tastes the full horror of his end yet moves unfaltering towards it. These words might come from the heart of the Ajax of the Nekuia who, when the other ghosts crowded round Ulysses, 'alone stood aloof, being still angry because of the victory' and even after Ulysses' noble appeal to him, still 'answered never a word but passed on to Erebus after the other spirits of the dead.'

JOHN MASSON.

A SUGGESTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREEK OPTATIVE.

THE term 'potential' as applied to the optative with *ἄν* is elastic, not to say vague. Strictly speaking, one may venture to think, it should be applied only to that phase of the optative with *ἄν* which is equivalent to the optative of *δυνασθαι* with *ἄν* and the infinitive of the verb in question (*λύοιμι ἄν = δυνάμην ἄν λύειν*). Besides this the optative with *ἄν* has often a plain desiderative, or inclinative force, being then equivalent to the optative of *βούλεσθαι* (or *ἐθέλειν*) with *ἄν* and the infinitive of the verb in question, or to itself plus *ἥδεως* (*λύοιμι ἄν = βουλοίμην ἄν λύειν*, or *ἥδεως ἄν λύοιμι*). In other cases

is emphasised, and the optative may be termed 'conditional' or 'contingent.' This use seems readily derivable from the desiderative, or inclinational, use. (Cf. Eng. 'would.') The optative of polite request (*λέγοις ἄν*) seems to have similar affinities, though it differs from the optative of inclination, in that the inclination or desire is that of the speaker, not that of the subject of the verbal form. The change from the first to the second person, as well as linguistic parsimony, is responsible for this shift. Thus *λέγοις ἄν = βουλοίμην ἄν σε λέγειν*, or *καθ' ἥδον ἄν μοι λέγοις*. (One thinks here of Sophocles *Ant.* 70, where