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Of the Prologue of *The Agamemnon*

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the hero and where was the scene of this transcendent experience. What may be worth enquiry is the nature of the evidence upon which Herodotus, who about oracles in particular expressly claims to be reasonably, though not obstinately, critical, accepted a statement, the objections to which he did not overlook.¹

We have some light upon this question when we observe, that, while the rest of the anecdote was composed freely, so far as appears, by Herodotus, the speech of the herald, like that of the lady from Cos, was not so composed, but translated from verse,

ὦ βασιλεῦ Μῆδων, Λακεδαιμόνιοι τε φόνοι
αἰτεῦσίν σε δίκας Σπάρτης ἀπό θ' Ἡρακλείδαι,
Ἑλλάδα ρύομενόν σφιν ὅτι κτεῖνας βασιλῆα,

into prose,

ὦ βασιλεῦ Μῆδων, Λακεδαιμόνιοι τέ σε καὶ
Ἡρακλείδαι οἱ ἀπὸ Σπάρτης αἰτέουσι φόνον
δίκας, ὅτι σφέων τὸν βασιλέα ἀπέκτεινας ρύο-
μενον τὴν Ἑλλάδα.

As there, so also here, the document is followed word for word. The possessive-dative (σφιν, in v. 3) might perhaps have been retained without offence; but with the prosaic arrangement and emphasis, the geni-

¹ Note the simple but significant suggestion that the herald took 'the quickest way'. It is uncertain whether Xerxes was then in Thessaly at all.

tive σφέων, answering to Μῆδων, is more natural; the other changes are just the inevitable.

Here again therefore we have to do, not with a narrative in hexameters, but a fragment of a narrative, such a fragment as could hardly exist except as an inscription, as an explanatory appendage to a reciprocally illustrative work of art. From this work itself, the painted or sculptured group, comes the principal scene, Xerxes answering the herald by 'pointing to Mardonius', and the story from the religious custodians of it, the Delphians or whoever they were. But we may now divine how and by what stages this story grew and came to be accepted. It is open and natural to be supposed, that the authors of the work neither asserted nor intended it to represent an actual event. It was a symbol, legitimate and appropriate, of the truth that Plataea was the Spartan's revenge for Thermopylae. But when the exhibitors for obvious reasons preferred to regard and explain it as historical, it seemed, to a mind perfectly honest but not sufficiently versed in the sifting of such testimony, to be an independent witness. It produced upon Herodotus the sort of effect which upon persons not accustomed to analysis is now produced when something, which they are not unwilling to believe, is actually shown to them 'in print'.

A. W. VERRALL.

OF THE PROLOGUE OF *THE AGAMEMNON*.¹

THOUGH many scholars have handled the prologue of the *Agamemnon*, yet it may, I venture to think, be said without presumptuousness that they have left something still to be done in the elucidation and restoration of that small group of verses. It is to this task that I now address myself.

The proper interpretation of the prologue of the *Agamemnon* is far from simple. The right understanding of the character of the watcher, as Aeschylus has depicted it in words put in the watcher's mouth, is so bound up with questions about the text that the problem, What in general was the watchman meant by the poet to say? and the problem, How precisely did the poet make him express the thoughts attributed

to him? can never be fully separated in any proper discussion of this passage. To the way in which Aeschylus, in a few masterly strokes, has made the watcher depict his own character, Patin has drawn attention in the excellent remark² about 'l'esclave d'Eschyle, qui ne prononce que quelques vers et offre cependant tout l'intérêt d'un caractère dramatique'. I will now run the risk of begging certain textual questions and proceed to set forth in a few words the character of the watcher and his mental attitude in the prologue.

The man is at once, anxious for his master's return and fearful of what may follow upon that return. He is thoroughly loyal to Agamemnon, whom he loves

¹ Read before the American Philological Association at Union College, Schenectady, 9 July, 1902.

² Patin's 'Eschyle' (in *Études sur les tragiques grecs*) p. 314, quoted approximately in Wecklein's German edition.

(v. 34 sq.); he fears Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus and mourns the evils of the house (vv. 14, 36 sq., 18 sq.). But his virtue is after all but the virtue of the faithful slave: his loyalty is alloyed with a regard for his own interests and his own comfort. Indeed, so prominent does he make his sense of the discomforts and the tediousness of his yearlong task that it would seem that readers of his words have generally been quite misled about the tenor of his speech. And this brings us at once to a question of the minute interpretation of the text.

If what has just been said of the state of mind of the watcher is true—and there is a begging of the question in my assuming above what a careful study of the text has seemed to me surely to yield—, if, I say, my analysis of the watcher's state of mind is just, then the *μέν* in v. 1 is concessive and its correlative is the *δέ* in v. 12. The man is indeed (*μέν*) praying for release from his irksome task by the beacon that shall announce his master's speedy return, but (*δέ*) mourns the evil plight of the house and dreads the future. This is the sum and substance of that part of the prologue which precedes the flare of the beacon on the neighbouring mountain; and this prelude thus falls into two halves of which the former consists of vv. 1–11, omitting the spurious v. 7. We will now examine certain portions of vv. 1–11.

A very important matter is the proper understanding of *καὶ νῦν* in v. 8. If we had to guess the general drift of what preceded the words *καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω* without having vv. 1–6 before us, we should certainly say that it must be either 'I have been doing something else than keeping watch for the beacon', or 'I have been keeping watch for a certain time'. Now we have vv. 1–6 before us, and we know that the former alternative is wrong. Where and how is the latter alternative expressed? The answer is that it is expressed in vv. 4–6. If we follow this line of interpretation, we should, I believe, come to see that *ἦν* in v. 2 has hitherto been wrongly construed and that vv. 2–8 are an elaboration of *φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μήκος ἦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον*, the verb *φυλάσσω* having a double object, an effected and an affected. The ultimate construction of *ἦν* is, then, with *φυλάσσω*, the words *κοιμώμενος... δίκην* are parenthetical, and vv. 4–6 are = *πεφύλαχα χεῖμα καὶ θέπος*.¹ This is revolutionary, but

¹ *τοὺς φέροντας... αἰθέρι* I take with others to refer to the stars that mark by their rising and setting

it is, after all, only a matter of putting the commas in the right places.

I may note before taking up v. 12 sqq. that the spurious v. 7 would never have been inserted, had it been seen, as I venture to think it should have been, that the genitive *ἄστρον νυκτέρων* belongs quite as much to *τοὺς... δυνάστας* as to *δμήγυριν*. Furthermore, it may be, as Meineke and van Herwerden have suggested, that *ἀνδρόβουλον* should give place to *ἀνδρόλημον*.

In the sentence—or clause—that begins in v. 12 M. Henri Weil's first thoughts seem to me to have been entirely right, so far as vv. 12 and 16 are concerned. We should regard *ὅταν δ'* as resumptive and should restore *ἔχων* for *ἔχω*. We find again that a simple thought is elaborated in a rambling fashion (and we must not forget that it is a slave that is speaking) to the confusion of the line by line reader. All would have been clear to the audience as Aeschylus's actor rendered the verses. The simple thought is this: *εἴτ' ἂν δέ, νυκτί-πλαγκτον ἐνδρόσον τ' ἔχων | εὐνήν, αἰδεῖν ἢ μινύρεσθαι δοκῶ*, and the fact that these words form two perfect trimeters makes me think that they represent very nearly Aeschylus's first draft on which he afterwards improved. The variation *εἴτ' ἂν—ὅταν* is characteristic of Greek style—and characteristic, too, in that the second synonyme is the commoner word. *ὅταν δ'*, it may be added, resumes the whole of *εἴτ' ἂν νυκτίπλαγκτον... εὐνήν* and should be followed by a comma.

In the parenthetical words *ὀνείροις... ὕπνῳ* I can not convince myself that *ἐμήν* is not what Aeschylus wrote. V. 1226 (*ἐμῶν φέρειν γὰρ χρὴ τὸ δούλιον ζυγόν*) is quite strikingly like v. 14, and Eur. *Med.* 793 (*τᾶμ' οὐτὶς ἔστιν ὅστις ἐξαίρησεται*) also favours *ἐμήν*. In this parenthesis it is also to be noted that *ἀνθ' ὕπνον* in v. 14 can not be what Aeschylus wrote; but I can not think that the *ἀντίπνοος* which Messrs. van Herwerden (*Exerc. Cr.*, p. 96) and Wecklein have proposed is certainly right. The word was rather, I fancy, *ἀντίος*, out of which and a clumsy explanatory *ὕπνον* the traditional reading could have arisen.

In v. 16 I fail to see why *δοκῶ* should not bear its ordinary sense of 'seeming.' 'Whenever', says the watcher, 'anyone that overhears me thinks I am trying to keep awake by turning a tune, I am really the changes of the seasons. See Wecklein's note *ad loc.* in his *Aeschylus Orestia*.

sobbing'. The expression, whether in the Greek or in this free rendering, is a perfectly natural one.

After v. 19, in which I would accept the substitution of *δεσποτοῦμένον* for the traditional *διαπονουμένον*, v. 20 *sq.* follow rather abruptly. But that is not all. At the end of the prologue we find four verses (36-39) that have nothing to do with what immediately precedes them, that deal with the dark secrets of the house and that fit perfectly after v. 19. My opinion that vv. 36-39 were placed by Aeschylus after v. 19 coincides with that of Professor van Herwerden, who in his *Emendationes Aeschyleae* (*Jahrb.* 10^{er} Suppl., 121 *sqq.*) writes thus (p. 132): 'Vss. 36-39 longe aptiorem locum nanciscuntur, si mecum transposueris statim post vs. 19, ubi custos tetigit tristem rerum conditionem. Quo facto et vocabula τὰ δ' ἄλλα habebunt quo referantur, et laetiora moesta exceperint ad finem orationis usque continuata.' I may add here that the *Nûn δ'* in v. 20 forms a sort of *reditus ad propositum* and brings us around to the point of view of v. 1. Dramatically v. 20 *sq.* prepare the way for the appearance of the beacon.

But there are certain textual questions in vv. 38 and 39 that require attention. The looming of fire by night, as Aeschylus dwells upon it in this prologue, inevitably calls up the opening of Pindar's first *Olympian*; and must not Aeschylus himself have had those splendid verses in mind when he wrote those that we are now examining? Does not also a certain likeness in v. 39 to something else in Pindar, that striking phrase *φῶν' ἄντα συνετοῖσιν* which seems to have taken hold upon the subsequent poets (cf. Euripides's *εὐξύνετον ξυνετοῖσι βοᾶν* *I.T.* 1092), does not this likeness also suggest that Pindar was running in Aeschylus's mind? Indeed, I believe that v. 39 in its original form had far greater likeness to the Pindaric phrase than it has in the traditional form. There is difficulty in construing vv. 38 and 39, as they stand. *λήθομαι*, of course with *ἐκὼν*, means 'forget on purpose' and need give give us no trouble; but where is its object, and what are we to do with *αἰδῶ* and the following *καὶ* where we do not want a finite form at all, but a participle or equivalent? The Pindaric phrase helps us out in part, and I would write *ὦν ἐκὼν ἐγώ, μαθοῦσιν αἰδῆς, οὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι*. There is a somewhat similar corruption to that assumed in *αἰδῶ κοῦ* in v. 1244, where for *κλύοντ'* *ἀληθῶς*, οὐδὲν *ἐξηκασμένα* we

should read *κλύοντ'* *ἀληθῆ* *κοῦδὲν ἐξηκασμένα*.¹

Of the remainder of the prologue I have less to say. I would accept Hermann's transposition of *Ἰοῦ ἰοῦ*, would take *συμφορᾶς* in v. 20 as 'coincidence' (*τῇσδε συμφορᾶς χάριν* must then go with *χαίρει*), would read *σημανῶ* in v. 26, would take *δόμοις* in v. 27 as locative and construe *τῇδε λαμπάδι* in v. 28 with *ἐπορθιάζειν*, and I would understand *θήσονται* in v. 32 as a poetic equivalent of *ποιήσονται* in the sense of *ἡγήσονται*. Furthermore, I would understand *δεσποτῶν* (v. 32) as referring to Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra² and the words *τὰ δεσποτῶν εὖ πεσόντα* as = *τὰ τῶν δεσποτῶν εὐτυχῇ*. Lastly, the contrast with *δεσποτῶν* demands that we write in v. 33 not *τῇσδέ μοι* but *τῇσδ' ἐμοί*.

I have appended the continuous text of the prologue, as I would write it, and have added a close translation, which will be found to fill some small gaps in the commentary above.

[NOTE.—The prologue possibly occupied one page of a MS. that had 38 or 39 lines to the page, and vv. 36-39 were added by the scribe that first omitted them, when he discovered his blunder, at the foot of the page. For evidence of the existence of MSS. of the Tragedians with 39 lines to the page see Hayley on Eur. *Alc.* 312.]

Θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος ἦν, κοιμώμενος
στέγαις Ἀτρείδων ἄκαθεν κυνὸς δίκην,
ἄστρων κάτοιδ' αὖ νυκτέρων ὀμήγυριν
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς 5
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι 6
καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον, 8
αἶγλιν πυρὸς φέρουσαν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν
ἀλώσιμόν τε βάξιν· ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ 10
γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ·
εὖτ' ἂν δέ, νυκτίπλαγκτον ἐνδρὸσόν τ' ἔχω<ν>
εἰνῆν—ὄνείροις οὐκ ἐπισκοπούμένην
ἐμῆν· φόβος γὰρ ἀντίος παραστατεῖ
τὸ μὴ βεβαίως βλέφαρα συμβαλεῖν ὕπνῳ— 15
ὅταν δ', αἰδεῖν ἡ μινύρεσθαι δοκῇ
ὑπνὸν τόδ' ἀντίμολπον ἐντέμνων ἄκος,
κλαίω τότ' οἴκου τοῦδε συμφορὰν στένων
οὐχ, ὥς τὰ πρόσθ', ἄριστα δεσποτοῦμένον— 19
τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῇ· βούδ' ἐπὶ γλώσση μέγας 36

¹ This correction has been anticipated by Professor van Herwerden (*Exercitationes Criticae*, p. 99).

² Of course, the reference is specially to Agamemnon, and Clytaemnestra can only be included by a specious optimism on the speaker's part, as though the evils he bewails in the present and dreads in the future were not there. His real thought appears in the *δ' ὄν* of v. 34.

βέβηκεν· οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβει, 37
 σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν ὧν ἐκὼν ἐγὼ, 38
 μαθοῦσιν αὐδῆς, οὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι. 39
 Νῦν δ' εὐτυχὴς γένοιτ' ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων 20
 εὐαγγέλου φανέντος ὀρφναίου πυρός. 21
 Ἰού, ἰού· 25
 ὦ χαίρε, λαμπτήρ νυκτὸς ἡμερήσιον 22
 φάος πιφαύσκων καὶ χορῶν κατάστασιν 24
 πολλῶν ἐν Ἀργεῖ, τῆσδε συμφορᾶς χάριν. 26
 Ἀγαμέμνωνος γυναικὶ σσημανῶ τορῶς
 εὐνῆς ἐπαντείλασαν ὡς τάχος δόμοις
 δολολυγμὸν εὐφημοῦντα τῆδε λαμπάδι
 ἐπορθιάζειν, εἴπερ Ἰλίου πόλις
 ἔάλωκεν, ὡς ὁ φρυκτὸς ἀγγέλλων πρέπει· 30
 αὐτὸς τ' ἐγὼγε φροῖμιον χορεύσομαι
 τὰ δεσποτῶν γὰρ εὐ πεσόντα θήσομαι
 τρίς ἑξ βαλούσης τῆσδ' ἐμοὶ φρυκτωρίας.
 Γένοιτο δ' οὖν μολόντος εὐφιλή χέρα
 ἀνακτος οἴκων τῆδε βαστάσαι χερὶ. 35

2-3 Sensui interpunctionem accommodavi.

4 Virgulam post ὁμήγουριν vulgo positam omisi, qui δυνάστας quoque cum ἄστρον iungendum esse censeam.

6 Virgulam sive gravius punctum post αἰθέρι omisi, quia simplex sententia est ἣν φυλάσσω.

12 Post δέ virgulam inserui; ἔχων scripsi sicut olim Weil.

13 et 15 Verba quaedam a poeta διὰ μέσου iniecta lineis indicavi.

14 ἀντίος scripsi viam monstrante Weckleino, qui ἀντίπνοος imprimendum curavit. Idem iam proposuerat van Herwerden.

19 δεσποτουμένου pro διαπονουμένου praeuntibus aliis cum Duebnero restitui.

Versus 36-39 huc reduxi. Idem iam fecerat van Herwerden.

39 Ratione habita et loci sententiae et uncialis litterarum ductus et Pindarici illius φωνᾶντα (quod sic scribendum esse censeo) συνεταῖσιν restituere conatus sum Aeschyleam manum. Cf. Ag. 1244, ubi pro, ἀληθὺς οὐδὲν scribendum erat ἀληθὺς οὐδὲν.

25 In sedem suam reposui cum Hermann.

26 Deteriorum librorum σσημανῶ Medicei illi σσημαῖνα cum Weckleino praetuli.

33 τῆσδ' ἐμοὶ pro librorum τῆσδε μοι reposui.

The gods, it is true, I am asking for release from those toils of a watch a year in length which, couching on the roofs of the Atridae upon elbow dogwise, I have learned full well the night stars' rank and file<in>

and those bright lords <of theirs>, looming in the aether, that bring winter and summer to mortals and now am keeping for that token of a torch, a gleam of fire that shall bring out of Troy speech and talk of capture; for thereto constrains <me> a woman's man-minded expectant heart: whensoever, though, occupying a night-buffeted and dewy couch— <a couch> by dreams unvisited in my case; for fear is at <my> side preventing my closing my eyelids tight in sleep—, whenever, I say, <occupying such a couch>, I am thought to be singing or humming, using that as a charm against sleep, I am <really> at such times weeping, mourning this house's misfortune, which is not, as once, most fitly governed—but I say no more; an ox upon my tongue stands heavy; but the house for itself, could it receive <the gift of> speech, would tell most clearly what I, of my own will, though voiceful to them that know, to them that know not forget. Now, however, may a fortunate release from toils come by the appearing of the fire of good news through the murk of night. Hurrah! hurrah! ah! welcome, thou beamer that by night daylight dost shew and <dost betoken> the holding of dances many in Argos, <welcome> for that thou comest upon the heels of my word! To Agamemnon's wife I'll signal clear that rising starlike¹ from her couch with all speed she shrill a cry of worshipful welcome over this torch, if indeed Troy-town is taken, as the beacon looms its message; and for myself I'll dance a prelude <to the public dances>; for my master's game I'll count a winning one now that this beacon-watch has thrown me treble six. But, <whether a winning game or not>, may it be <mine>, when he comes home again, to lift the well-beloved hand of the lord of the house with this hand of mine.

MORTIMER LAMSON EARLE.

¹ 'Der Wächter ist noch ganz eingenommen von der Beobachtung der Sterne.' (Wecklein.)

NOTE ON AGAMEMNON 326.

νικᾷ δ' ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος δραμών.

Without pretending to find a final solution of this old *crux* I think there is an element of evidence which has been

neglected. All the commentators analyse word for word in the attempt to discover a meaning; but in analysing word for word we may break up some organic unit of phrase and so be further than ever from