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Clytemnestra and the Elders: Dramatic Technique in Aeschylus, Agamemnon 1372–1576

By Gerard J. P. O'Daly, Würzburg

The great scene of confrontation between Clytemnestra and the chorus over the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra is the emotional climax of the Agamemnon, and its interpretation is crucial to our understanding of the degree of Clytemnestra's responsibility for the murder of her husband. Yet there are considerable (and still unresolved) difficulties of text and language in the scene, and profound differences of scholarly opinion about the nature of its development. In these circumstances further investigation of the problems is surely justified.

I

The scene (strictly speaking, from the first choral lyrics of 1407ff. onwards) is a specimen of the type to which Walther Kranz applied the term "epirrhematic"[1]. The characteristics of epirrhematic structures in tragedy have been thoroughly analysed by Kranz and Peretti, and need not be rehearsed here[2]. Yet one feature seems not to have been sufficiently emphasized. These dialogues between chorus and actor, in which the actor replies to the choral lyrics

* This is an expanded version of a paper read at a Habilitationscolloquium before the Faculty of Classical and Oriental Studies of Heidelberg University on 8 February 1984. I am grateful for the criticism of participants at the Colloquium, and especially for Professor Albrecht Dihle's comments on a subsequent draft. – The following abbreviations are used: Denniston-Page = J. D. Denniston / D. L. Page (eds.), *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957); Fraenkel = Ed. Fraenkel (ed.), *Aeschylus, Agamemnon,* 3 vols. (Oxford 1950).

1 W. Kranz, Hermes 54 (1919) 318f. = Studien zur antiken Literatur und ihrem Fortwirken (Heidelberg 1967) 276f. For the use of the term ἐπίρρημα in ancient and modern scholarship see O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 86 n. 2.

2 W. Kranz, *Stasimon* (Berlin 1933) 14ff.; A. Peretti, *Epirrema e Tragedia* (Florence 1939). Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aischylos, Interpretationen* (Berlin 1914) 74. For a more recent discussion see H. Popp in W. Jens (ed.), Die Bauformen der griechischen Tragödie (Munich 1971) 230–5. 239–46.

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in spoken verses (trochaics or iambics) or recitative (marching anapaests), are characterized by the two distinct emotional levels upon which the participants operate[3]. On the one hand, the chorus sings out of fear, anger or grief, in short stanzas full of pathos; on the other, the actor declaims, not without feeling, but in rhetorically articulated and often carefully argued sentences.

The epirrhematic structure is particularly suited to this type of contrast, whereas actor-chorus dialogues which are conducted, so to speak, on one emotional plane may be either entirely spoken (like stichomythia) or purely lyrical (like the "kommos"). A glance at some epirrhematic scenes in Aeschylus will confirm this point. In the Seven Against Thebes 203–244 the male warrior-world is pitted against the female sphere of hearth and home. Eteocles upholds the essential military values of courage, discipline and obedience in terse trimeters of three verses each; the Theban women sing timorously of violence and siege. This scene has some features of the "agon": a second scene in Seven (686–711) displays these features more clearly, as the chorus attempts to hold Eteocles back from the duel which will end in fratricide and his own fated death. Contest-form is also characteristic of an epirrhematic scene in Hiketides (348–417), where the Danaids attempt to persuade a reluctant Pelasgus to grant them asylum in Argos, as it is of Eumenides 777–891, where Athene tries to counter the menacing anger of the Erinyes with the offer of new honours to compensate for their defeat in the preceding trial-scene, as well as with menaces of her own. We shall see that the scene which is under investigation also has this typical contest-form[4].

In a play like the Hiketides, where the chorus is the focal point of the action and, in a sense, the chief dramatic character, the epirrhematic scenes are decisive turning-points and highlights of the drama[5]. Reference has already been made to the chorus's plea for asylum; a further important scene is their anguished appeal to their father Danaus not to abandon them in the face of the approaching hostile Egyptians, even if it be to obtain Argive help (736–75). Finally, the text of 866–904, though mutilated, none the less vividly conveys the Egyptian Herald's verbal threats of force, against which the chorus reacts with terrified expressions of resistance.

3 The importance of the two distinct levels was, however, noted by E. Fraenkel, *Die Kassandraszene der Orestie,* in: Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie II (Rome 1964) 381f. Cf. D. J. Conacher, AJPh 95 (1974) 329.

4 On contest-scenes in epirrhematic structures see the remarks of Popp (n. 2) 241.

5 The observations of Kranz (n. 2) 15f. 20f. on these scenes remain valid, even if his, and other scholars', conclusions about the play's early date cannot survive the discovery of the papyrus *didaskalia* POxy. 2256 fr. 3 (= TrGF 1, DID C 6). The central role of the chorus in *Hik.* and *Eum.* was an archaizing experiment in response to the needs of the dramatic theme: see A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplices, Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge 1969) 106–20. However, the chorus's extended involvement in various types of dialogue scene in these two plays suggests, against Garvie, that archaic tragedy was not uneventful and static; cf. Taplin (n. 1) 207–9.

The especially refined and complex epirrhematic scenes of the Hiketides and Oresteia, although they cannot be used to support any new theory of the technical development of such scenes by Aeschylus, do however indicate that for him this particular form of dialogue remained a flexible instrument, capable of development and adaptation in accordance with the needs of the individual dramatic situation. Within the general framework of the two distinct, and often conflicting, emotional levels different variations may occur. Thus the calm confidence of the Danaids' appeal in Hik. 348ff. is in sharp contrast to their terror in 866ff.; and a parallel contrast informs the serious political considerations of Pelasgus in the former scene, and the brutal threats of the Egyptian Herald in the latter. In more complex scenes there can be changes of mood in actor and chorus themselves. A particularly brilliant example of such changes is the Cassandra scene in Ag. 1072ff., where Cassandra initially sings in a state of visionary trance, to which the chorus, understanding nothing of her inspired madness, replies in iambic distichs of sharply contrasting sobriety. But, gradually infected by her mood, it goes over to dochmiacs from 1121 on, so that the initial contrast of the scene is actually superseded by the predominantly lyrical kommos-part of the amoibaion. But contrast is nonetheless maintained, for, if the chorus thereafter (with the probable exception of the iambics of 1130–1) sings, Cassandra's remaining utterances all end with iambic distichs (1138–9. 1148–9. 1160–1. 1171–2) which were probably spoken[6]. These lines of Cassandra's do not appear to us to be emotionally less intense than the others of the scene, but they all occur in her reflections about her own imminent fate and their bleak realism is in sharp contrast with the visionary mood in which she sees the children of Thyestes in the palace and evokes the killing of Agamemnon. They thus represent a descent from the state of trance in which she begun the scene (and which Aeschylus represented by the novelty of giving the actor lyrics and the chorus spoken iambics, thus reversing the normal epirrhematic process)[7], and initiate the transition to her speeches of 1178ff.

Change of mood within the chorus occurs in Eum. 777ff., and this time it is a change from the indignant complaints of the Erinyes at their loss of honour in the trial verdict, combined with threats against Attica, to interest in Athene's offers of compensation – an interest which leads (after four choral lyric stanzas and four speeches in reply by Athene) to the probing, precise questions of the stichomythia of 892ff. In this scene there is no corresponding shift in Athene's mood; indeed it is essential to her persuasiveness (cf. 885) that her appeal to the Erinyes be consistent and unshakeable.

Characteristic features of the epirrhematic structure will also be observed in Ag. 1407ff. Reference has already been made to its contest-form; but it will

6 The metrical tempi of the scene are well observed by Denniston-Page 165.

7 See Kranz (n. 2) 20, who lists there the chief characteristics of epirrhematic structures.

also exploit the distinctive two-tier emotional scale of this scene-type, and there will be a modest but significant change of emotional tone in Clytemnestra's transition to the marching anapaests of 1462ff.

II

The problems of the staging of the scene have been well discussed by Taplin and his cautious conclusions commend themselves[8]. A tableau is presented: Agamemnon's corpse lies in a bath-tub, wrapped in the net cloth in which he was trapped; Cassandra lies beside him; it is more likely that scene-shifters set up this tableau than that the ekkyklema was used, for the textual signals that may indicate the latter's use are missing[9]; Clytemnestra stands by the corpses. She will not hold the murder weapon, a sword, in her hand, for there is no textual reference to its presence[10], and the audience's attention is rather to be focussed on the potent symbolism of those other instruments of her deed, the net cloth and the bath, tokens of δόλος and humiliation (1492–6 = 1516–20. 1539–40)[11]. The humiliation persists after δόλος has done its work: the laying-out of the corpse of Agamemnon in the narrow hip-bath (δροίτη) is a travesty of the πρόθεσις of a dead king, a fact underscored by the description, echoing Homer, of the bath's silver sides[12]. It may also be that Aeschylus wishes to suggest the connection between bath-tub and bier/coffin in the washing, dressing and laying-out of the dead: this πρόθεσις has been perversely prepared[13].

8 Taplin (n. 1) 325f.

9 See Taplin (n. 1) 442f. It is by no means certain that the ekkyklema was known to Aeschylus, and unlikely that it was, if, as seems plausible, the skene did not serve as a stage set representing a building in the theatre of Dionysos before the late 460s: see Wilamowitz, Hermes 21 (1886) 597–622 = Kl. Schr. I 148–72; N. G. L. Hammond, GRBS 13 (1972) 387–450; Taplin (n. 1) 452–9 (but cf. E. Pöhlmann, Mus. Helv. 38, 1981, 129–146, esp. 135f.). Aeschylus' text would surely have betrayed some self-consciousness in the use of what would have been a novel device. We need not, pace E. Simon, *Das antike Theater* (Freiburg/Würzburg ²1981) 34, assume the use of the ekkyklema in the *Prometheus Lyomenos*: quite apart from the question of the Aeschylean authorship of the *Prometheus* plays the staging of both *PV* and *Ly.* could have been realized by means other than the use of the skene and its doors. For the possibility that the limestone outcrop in the orchestra of the theatre of Dionysos represented Prometheus' rock see Hammond 422ff.; M. L. West, JHS 99 (1979) 135ff.

10 Its presence in the scene in Peter Stein's remarkably faithful Berlin production of the *Oresteia* was therefore ill-advised. The production is discussed from the classicist's viewpoint by M. Schmidt and F. Schuh, Hephaistos 3 (1981) 127–44.

11 For the dramatic function of the net in the scene see Fraenkel III 808f. For the spider's (1492 = 1516) skill cf. Aristot. *Hist. an.* 622b–3a.

12 See Fraenkel III 731.

13 For the connection between bath-tubs and coffins see E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1979) 13 and n. 22. The link between bath and bier is given in the description of the former as a χάμευνα (1540): biers were, or represented, beds in the πρόθεσις, cf. Vermeule, ibid.

III

The specifically epirrhematic part of the scene (1407ff.) is preceded by a long trimeter section closely connected with what follows. The exultant self-assertion of Clytemnestra in 1372ff. sets the mood and theme of the scene. The prevailing scholarly opinion on the scene's development is that it portrays a shift in the attitude of Clytemnestra, if not a deterioration of her morale or a development in her character. Given such views, it is not surprising that critics are concerned to identify the point at which the shift or deterioration or development occurs. Fraenkel, for example, finds it in 1431ff., where – despite her express denial of any fear and her invocation of Dike and the gods of revenge – the reference to Aegisthus as her protector is seen to betray that "she is conscious of a whisper of fear in her heart ... the descent from her summit has begun"[14]. This "καταστροφή in Clytemnestra's own soul" is continued in 1462ff., Fraenkel maintains[15]. Taplin sees a growth of understanding in Clytemnestra throughout the scene: she comes to recognize the role of the family doom and the daimon in her deed. This development is paralleled by the chorus's gradual recognition of the influence of several external factors (the rule of Zeus, the family curse, past guilt, Helen, Iphigeneia) in a murder which initially they could only condemn in terms of immediate shock[16]. Even scholars who deny that a development in Clytemnestra is portrayed are nevertheless inclined to base their judgement on a psychological and naturalistic reading of the scene. Thus Denniston-Page counter Fraenkel's reading of 1435 with the assertion that "her (Clytemnestra's) confidence is not necessarily shaken"[17]. And evaluation of the controversial final lines of the scene (1567ff.: see below pp. 18f.) invariably refers to Clytemnestra's anxiety or fear, or to her irony or defiance or cool practicality[18]. Now it is certainly legitimate to speak of characterisation in Greek tragedy in general and in Aeschylus in particular[19]. We may apply what the critic of Hamlet says to the Greek theatre also: "Once we assume the presence of live actors, it is difficult not to believe in the active force of characterization; the actors will naturally endow the play-

14 Fraenkel III 678.

15 Fraenkel III 694.

16 O. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London 1978) 143f.

17 Denniston-Page 202.

18 Fraenkel III 742: "deep anxiety"; Wilamowitz (n. 2) 202: "Angst um ihr Leben"; Kranz (n. 1) 318 = Studien 276: "Furcht"; K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (Berne 1949) 107: "Angst vor dem Dämonischen"; A. Sidgwick (ed.), *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford ^{5}1898) II 75: "cold irony"; Denniston-Page 212: "a cool, practical, and thoroughly sensible suggestion"; H. Lloyd-Jones (tr.), *Aeschylus, Oresteia: Agamemnon* (London ^{2}1972) 100: "she remains defiant". Lloyd-Jones, ibid. xxf., has some salutary remarks on the lack of development in Clytemnestra's character.

19 See H. Lloyd-Jones, *Females of the Species* (London 1975) 29–33.

wright's fictions with the illusion of human purpose and consistency"[20]. And it will be equally true of the Elizabethan and the Attic stage that "the psychological processes ... are deliberately simplified and stylized to suit the demands of the brief, swift and unequivocal communication demanded in the theater"[21]. In other words, character is subordinated to the dramatic action and need be no more than adequate to make the latter plausible, as Aristotle asserted and much of Greek tragedy exemplifies: "Character is a function of plot"[22]. There is no such thing as characterisation for its own sake in Greek tragedy, but neither should one regard individual scenes of the plays as isolated essays in dramatic effectiveness which make no attempt to present characters who are psychologically plausible. Yet if there is plausibility in character portrayal it falls far short of the detail and complexity of other types of drama, not to speak of the naturalistic novel[23].

Clytemnestra has, among Aeschylean creations, pre-eminently the authenticity of a great and powerfully imagined *persona.* It would therefore be per se plausible that she should be shown to experience fear, or grow in insight, in the course of the scene. I shall, however, argue that neither the language nor the progression of the scene lend themselves to an interpretation in terms of psychological change. Rather, what we are presented with is a *development of theme,* in which both actor and chorus participate. Insofar as this development is also an exposé of Clytemnestra's character in a particular set of circumstances, it shares certain features with Aeschylus' presentation of Orestes in the great kommos of the Choephoroi. One of the merits of Albin Lesky's analysis of that kommos was to show how Orestes' own resolve to avenge his father's murder, as exemplified in it, complements rather than contradicts the command and compulsion to avenge that derives from Apollo and is stressed in the preceding scene: "Was in Wahrheit ineinander liegt, ist im dramatischen Ablaufe zu einem Nebeneinander und Nacheinander geworden"[24]. This is also true of Clytemnestra as a character in a tragic situation whose exposure is gradual and cumulative. As the situation grows in complexity and explicitness,

20 M. Charney, *Style in "Hamlet"* (Princeton, N.J. 1969) 220.

21 Op. cit. 218.

22 The phrase comes from B. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London 1973) 53, but its substance is already stated in Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449 b 36ff.; 1454 a 16ff.

23 Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Dramatische Technik des Sophokles* (Berlin 1917; Nachdruck 1969), effectively demolished the view that Sophocles engaged in minute psychological character portrayal, but pushed to excess the thesis that consistency of character is disregarded in the plays. See H. Lloyd-Jones, CQ n.s. 22 (1972) 214–228, who incorporates unpublished comments by Ed. Fraenkel. – For an attempt to save Aeschylean characterization from some psychological and symbolist pitfalls see P. E. Easterling, Greece and Rome 20 (1973) 3–19.

24 A. Lesky, *Der Kommos der Choephoren,* Sitzb. Akad. Wien, Phil.-hist. Kl. 221, 3 (Vienna 1943) 122.

so does the monolithic *persona* involved in it: from the audience's viewpoint, this is not a case of seeing a fully-comprehended dramatic character exposed to new experiences and arguments and showing fresh, even surprising, facets of personality as she grapples with these, but of a development of insight into the ramifications of a character's situation which is already, as it were, given, but not yet fully articulated in the language and action of the drama[25].

Thus the role of the Daimon in her action is not something which the chorus either comes to realize, or, knowing it, persuades Clytemnestra of it. As will be shown, the form and language of its introduction into the scene indicate that it is rather the audience to which this supernatural element is revealed by the stage-dialogue of Clytemnestra and chorus. In this way the dramatic technique of Aeschylus reflects the supernatural dimension of the plays: what a god or daimon wills is given, but realized only as the dramatic action unfolds. And to understand this supernatural dimension is to understand the tragic situation of the play's characters. The scene under discussion illustrates this process well[26].

IV

If Clytemnestra believed that the decisive contest (ἀγών, 1377) of her long-prepared revenge is now over, she is deceived, for a bitter verbal contest – a dramatic ἀγών – with the chorus lies ahead. It is a matter of self-defence, in which "words spoken to suit the occasion" (καιρίως εἰρημένων, 1372) will not merely be a thing of the past, now no longer necessary. Advocacy is called for, and Clytemnestra sees in the Elders her judges (1412. 1421): commenting on the style of 1412–8 Fraenkel rightly speaks of an "elaborate period" in which Clytemnestra "pleads her case"[27]. Thus she can throw down the gauntlet in this contest in which, as she believes, only one side can be victor, and accept the Elders' challenge, with its risk of her possible defeat (1421–5). Neverthe-

25 See the pertinent remarks of Vickers (n. 22) 382. We must understand Clytemnestra's words at 1654ff. in this light.

26 Reinhardt (n. 18) 107, with characteristic insight, observed this aspect, even if he persists in seeing a development in Clytemnestra: "Der Wechsel ist nicht nur von seiner subjektiven Seite zu verstehen, nicht nur als aufdämmerndes Schuldbewusstsein, Reue, Furcht oder dergleichen, sondern auch als Wechsel zwischen Bild und Gegenbild der Tat an sich, erst als Triumph und Sieg, dann als Verhängnis, erst als Anbruch einer neuen Zeit, dann als Vision der fürchterlichen Folgen. Die Tat zeigt ihr Doppelantlitz." – Development of theme rather than of character in 1448ff. underlies the structure found there by Popp (n. 2) 244 (followed and developed by H. Neitzel, Hermes 107, 1979, 136f.), even if that structure seems too rigidly linear to be convincing. That Clytemnestra's replies form recurrent patterns of agreement and rejection, cutting across any strict progression in the scene, was observed by Fraenkel III 737.

27 Fraenkel III 667. On the judicial theme of 1412ff. see B. Daube, *Zu den Rechtsproblemen in Aischylos' Agamemnon* (Zurich/Leipzig n.d. [1938]) 179.

less, her words do, to a certain extent, transmit the sense of authenticity which 1372–3 promise, for she is given arguments in which her true preoccupations – as mother, wife and lover – come to light. Thus the scene is in a sense the forerunner of the contest in the Electra plays of Sophocles and Euripides, and similar arguments are used by Clytemnestra in all three plays, in particular her chief complaint against Agamemnon – that he sacrificed Iphigeneia[28]. The violent death of her daughter is undoubtedly the event which provoked most sympathy for Clytemnestra in the Athenian theatre, as it does today, but we must not misread that sympathy, for it will have been countered both by the sacrificial command of Artemis[29] and by the deeply-rooted feeling that it is perverse for a woman to take the law into her own hands[30]. And so the arguments which Aeschylus gives Clytemnestra take away with the one hand whatever credibility the other has provided. The first reference to Iphigeneia in the scene (1415–8), while it grants that her death was a sacrifice (ἔθυσεν, 1417), avoids all reference to the recipient of that sacrifice, and reduces its gravity by suggesting that Agamemnon cynically slaughtered his daughter like a beast (1415), to be a magical charm which would induce the needed winds (1418). This slaughter is seen only as a pollution (1420). Whatever sympathy the words φιλτάτην ἐμοὶ ὠδῖν' (1416–7) provoke is thus countered by this deliberate falsification of the motives and mood of those making the sacrifice. In a second passage (1431–3) Clytemnestra swears a blasphemous oath by her daughter's Dike, and by Ate and Erinys, and the killing of Agamemnon is seen as the sacrifice which seals the oath with those powers. That the notion of a wronged person's Dike, as well as the practices of the oath and accompanying sacrifice, are here grimly travestied is perhaps less obvious than other instances of the misuse of religious language by Clytemnestra in the scene, but Aeschylus' audience will have been sensitive to the tenor of these words[31]. A third reference to Iphigeneia is neutral in its language (1525–7), except that once again the rights of the sacrifice are categorically excluded: what Iphigeneia suffered at Agamemnon's hands was "unworthy" (ἀνάξια, 1527). And in the end impious satire triumphs as Clytemnestra parodies the δεξιώσις motif so favoured

28 Soph. *El.* 516–633, esp. 525ff.; Eur. *El.* 1011–1110, esp. 1018ff. 1041ff.

29 The death of Iphigeneia against the background of Greek sacrifice in general and the cult of Artemis in particular is analysed by H. Lloyd-Jones, JHS 103 (1983) 87–102.

30 Audience attitudes to Clytemnestra will inevitably have been affected by the contemporary juridicial status of women, even if allowance will have been made for the queen's "historical" role in the myth. But the latter will never justify Clytemnestra's destructive blow at the head of the household whose prosperity and continuity she should serve: the moral and mythical implications of her behaviour are expressed in the stasimon of *Cho.* 585ff.: see esp. 623–30. Some of the ways in which myth reflects attitudes to women in Greek society are explored by J. Gould, JHS 100 (1980) 52–8.

31 Daube (n. 27) 181f. observed the blasphemous travesty in the link between oath and sacrifice of these lines.

by Greek art[32]: Iphigeneia's fate is now a mere tool in her attempt to undermine Agamemnon's posthumous status (1555–9).

Thus Clytemnestra's defence as mother is flawed even as she presents it: similar self-defeating language is used in her defence as wife and lover. She insists repeatedly that her killing of Agamemnon was just (1396. 1406. 1432. 1503. 1527–8. 1529. 1567). Her assertion of responsibility is the steel-like link which binds the scene together: from the brutal directness of 1379 (ἕστηκα δ' ἔνθ' ἔπαισ') through the terrible confidence of 1404–5

> οὗτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς
> πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, τῆσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς
> ἔργον

a direct line of self-assertion leads to 1552–3:

> πρὸς ἡμῶν
> κάππεσε κάτθανε, καὶ καταθάψομεν ...

Yet here also the very claims of the agent are distorted and perverted by their verbal setting and development. Thus the blows of line 1379 are specified (1384–6) as three, and in a "grandiose blasphemy"[33] the third blow is seen as a σπονδή to Zeus Soter: but this Zeus is a saviour of *corpses*. Or, in the second passage quoted, Clytemnestra goes on to compare murder with a craft or skill, and a just one at that (δικαίας τέκτονος 1406). And the claim of 1552–3 is embedded in the δεξίωσις – parody on the one hand, and, on the other, an explicit assertion of family relationship – but one which, Clytemnestra feels, allows her to dictate which kind of funeral Agamemnon will get, rather than involving her in any responsibility to provide an appropriate one: the Elders are reminded that they are no relatives of the dead king, even if their concerns resemble those of pious kinsmen (1541ff.)[34].

But the most striking assertions of Clytemnestra as wife are to be found in two of the most difficult passages of the scene, 1388–92 and 1395–6. The perverse blasphemy of the former lines has long been recognized: the life-blood of Agamemnon, as it spurts out, is compared with the fertilizing moisture sent by Zeus to promote the blossoming of the sprouting crops. The recent attempt by J. L. Moles to interpret the passage as an erotic metaphor in which Clytemnestra enjoys a kind of surrogate orgasm as Agamemnon ejaculates his

32 See Fraenkel III 735f.; cf. Vermeule (n. 13) 14f. and fig. 8B (detail of Nekyia krater). The denial of funeral rites implicit in 1553–9 reflects the reproach of the Homeric Agamemnon against his wife: *Od.* 11, 424–6.

33 See Fraenkel III 653.

34 That this notion (explicit in Isaeus 8, 24) is the implication of 1551ff. is shown by Lloyd-Jones in: Dionysiaca. Nine Studies in Greek Poetry by Former Pupils, Presented to Sir Denys Page on his Seventieth Birthday (Cambridge 1978) 59.

blood, is not, however, convincing[35]. This is less because such sexual imagery might have been out of place in tragedy than for the more basic reason that it strains the language of the lines to breaking-point. Not only does Moles ask us to believe that "the chronological gap between impregnation and parturition is telescoped simply because the process of generation is regarded as a unity" (181), but Aeschylus is also responsible for a similar "conflation of time scale in the imagery between 'penetration' and 'ejaculation'" (184). But it is one thing to appeal to Aeschylus' imagery, lacking "mathematical precision" (184), in defence of such an interpretation; it is quite another to read into his words complexities which are not there, and whose presence is not needed for the words to be both comprehensible and forceful. In the much-quoted passage from the Danaids (fr. 44 N.) the stages of desire, impregnation and parturition are clearly differentiated (ἐρᾷ μὲν ... ἔρως δὲ ... ὄμβρος δ' ... ἡ δὲ τίκτεται ...): when Fraenkel compared this fragment with the phrase κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν (1392), "in which ... the birth of all created life is seen as a homogeneous process" (III 656), he was not referring to any conflation of the temporal stages leading from desire to parturition, as Moles (181) would apparently wish, but rather to the homogeneity of plant, animal and human life. It is precisely the notion of that homogeneity which underlies the metaphor of 1388–92. The terms of comparison are fourfold. There is, on the one hand, the spurting blood of Agamemnon; and, on the other, the delight of Clytemnestra at his dying. The former is compared with moisture (rain, drizzle or dew) – δρόσου, γάνει; the latter with a personification of the crops "rejoicing" in the blossoming (birth: the reference to λοχεύμασιν removes all doubt) that this moisture brings about. This last term is, of course, the point of the metaphor as a powerful expression of joy. It is perhaps symptomatic of a modern interpretation such as that of Moles that it should seek to focus on the attempt to see the lines as an image of the sexual act, rather than follow its no less sexual, but different, imagery of birth. The joy of giving birth, a joy not without pain (the word λοχεύμασιν will recall the birth-pangs, cf. 1417–8 for the oxymoron φιλτάτην ... ὠδῖν'), is what the metaphor conveys. It is unlikely that it is intended to convey more, and we should probably resist the temptation to look for more specific meanings: to ask whether we are meant to link this metaphorical birth ironically to the real births of those children of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Iphigeneia and Orestes, the one born to be a sacrificial victim at her father's hands, the other born a snake to slay its mother[36]; or whether Aeschylus wishes to suggest that this killing is an impious deed begetting others, as in Ag. 758–60. But, if we are not to extend the implications of the metaphor beyond

35 J. L. Moles, *A neglected aspect of Agamemnon 1389–92,* Liverpool Classical Monthly 4/9 (1979) 179–89.

36 Orestes as snake: *Cho.* 527ff. 928f. Cf. *Ag.* 1281: μητροκτόνον φίτυμα.

its immediate effect, we must surely see it in yet another example of that self-annihilation in language which is characteristic of Clytemnestra's protestations in this scene. Another passage in the Agamemnon underlines this aspect. At 1015ff. the rich harvests that ward off famine are seen as a reward for the voluntary sacrifice of possessions, and this latter is contrasted with the pouring out of human blood that can never be made good. Clytemnestra's words at 1388ff. attempt to assert what the earlier passage suggests to be impossible: that from bloodshed good, prosperity, might follow. She flouts the Aeschylean ethical norm.

The difficulties of 1395–6 are of a different kind. Their solution depends less on an understanding of metaphorical association than on the interpretation of an allusion to a ritual act. D. W. Lucas has convincingly argued that we should not search in the details of the cult of the dead for an explanation of the phrase ἐπισπένδειν νεκρῷ, for the pouring of libations on the body was not a part of the burial ritual, nor can Clytemnestra's words plausibly refer to the custom of pouring χοαί into the grave[37]. The natural associations of the term ἐπισπένδειν are with sacrifices, and Lucas is surely right when he links 1395 with the notion of Agamemnon as a sacrificial victim (1433. 1504: cf. 1409 and already 1118), whose blood is seen as a libation to the god of the dead (1386–7). Lucas suggests that a reference may be intended to the sprinkling with χέρνιβες of a sacrificial victim before the latter is killed. The point of 1395 would then be, that, even if Agamemnon is a victim who might have been sprinkled with χέρνιβες, this is now no longer appropriate, as the victim is already dead, a corpse: "ἐπισπένδειν νεκρῷ is an obvious contradiction in terms" (66). The words may indeed mean this, as the examples of usage adduced by Lucas indicate[38]. But this interpretation gives a weak, even anticlimactic meaning – "She refrains not because it would be blasphemous, but because it would be meaningless" (67). Aeschylus, at this point in a powerful speech, surely intended more. If, instead of a retrospective reference to what might *earlier* have been fittingly done, we understand the line in its natural chronological position, as a reference to what might *now* be done, a more acceptable explanation suggests itself. What σπονδή is still performable in this sacrificial sequence? Only the concluding pouring of libations on the burning entrails of the victim. That ἐπισπένδειν could refer to this is clear from Il. 11, 775: σπένδων αἴθοπα οἶνον ἐπ' αἰθομένοις ἱεροῖσι. Apart from the Homeric descriptions of this act it is a familiar motif in Greek art. After the bloody

37 D. W. Lucas, ἐπισπένδειν νεκρῷ, *'Agamemnon' 1393–8,* Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc. 195 = n.s. 15 (1969) 60–8.

38 Lucas (n. 37) 66f. That Herodotus (4, 62, 3) uses the term with reference to preliminary rites in his account of human sacrifice among the Scythians does not help Lucas's interpretation, for Herodotus is simply explaining other people's practices in terms of the language and norms of Greek animal sacrifice.

sacrifice comes the pious libation, which even a god might be depicted as performing[39]. To understand 1395 in this way entails accepting an ellipsis, for there is no explicit reference to the dismembering and burning of the victim which would precede the libation. But the expression, as understood by Lucas, would be no less elliptic; and σπένδειν referring to a wine-offering (the natural, but not exclusive reference of this verb) would go well with the κρατήρ of 1397[40]. Lucas's interpretation of 1395 obliges him to follow Fraenkel in denying a close connexion of thought between 1397–8 and what precedes: but 1397–8, with its connective τοσῶνδε, must somehow supplement its antecedent[41]. It does so syntactically; but the supplement is not a full explanation, for, apart from the κρατήρ reference it compounds the allusiveness of the whole passage by evoking the further image of Agamemnon drinking a deadly mixture of his own making. Such accumulation of tenuously related imagery sequences is, however, characteristic of Aeschylus[42]. Finally, the explanation here offered of 1395 necessitates a new interpretation of νεκρῷ there. The word naturally and normally refers to a *human* corpse: that is why the libation might be inappropriate[43]. For the norm to which Aeschylus and his audience refer is *animal* sacrifice, despite the instances of human sacrifice, such as Iphigeneia's, in the world of the plays[44]. Even if she can countenance the thought of pouring libations on her victim, Clytemnestra must admit the impossibility of actually doing it. It is the point at which the sacrifice metaphor, successfully sustained hitherto, finally breaks down. The blasphemy of her words is not thereby lessened, for she adds that she considers it "more than just" (1396) to complete the ritual of human sacrifice in this way: the implication is that it might be morally right to do so, but inappropriate to put this justifiable intention into practice. The horror of what she means must be supplied by the audience, who will imagine the dismemberment[45] and burning which are the necessary preludes to the concluding libation.

39 See W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 122f. For σπονδή in sacrificial connections see P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer* (Munich ³1920) 149 n. 2.

40 σπονδαί over sacrificial victims could be of mixed wine: see K. Hanell, *Trankopfer,* RE VI A 2 (1937) 2133.

41 The observations of Denniston-Page 199 on τοσῶνδε seem incontrovertible.

42 Cf. e.g. *Ag.* 218–9. 966ff. 1178ff.

43 In Marc. Aurel. 6, 13 νεκρός refers to the animal cadaver, but its usage there is exceptional. The Stoic wishes to inculcate disgust at – and, in consequence, independence from – physical pleasure and luxury: to envisage fish, fowl or pork as "corpses" is to develop φαντασίαι καθικνούμεναι αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ διεξιοῦσαι δι' αὐτῶν, ὥστε ὁρᾶν, οἷά τινά ποτ' ἐστίν (p. 126 Theiler).

44 On the mythical interplay of human and animal sacrifice see W. Burkert, GRBS 7 (1966) 112ff.

45 A dismemberment of Agamemnon's corpse did subsequently occur: *Cho.* 439.

It is interesting that Clytemnestra's one reference in the scene to her relationship with Aegisthus (1435–6) prefaces her comments as wronged wife and her abuse of Cassandra. (That Clytemnestra can both live with Aegisthus and plan the killing of Agamemnon as, among other things, the husband who brought Cassandra home with him was understood by Cassandra [1258–63]. Those lines are the forerunner of the speech in 1431–1447.) This may be Aeschylean psychological subtlety: it certainly heightens the irony of her remarks. This irony is further underlined by her application of the term λυμαντήριος (1438) to Agamemnon, whereas by rights it should not be applied to him but rather, as Daube pointed out, to Aegisthus[46]. The withering contempt of 1440ff. is clear; what remains controversial is the nature of the abuse in the difficult word ἱστοτριβής (1443). We must accept Fraenkel's demonstration that Pauw's conjecture ἰσοτριβής is unlikely in view of the fact that compounds with ἰσο- do not usually have a second component which is verbal[47]. The attempts of Casaubon and Heath to find an obscene meaning for ἱστοτριβής have recently been revived, and depend on a single apparent use of ἱστός = penis in Strabo, where a courtesan says τρεῖς ἤδη καθεῖλον ἱστοὺς ἐν βραχεῖ χρόνῳ τούτῳ (8, 6, 20 [378]). These words must be a play on the meanings "beam (of the loom)" and "mast": the former meaning is required by the context, the latter suggested by the nautical term ἱστὸν καθαιρεῖν (e.g. Od. 15, 496)[48]. But even granted the possible sexual connotations of τρίβειν[49] it seems unduly risky to defend on evidence so slender and questionable an otherwise unattested word in order to produce an obscenity whose coarseness is unparalleled in tragic diction. Lloyd-Jones's explanation in terms of an allusion to the punishment of fornication by public exposure seated on a ἱστός gives a more acceptable tragic term of abuse, even if it is not necessary to follow him in understanding ἱστός as "top-beam of a loom": the word could refer to any rod or pole[50]. The portrayal of Cassandra as a dishonoured woman would, incidentally, be an apt counterpart to Agamemnon the adulterer of 1438.

46 Daube (n. 27) 182.

47 Fraenkel III 680–2.

48 The Strabo passage appears to have been first adduced in explanation of ἱστοτριβής by D. C. C. Young, CQ n.s. 14 (1964) 15. G. L. Koniaris, apparently unaware of Young's article, offers the same explanation in AJPh 101 (1980) 42–3. It may be that, rather than trying to find traces of coarse nautical slang in the transmitted word, we should agree with Fraenkel (III 683 n. 3) that the nautical context has led to the corruption ἱστο-: the most convincing recent emendation is J. Diggle's κοιτοτριβής (CR n.s. 18, 1968, 2f.). We certainly cannot use *Ag.* 351 to defend vulgar male language in Clytemnestra's mouth, as W. B. Tyrell, AJPh 101 (1980) 44f., does: for in that line it is the sage prudence of her words, κατ' ἄνδρα σώφρον', that the chorus praises.

49 See J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse. Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven/London 1975) 176.

50 Lloyd-Jones (n. 34) 58f. K. Latte, Kleine Schriften zu Religion, Recht, Literatur und Sprache der Griechen und Römer (Munich 1968) 291, on whose explanation of ἀκρίστιος in Hesy-

The occurrence of the word παροψώνημα in line 1447 is a reminder that we should not narrow excessively our expectations of what may constitute appropriate tragic diction. The sexual meaning of this gastronomic term is paralleled by uses of related words like παροψίς and παροψωνεῖν in Old Comedy[51]. The lines are difficult. The double genitive of 1447 need not be altered: a similar construction is found at Ag. 360–1 (μέγα δουλείας γάγγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου)[52]. The main problems lie in the identification of the subject of ἐπήγαγεν in 1446 and the sense of τῆς ἐμῆς χλιδῆς. A change of subject in 1446 would be harsh, and unintelligible to an audience without some explanatory word, e.g. a pronoun: Cassandra must remain the subject of ἐπήγαγεν. The juxtaposition of τοῦδ' and ἐμοί expresses the related yet contrasting significance of Cassandra's presence for Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and this intermeshing of meanings is also found in the following words. We should understand παροψώνημα as the *object* and *cause* of pleasure, rather than a pleasurable *feeling*: the former meaning corresponds to the uses of παροψίς in the parallel Aristoph. fr. 187 and ἐμπόλημα in Soph. Trach. 538, which may echo our passage[53]. The sentence refers to the insulting degradation which the arrival of the παλλακίς inflicts upon Clytemnestra, and this should be the clue to the interpretation of τῆς ἐμῆς χλιδῆς. In the context we must surely agree with those scholars who understand it to connote sexual satisfaction[54]. The difficulty of interpreting it in this way has (apart from the feeling that such sentiments cannot be attributed to the tragic *persona* Clytemnestra) been caused by the assumption that ἐμῆς is a subjective genitive, and that Clytemnestra must be saying that her own satisfaction (presumably with Aegisthus) has been heightened by Cassandra – and that can only mean, by the killing of Cassandra. But this is to impose upon the text a burden of unarticulated meaning which it can scarcely sustain. If, however, we understand ἐμῆς objectively

chius (ed. Latte 1, 91) Lloyd-Jones's interpretation is based, understood the ἱστός of Hesychius' definition to be a pole, and only possibly a loom beam. The facts that the setting of *Ag.* 1443 is nautical and that ἱστός also means "mast" would, on this explanation, be coincidental. – Professor Dihle suggests to me that if we assume that ἱστοτριβής has no nautical connotation the words ναυτίλων ... σελμάτων acquire a comprehensible explanatory function.

51 See the passages quoted by Denniston-Page 203f. E. Livrea, in a good discussion of the passage in: Studi in onore di Anthos Ardizzoni, a cura di E. L. e G. A. Privitera (Rome 1978), vol. 1, 509ff., points out that μείλιγμα (1438) has similar gastronomic-sexual connotations (511). – The possibility that the term φιλήτωρ (1446) may subtly suggest that Cassandra was as much seducer as seduced (see Fraenkel III 685) shows how free Aeschylean diction could be.

52 Livrea (n. 51) 512 points out that εὐνῆς is a pro-adjectival genitive, comparing (apart from *Ag.* 360–1) 739–40. 1535, and *Cho.* 183–4.

53 See Fraenkel III 686; cf. P. E. Easterling (ed.), *Sophocles: Trachiniae* (Cambridge 1982) 140f.

54 So e.g. Conington, followed by LSJ s.v. παροψώνημα; Denniston-Page 203; Lloyd-Jones (n. 18) 95. But cf. Fraenkel III 686.

then the phrase can mean "delight in me" or "my charms" (cf. Aesch. Suppl. 1003 παρθένων χλιδαῖσιν εὐμόρφοις and Eur. Phoen. 224 παρθένιον χλιδάν). We may translate: "and she brought in a supplementary side-dish to me for our bed, an addition to my charms"[55]. The irony of the lines is implicit, but, given the tableau before the audience's eyes, and the repeated insistence on the fact that Agamemnon and Cassandra lie beside one another (κεῖται: 1438. 1446, cf. ξύνευνος, 1442), its grimness will none the less be understood: this lying-together of the two corpses is not what was planned[56].

We may conclude therefore that, despite the difficulties of the four passages discussed, the language of Clytemnestra may be characterized as violent; ranging in its coarse vividness to the very extremes of Aeschylean diction; blasphemous and thus undermining whatever justification its strength imparts to her self-defence; but always ruthlessly vivid and unique. Here is indeed an extraordinary character, presented through the medium of extraordinary language. Nor do the ensuing anapaests lessen this impression or weaken its unity. Reference has already been made to 1552–3. But one may also point to 1476ff., where the Daimon is called τριπάχυντον ("thrice gorged"), and said to nurture an ἔρως αἱματολοιχός ("a lust to lick blood"[57]) in the family, a continuing ἰχώρ ("pus") in its festering wound. And there is a final borrowing from colloquial language in 1575: πᾶν ἀπόχρη μοι, which suggests the immediate vividness of her hopeless dream of a pact with the Daimon, but also its vulgar inadequacy[58].

V

The chorus of Elders might at first sight appear to lack the insistent unity of Clytemnestra's character in this scene. It moves from theme to theme in a rapid, almost impressionistic succession of emotional and moralising outbursts. Yet it would be wrong to see in this movement a sign of incoherence or disarray[59]. That was not Aeschylus' intention in this scene, even if it had been the

55 Of the interpretations referred to in the previous note, LSJ and Denniston-Page may (but do not explicitly) understand ἐμῆς objectively.

56 The words εὐνή, ξύνευνος, κεῖσθαι may be part of a "talamo – sepolcro" motif in the trilogy, as Livrea (n. 51) 513 suggests. Cf. *Cho.* 318. 893–4. 906. The ambiguity of εὐνή was also noticed by C. Fuqua, CPh 67 (1972) 191f.

57 So Lloyd-Jones (n. 18) 96.

58 It may, however, be unwise to read too much significance into this type of colloquialism, of which there are several similar instances of the 'τί χρῆμα;' type in Aeschylus and the other tragedians: see Fraenkel III 607f.; cf. P. T. Stevens, *Colloquial Expressions in Euripides* (Hermes Einzelschriften 38, Wiesbaden 1976) 21f.

59 The chorus's disarray is greatly exaggerated by J. Bollack, *L'Agamemnon d'Eschyle. Le texte et ses interprétations* (Lille 1981) 1, 1, CXVII. Its role is rather to be sought in the tension and dissonance which he observes in the Aeschylean chorus, ibid. XVII. XLIf.

underlying mood of the trimeters which preceded it (1348–71). Confused and disturbed the chorus may be, but it expresses thereby a sense of grief and outrage at the king's murder; and out of such feelings the two aspects of its role in the scene develop. These are: the lament for Agamemnon, and the emotionally charged yet intensely practical exploration of the action's ethical and religious dimensions. The presentation of these interlocking themes is carefully structured. The Elders extend and deepen the theme of Clytemnestra's responsibility. Paradoxically, they do this by suggesting a sequence of factors or agents which might seem to delimit that responsibility, and which ultimately serve to situate it in the larger pattern of the tragedy. Thus, if Clytemnestra seems to forfeit whatever sympathy she might expect by the nature of her self-defence, the Elders, in a counter-movement, contrive to make of her an agent who is also a victim, whose dreadful deed is not solely her own doing. In her appearances in the trilogy subsequent to this scene she will always be shown in such an ambivalent light, as a tragic, and not merely a monstrous figure[60].

From its first lyrical outburst in 1407ff. the chorus speaks of the responsibility for the murder. Initially its thoughts turn to obvious explanations for so outrageous a deed: drugs (1408–9) or madness (1427–9) must have possessed Clytemnestra's wits. But the notion of some form of external, even supernatural cause is thus introduced. This does not lessen Clytemnestra's guilt and the need for punishment (1409–11. 1429–30), and the *lex talionis* is invoked in 1429–30: χρὴ ... τύμμα τύμματι τεῖσαι, as it will be in 1562 and 1564. But these first attempts at explanation remain on the surface, as if this murder were another unexceptional killing, to be punished by such conventional means as banishment (1410–1). Only the complex and pernicious sexual antagonisms of 1438ff. can induce the chorus to look for deeper and remoter causes, and the turbulent emotional world which Clytemnestra reveals in that speech suggests to its male minds that typically female forces are at work here: it is because of the misdeeds of Helen, no less than those of Clytemnestra, that kindly kings (1452) and countless soldiers (1456–7) must die[61]. But behind the women are the Eris in the house (1460–1), the Daimon (1468ff.), and, mysteriously, Zeus himself (1485–8). Corresponding to these historical perspectives is the chorus's developing sense of the future consequences of the present action. Further violence will ensue (1533–6. 1561ff.): the fate of a family is at issue (1531–2. 1566). It is thus the chorus's function not merely to see behind the immediate situation to its causes and effects, but also to relate the supernatural forces at work to the broad canvas of the destiny of the house. When, by contrast,

60 See especially *Ag.* 1654–61; *Cho.* 691–9. 910–29; *Eum.* 95–102.

61 The theme of Helen the destroyer of Troy takes up what has already been said at *Ag.* 61ff., and, above all, 681ff. The linking of the crimes of Helen and Clytemnestra, and their κράτος ἰσόψυχον (1470), are perceptively understood by C. W. Macleod, JHS 102 (1982) 127, to be a "'dominion' ... grotesquely parallel to the joint rule of the Atreidae".

Clytemnestra invokes Dike, Ate and the Erinys in 1432–3 these forces are intimately related by her to her daughter and her husband: they do not extend beyond these personal links to a perception of the grand design of the trilogy.

The sustained development of the theme of responsibility for Agamemnon's death is presented through elaborate lyrical and associative means: it is obvious that this is no attempt to reproduce a naturalistic train of thought or imitate the growth of insight, even if, as with Clytemnestra, the thoughts expressed are not inappropriate to those who express them. Appropriateness must, after all be upheld if the chorus is not to lose its function in the play's surface action. Because it remains an involved participant it can, apart from lamenting Agamemnon (if only in an incipient and aborted way[62]), extend our vision of the tragic pattern and at the same time fail fully to understand and justify that pattern (1530: ἀμηχανῶ. 1561: δύσμαχα δ' ἐστὶ κρῖναι). The physical weakness and indecisiveness of the chorus after the murder is thus transformed into, and complemented by, an inner ἀμηχανία.

VI

The scene is one of confrontation: of the nine reactions of Clytemnestra from 1401 on only two (1475ff. and 1567ff.) agree with preceding utterances of the chorus. The sense of opposition and contrast is thereby sustained to the end: there is no ultimate convergence of views. Nevertheless, the lyrical section (from 1448) facilitates a dialogue that is missing in the mere juxtaposition of actor's iambics and choral lyrics of the first part of the scene. It is significant that the chorus neither answers the details of Clytemnestra's defence in this earlier part (not even her reproaches against itself, 1414–5), nor echoes the themes or words of her speeches[63]. The invitation to an ἀγών (1421–5) is never fully taken up. By contrast, there is intimate interlocking of both theme and expression in the epirrhematic part proper. While this interlocking does not obliterate the differences and distinctions between Clytemnestra and the Elders it enables each party to extend and modify the other's words, so that confrontation is counterpointed by mutual correction. This process is particularly obvious from 1462 on. Clytemnestra criticizes the notion that Helen is responsible for the deaths of many (1464–7): the Elders tacitly modify the notion by invoking the Daimon behind the women (1468ff.). Invocation of the Daimon eventually leads Clytemnestra to make it, rather than herself, responsible for

62 On the scene as incipient *kommos* see Reinhardt (n. 18) 107f. The real θρῆνος for Agamemnon would have been the ἐπιτύμβιος αἶνος referred to by the chorus at 1547. On possible connections between lament and accusation in the θρῆνος for murder victims see Daube (n. 27) 183f.

63 Such discontinuity in tragic dialogue is analysed by D. J. Mastronarde, *Contact and Discontinuity. Some Conventions of Speech and Action on the Greek Tragic Stage* (Berkeley 1979).

the killing of Agamemnon (1497ff.); but the chorus modifies this extreme view by reasserting her responsibility, with supernatural co-operation (1505–8)[64] – an assertion which Clytemnestra tacitly accepts, as her later avowals of responsibility (1553–4) and the Daimon's role (1569ff., cf. 1660) indicate. It is thus difficult to read 1497ff. "in character" and see, as Daube does, in Clytemnestra's words a legalistic sophistry whereby she attempts to capitalize on the chorus's introduction of the Daimon-motif into the debate in order to disavow her guilt[65]. If this is intended to be a new line of self-defence, then it quickly and unceremoniously falls flat. But the role of the Daimon *is* significant, in the co-operative manner specified by the chorus in 1507–8. We must read Clytemnestra's words as part of an impersonal, paratactic sequence that is only completed by the chorus's reply[66]: she becomes momentarily the vehicle of the Atreidae-theme, and it is symptomatic of this that it is the children of Thyestes, and not merely Iphigeneia, of whom she speaks in 1504[67].

The interpretation of Clytemnestra's other agreement with the chorus (1567ff.) is controversial. Much depends on the meaning of χρησμόν in 1568. If we understand it in a weak sense, as "saying" or "pronouncement" then it need have no future reference: Clytemnestra is simply corroborating the chorus's evocation of the law of retribution. She might understand it as an echo of her own words (1503. 1529), and so as a reference to Agamemnon's fate and no more: the application to herself might be missing. But it is difficult to support such a sense of χρησμός, as Fraenkel points out[68]. Clytemnestra must find something oracular in the chorus's words: Fraenkel thinks it inevitable that she understands them as a prediction applicable to herself. If χρησμός is a prediction here, then it must be a clearly understood one: we cannot have Clytemnestra saying: "you have truly spoken this *obscure* utterance"[69]. But need χρησμός be solely predictive? Seers are expert, not merely in foretelling the future, but in knowing and understanding past and present as well (cf. Il. 1, 70). The paraphrase of Denniston-Page, "oracular sort of saying", may be the most acceptable meaning of χρησμός here[70]. The chorus has spoken with prophetic (not merely predictive) insight, as Clytemnestra recognizes. But she recognizes only the application of its words to present and past: a part of its

64 On this notion of the divine part in actions for which humans are none the less responsible see Fraenkel II 371–4.

65 Daube (n. 27) 185–90.

66 See pp. 6f. and n. 24 above.

67 See Fraenkel III 712.

68 Fraenkel III 738.

69 For this reason the attempt of Neitzel (n. 26) 144, to understand χρησμός as an oracular riddle must be deemed a failure. Cassandra as prophetess can say that she will proceed to a χρησμὸς οὐκέτ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων (1178) and no longer speak ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων (1183), thus making the distinction between obscure and readily intelligible χρησμοί explicit.

70 Denniston-Page 212.

meaning, not the whole. Because the chorus's words generalize and are not temporally fixed, Clytemnestra can understand them as she will, as referring primarily to Agamemnon[71]. Her agreement with the chorus is based on the irony of a misunderstanding, or, rather, partial understanding. The rest of her stanza makes sense, if this is grasped. She accepts what has happened up to now as a hard but inevitable working-out of the Daimon's will. Then, and only then, does she turn to consider the future (ὃ δὲ λοιπόν 1571). What she wishes is understandable, and the means of achieving it – a sacrifice of the wealth which may encourage divine envy – recognizably traditional[72]: it is however no "practical and thoroughly sensible suggestion"[73], but rather a misguided hope of achieving the impossible – a pact with the Daimon[74]. Through her own and the chorus's words we have come to appreciate the supernatural element in her action, but she is shown to be totally unaware of its implications for her own future, just as she can and will not apply the law of retribution to herself. She acts, and does not fully understand, although claiming to do so; the chorus, whose attempted actions are abortive, understands more, while not claiming to understand everything. The epirrhematic sequence preserves this contrast to the end of the scene[75].

71 The χρησμός can be the whole passage 1562–6: it is neither necessary nor convincing to limit it to 1564 παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα, as Wilamowitz (n. 2) and Denniston-Page 212 do. – We must understand 1562 generically, not merely the lines which follow it. The attempts of O. Lendle, Hermes 106 (1978) 30f. and Neitzel (n. 26) 139f. to provide a definite subject for φέρει are convincingly rebutted by H. Hommel, Würzburger Jahrbücher N.F. 6a (1980) 33ff. Lendle's subject δύσμαχα (sc. ὀνείδη), with φέροντ' as accusative neuter plur. (sc. ὀνείδη) gives an unnatural Greek that is, moreover, so truncated as to be indecipherable. Neitzel's revival of Hermann's view that Clytemnestra is the subject of φέρει lacks any syntactical support (nor is there any reason why ὁ καίνων must refer exclusively to Agamemnon), and his attempt to relate the meaning of φέρειν to ἔρδειν and καίνειν is rightly rejected by Hommel 37. But neither does Hommel's own interpretation (first published in Wege zu Aischylos II, Darmstadt 1974, 242ff.) convince: φέροντ' cannot without the article be the subject of φέρει, as W. Kraus, Gnomon 49 (1977) 746 points out, and Soph. *OC* 1694 is too unreliable a witness for τὸ φέρον in the sense of "fate" (the line is athetised by Dawe). Translate with Kraus, ibid. "es rafft den Raffenden".

72 Her wish is repeated in 1659–60. For the attempt to divert divine envy by jettisoning of excessive wealth cf. 1008ff.

73 So Denniston-Page 212.

74 See Lloyd-Jones (n. 18) 100.

75 The contrast overshadows the apparent resolution of the confrontation between Clytemnestra and the chorus in 1567ff. That the following Aegisthus scene follows the same structural pattern of tension and its apparent resolution is argued by G. A. Seeck, *Dramatische Strukturen der griechischen Tragödie: Untersuchungen zu Aischylos* (Zetemata 81, Munich 1984) 53f.