

AESCHYLUS , EURIPIDES ,
MOULTON RICHARD GREEN И
ДР.

**BOOK OF
ILLUSTRATIONS :
ANCIENT TRAGEDY**

Aeschylus

**Book of illustrations :
Ancient Tragedy**

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Aeschylus

Book of illustrations : Ancient Tragedy

REFERENCES

In the case of Aeschylus and Sophocles the numbering of lines agrees with that in the translations of Plumptre and in the original. In the plays from Euripides the numbering is that of the lines in the cheap translation (Routledge's Universal Library).

[Transcriber's note: In the original book, the line numbers mentioned above were right-justified. In this e-book, they are enclosed in curly braces, and placed immediately after their associated line of text, e.g. ".. a line of text {123}".]

The passages quoted are from Plumptre's Translation

MEMORANDUM

The Sacred Legends touched by this Trilogy would be familiar, in outline, to the Auditors: e. g.:
The woes of the House of Atreus: the foundation of them laid by Atreus when, to take vengeance on his brother Thyestes, he served up to him at a banquet the flesh of his own sons;

His grandsons were Agamemnon and Menelaus: Menelaus' wife, Helen, was stolen by a guest, Paris of Troy, which caused the great Trojan war.

Agamemnon, who commanded the Greek nations in that war, fretting at the contrary winds which delayed the setting out of the fleet, was persuaded by the Seers to slay his own daughter Iphigenia, to appease the Deities;

Her mother Clytaemnestra treasured up this wrong all through the ten years' war, and slew Agamemnon on his return, in the moment of victory, slew him while in his bath by casting a net over him and smiting him to death with her own arm;

Then she reigned in triumph with Aegisthus her paramour (himself one of the fatal house), till Orestes her son, who had escaped as an infant when his father was slaughtered, returned at last, and slew the guilty pair;

For this act of matricide, though done by the command of Apollo, Orestes was given up to the Furies, and driven over the earth, a madman, till in Athens, on Mars' Hill they say, he was cleansed and healed.

Cassandra too was involved in the fall of Agamemnon: the Trojan maiden beloved of Apollo, who bestowed upon her the gift of prophecy; when she slighted the God's love, Apollo – for no gift of a god can be recalled – left her a prophetess, with the doom that her true forebodings should ever be disbelieved. She, having thus vainly sought to save Troy, with its fall fell into captivity, and to the lot of Agamemnon, with whom she died.

The name of Orestes would suggest the proverbial friendship of Orestes [Transcriber's note: Orestes?] and Pylades, formed in Orestes' trouble and never broken.

TRILOGY OF THE ORESTEIA

FIRST PLAY: IN THE MORNING: AGAMEMNON

PROLOGUE

The Permanent Scene is decorated to represent the facade of the Palace of Agamemnon, at Argos; the platform over the Central door appearing as a Watch-tower. At intervals along the front of the Palace, and especially by the three doors, are statues of Gods, amongst them Apollo, Zeus, and Hermes. The time is supposed to be night, verging on morning. Both Orchestra and Stage are vacant: only a Watchman is discovered on the Tower, leaning on his elbow, and gazing into the distance.

The Watchman soliloquizes on his toilsome task of watching all night through for the first sight of the signal which is to tell of the capture of Troy: he has kept his post for years, till the constellations which usher in winter and harvest-time are his familiar companions; he must endure weather and sleeplessness, and when he would sing to keep his spirits up he is checked by thoughts of his absent master's household, in which, he darkly hints, things are "not well." [*He is settling himself into an easier posture, when suddenly he springs to his feet.*] The beacon-fire at last! [*He shouts the signal agreed upon, and begins dancing for joy.*] Now all will be well; a little while and his hand shall touch the dear hand of his lord; and then – ah! "the weight of an ox rests on his tongue," but if the house had a voice it could tell a tale! [*Exit to bring tidings to the queen.*] {39}

PARODE, OR CHORUS-ENTRY

As if roused by the Watchman's shout, enter the Chorus: Twelve Elders of Argos: in the usual processional order, combining music, chanting and gesture-dance, to a rhythm conventionally associated with marching. They enter on the right (as if from the city), and the Processional Chant takes them gradually round the Orchestra towards the Thymele, or Altar of Dionysus, in the centre.

The Chorus in their Processional Chant open the general state of affairs, especially bringing out the doublesidedness of the situation [which is the key-note of the whole Drama]: the expected triumph over Troy, which cannot be far distant now, combined with misgivings as to misfortunes sure to come as nemesis for the dark deeds connected with the setting out of the expedition. They open thus:

Lo! the tenth year now is passing {40}
Since, of Priam great avengers,
Menelaos, Agamemnon,
Double-throned and double-sceptred,
Power from sovran Zeus deriving —
Mighty pair of the Atreidae —
Raised a fleet of thousand vessels
Of the Argives from our country,
Potent helpers in their warfare,
Shouting cry of Ares fiercely;
E'en as vultures shriek who hover,

Wheeling, whirling o'er their eyrie, {50}
In wild sorrow for their nestlings,
With their oars of stout wings rowing,
Having lost the toil that bound them
To their callow fledglings' couches.
But on high One – or Apollo,
Zeus, or Pan, – the shrill cry hearing,
Cry of birds that are his clients,
Sendeth forth on men transgressing
Erinnys, slow but sure avenger;
So against young Alexandros
Atreus' sons the Great King sendeth,
Zeus, of host and guest protector: {60}
He, for bride with many a lover,
Will to Danai give and Troïans
Many conflicts, men's limbs straining,
When the knee in dust is crouching,
And the spear-shaft in the onset
Of the battle snaps asunder.
But as things are now, so are they,
So, as destined, shall the end be.
Nor by tears nor yet libations
Shall he soothe the wrath unbending {70}
Caused by sacred rites left fireless.

They are going on to soliloquize how they themselves have been shut out of the glorious expedition, for, in matters of War, old age is but a return to boyhood; when {82}

The Chorus-Procession having reached the Thymele, turn towards the Stage. Meanwhile the great Central Door of the Stage has opened, and a solemn Procession filed out on the Stage, consisting of the Queen and her Attendants, bearing torches and incense, and offerings for the Gods; they have during the Choral Procession silently advanced to the different Statues along the front of the Palace, made offerings and commenced the sacrificial rites. When the Chorus turn towards the Stage, the whole Scene is ablaze with fires and trembling with clouds of incense, rich unguents perfume the whole Theatre, while a solemn Religious ritual is being celebrated in dumb show.

The Chorus break off their Processional Chant [keeping the same rhythm] to enquire what is the meaning of these solemn rites, and whether the Queen can solve their doubt, which wavers between hope and foreboding:

The Queen signifying, by a gesture, that the Ritual must not be interrupted by speech, the Chorus proceed to take their regular position round the Thymele, and address themselves to their {104}

PRELUDE

the Music, Poetry, and Gesture-dance changing from a March to a highly Lyrical rhythm; the evolutions of the Dance taking Right and Left hand directions, but without the Chorus quitting their position round the Altar.¹

Strophe: during which the evolutions take a Right Hand direction.

¹ This is a mere guess: we have no information as to how the evolutions of a Proem differed from those of a regular Choral Ode.

The Chorus resume: though shut out from War their old age has still suasive power of song, and they can tell of the famous omen seen by the two kings and the whole army as they waited to embark: two eagles on the left devouring a pregnant hare:

Sing a strain of woe
But may the good prevail! {120}

Antistrophe: the same rhythm line for line as the Strophe, but the evolutions taking Left Hand direction.

and the Prophet Calchas interpreted; they shall lay Troy low, only beware lest the Victors suffer from the wrath of some God, Artemis who hates the eagle:

Sing a strain of woe,
But may the good prevail! {137}

Epode: a different rhythm, and the evolutions without any special direction.

May some Healer, Calchas added, avert her wrath, lest she send delays upon the impatient host and irritate them to some dread deed, some sacrifice of children to haunt the house for ever! So he prophesied in piercing strains.

Sing a strain of woe,
But may the good prevail {154}

ENTRY-ODE

With a change of rhythm, the Chorus pass into their first regular Choral Ode; Strophes and Antistrophes as in the Prelude, but the Evolutions now leading them from the central Altar to the extreme Right and Left of the Orchestra.

Strophe I: Evolutions leading Chorus from Thymele to extreme Right of Orchestra.

It must be Zeus – no other God will suffice – Zeus alone who shall lift from my² mind this cloud of anxiety;

Antistrophe I: Evolutions the same, rhythm for rhythm, as the Strophe, but leading the Chorus back from the Right of Orchestra to the central Altar.

For on Zeus, before whom all the elder Gods gave way, they must rely who are bent on getting all the wisdom of the wise. {168}

Strophe II: a change of rhythm: evolutions leading Chorus from the central Altar to the extreme Left of Orchestra.

Yes: Zeus leads men to wisdom by his fixed law that pain is gain; by instilling secret care in the heart, it may be in sleep, he forces the unwilling to yield to wiser thoughts: no doubt this anxiety is a gift of the Gods, whose might is irresistible. {176}

Antistrophe II: same rhythm, but evolutions leading back from Left of Orchestra to central Altar.

When Agamemnon, not repining, but tempering himself to the fate which smote him, waited amidst adverse winds and failing stores: {184}

Strophe III: fresh change of rhythm, Chorus moving to Right of Orchestra.

² The Chorus generally speak of themselves in the Singular.

and the contrary winds kept sweeping down from the Strymon, and the host was being worn out with delays, and the prophet began to speak of 'one more charm against the wrath of Artemis, though a bitter one to the Chiefs,' {195}

Antistrophe III: same rhythm, movement back from Right of Orchestra to Altar.

at last the King spoke: great woe to disobey the prophet, great woe to slay my child! how shed a maiden's blood? yet how lose my expedition, my allies? May all be well in the end! {210}

Strophe IV: change of rhythm; movements to the left of Orchestra.

So when he himself had harnessed
To the yoke of Fate unbending,
With a blast of strange new feeling
Sweeping o'er his heart and spirit,
Aweless, godless and unholy,
He his thoughts and purpose altered
To full measure of all daring,
(Still base counsel's fatal frenzy,
Wretched primal source of evils,
Gives to mortal hearts strange boldness,)
And at last his heart be hardened
His own child to slay as victim,
Help in war that they were waging
To avenge a woman's frailty,
Victim for the good ship's safety. {219}

Antistrophe IV: back to Altar.

All her prayers and eager callings
On the tender name of Father,
All her young and maiden freshness,
They but set at naught, those rulers,
In their passion for the battle.
And her father gave commandment
To the servants of the Goddess,
When the prayer was o'er, to lift her,
Like a kid, above the altar,
In her garments wrapt, face downwards, —
Yea, to seize with all their courage,
And that o'er her lips of beauty
Should be set a watch to hinder
Words of curse against the houses,
With the gag's strength silence-working.

Strophe V: Altar to Sight of Orchestra.

And she upon the ground
Pouring rich folds of veil in saffron dyed,
Cast at each one of those who sacrificed
A piteous glance that pierced
Fair as a pictured form,

And wishing, – all in vain, —
To speak; for oftentimes
In those her father's hospitable halls
She sang, a maiden pure with chastest song,
And her dear father's life
That poured its threefold cup of praise to God,
Crowned with all choicest good,
She with a daughter's love
Was wont to celebrate. {238}

Antistrophe V: Back to Altar.

What then ensued mine eyes
Saw not, nor may I tell, but Calchas' arts
Were found not fruitless. Justice turns the scale
For those to whom through pain
At last comes wisdom's gain.
But for our future fate,
Since help for it is none,
Good-bye to it before it comes, and this
Has the same end as wailing premature;
For with to-morrow's dawn
It will come clear; may good luck crown our fate!
So prays the one true guard,
Nearest and dearest found,
Of this our Apian land. {248}

EPISODE I

The Ritual on the Stage being now concluded, Clytaemnestra advances to the front. At the same moment the Choral Ode is finished and the Chorus take up their usual position during the Episodes, drawn up in two lilies in front of the Altar facing the Stage. They speak only by their Foreman (or Corypliceus), and use the ordinary Iambic Metre (equivalent to our Blank Verse).

The Foreman of the Chorus repeats his enquiries of Clytaemnestra as to the meaning of this sudden rejoicing, guardedly adding that it is his duty to pay respect to his lord's wife in his absence —Clytaemnestra announces that Troy has been taken this last night – rapid interchange of stichomuthic dialogue, the Chorus expressing their amazement as to how the news could travel so fast.

Cho. What herald could arrive with speed like this?

Clytaem. Hephistos flashing forth bright flames from Ida:
Beacon to beacon from that courier-fire
Sent on its tidings; Ida to the rock
Hermaean named, in Lemnos: from the isle
The height of Athos, dear to Zeus, received
A third great torch of flame, and lifted up,
So as on high to skim the broad sea's back,
The stalwart fire rejoicing went its way;
The pine wood, like a sun, sent forth its light

Of golden radiance to Makistos' watch;
 And he, with no delay, nor unawares
 Conquered by sleep, performed his courier's part.
 Far off the torch-light to Euripos' straits
 Advancing, tells it to Messapion's guard:
 They, in their turn, lit up and passed it on,
 Kindling a pile of dry and aged heath.
 Still strong and fresh the torch, not yet grown dim,
 Leaping across Asôpos' plain in guise
 Like a bright moon, towards Kithaeron's rock,
 Roused the next station of the courier flame.
 And that far-travelled light the sentries there
 Refused not, burning more than all yet named:
 And then the light swooped o'er Gorgôpis' lake,
 And passing on to Aegiplanctos' mount,
 Bade the bright fire's due order tarry not;
 And they, enkindling boundless store, send on
 A mighty beard of flame, and then it passed
 The headland e'en that looks on Saron's gulf
 Still blazing. On it swept, until it came
 To Arachnaean heights, the watch-tower near;
 Then here on the Atreidae's roof it swoops,
 This light, of Ida's fire no doubtful heir.
 Such is the order of my torch-race games;
 One from another taking up the course,
 But here the winner is both first and last;
 And this sure proof and token now I tell thee,
 Seeing that my lord hath sent it me from Troia. {307}

While the *Chorus* are still overcome with amazement, *Clytaemnestra* triumphs over the condition of Troy that morning: like a vessel containing oil and vinegar, the conquered, bewailing their first day of captivity over the corpses of husbands and sons, the victors enjoying their first rest free from the chill dews of night and the sentry's call – and all will be well, *if* they remember the rights of the Gods in their sack of the city: ah! may they not in their exultation commit some sacrilegious deed of plunder, forgetting that they have only reached the goal, and have the return to make! If they should, the curse of those who have perished might still awake against them [*Cl.* thus darkly harping upon her secret hope that vengeance may still overtake them for the sacrifice of her daughter.] {345}

Exit *Clytaemnestra*, with Attendants.

After a few words of triumph (*in marching rhythm*), that Zeus, protector of host and guest, has visited the proud Trojans, and brought them into a net of bondage that neither young nor full-grown can overleap, the *Chorus* proceed to a more formal expression of their feelings in {357}

CHORAL INTERLUDE I

breaking, as regularly in the Choral Odes, into highly Lyrical rhythms accompanied with Music and Gesture-dance, the evolutions of which lead them alternately to Right and Left of Orchestra and back to Altar.

Strophe I: evolutions from Altar to Right.

Yes: it is the hand of Zeus we may trace in all this! Now what will they say who contend that the Gods care not when mortal men trample under foot the inviolable? Troy knows better now, that once relied on its abounding wealth: ah! moderate fortune is best for the seeker after Wisdom; Wealth is no bulwark to those who in wantonness have spurned the altar of the Right and Just. {375}

Antistrophe I: evolutions front Right back to Altar, rhythm as in Strophe.

Such a man is urged on by Impulse, offspring of Infatuation, till his mischief stands out clear, as worthless bronze stripped of its varnish. So Paris sees now his light-hearted crime has brought his city low. He came to the house of the Sons of Atreus, and stole a Queen away, leaving Shame where he had sat as Guest. {392}

Strophe II: change of rhythm, evolutions from Altar to Left.

She, leaving to her countrymen at home
Wild din of spear and shield and ships of war,
And bringing, as her dower,
To Ilion doom of death,
Passed very swiftly through the palace gates,
Daring what none should dare;
And many a wailing cry
They raised, the minstrel prophets of the house,
"Woe for that kingly home!
Woe for that kingly home and for its chiefs!
Woe for the marriage-bed and traces left
Of wife who loved her lord!"
There stands he silent; foully wronged and yet
Uttering no word of scorn,
In deepest woe perceiving she is gone;
And in his yearning love
For one beyond the sea,
A ghost shall seem to queen it o'er the house;
The grace of sculptured forms
Is loathed by her lord,
And in the penury of life's bright eyes
All Aphrodite's charm
To utter wreck has gone. {409}

Antistrophe II: back to Altar.

And phantom shades that hover round in dreams
Come full of sorrow, bringing vain delight;
For vain it is, when one
Sees seeming shows of good,
And gliding through his hands the dream is gone,
After a moment's space,
On wings that follow still
Upon the path where sleep goes to and fro.
Such are the woes at home
Upon the altar hearth, and worse than these.
But on a wider scale for those who went
From Hellas' ancient shore,

A sore distress that causeth pain of heart
Is seen in every house.
Yea, many things there are that touch the quick:
For those whom each did send
He knoweth; but, instead
Of living men, there come to each man's home
Funereal urns alone,
And ashes of the dead. {425}

Strophe III: change of rhythm, evolutions from Altar to Right.

War is a trafficker; in the rush of battle he holds scales, and for the golden coin you spend on him he sends you back lifeless shapes of men; they sent out men, the loving friends receive back well-smoothed ashes from the funeral pyre. They sing the heroic fall of some – all for another's wife; and some murmur discontent against the sons of Atreus, and some have won a grave in the land they had conquered. {441}

Antistrophe III: evolutions repeated, but from Right back to Altar.

So sullen discontent has been doing the work of a people's curse: therefore it is that I am awaiting with dim forebodings the full news. The Gods do not forget those who have shed much blood, and sooner or later the dark-robed Deities of the Curse consign the evil-doer to impassable, hopeless gloom. Away with the dazzling success that attracts the thunderbolt! be mine the moderate lot that neither causes nor suffers captivity. {458}

Epode: change of rhythm and Chorus not moving from the Altar.

The courier flame has brought good news – but who knows whether it be true? – Yet it is childish when the heart is all aglow with the message of the flame to be turned round by everchanging rumour. – Yet it is the nature of a woman to believe too soon. [Observe how the Chorus, setting out on an ode of triumph, have come back to their persistent forebodings.] {471}

Suddenly at the Side-door on the extreme Left of the Stage (signifying distance) appears a Herald, covered with dust, crowned with olive in token of victory. The Chorus immediately fall into their Episode position to receive him, the Foreman expressing their anticipations as the Herald traverses the long stage to the point opposite the Chorus.

EPISODE II

Foreman of Chorus. Now we shall have a clearer message than that of the beacon-fires: all is well or.. but I cannot put the other alternative. *The Herald (arrived opposite the Chorus)* solemnly salutes the land of Argos he had never hoped to see again, salutes the several Gods whose statues are now bright with the morning sun, especially Apollo who has proved himself a Healer, and Hermes, patron of Heralds; and then announces Agamemnon is close at hand, victorious over Troy and having sent Paris to his merited punishment. – Observe how in the parallel dialogue that follows the foreboding tone creeps in again in the midst of the news of triumph. {520}

Chor. Joy, joy, thou herald of the Achaean host!

Her. All joy is mine: I shrink from death no more.

Chor. Did love for this thy fatherland so try thee?

Her. So that mine eyes weep tears for very joy.

Chor. Disease full sweet then this ye suffered from.

Her. How so? When taught, I shall thy meaning master.

Chor. Ye longed for us who yearned for you in turn.

Her. Say'st thou this land its yearning host yearned o'er?

Chor. Yea, so that oft I groaned in gloom of heart.

Her. Whence came these bodings that an army hates?

Chor. Silence I've held long since a charm for ill.

Her. How, when your lords were absent, feared ye any?

Chor. To use thy words, death now would welcome be. {533}

The Herald, not understanding the source of the Chorus' misgiving, goes

on to say of course their success is mixed: so fare all but the Gods.

They have had their tossings on the sea, their exposure to the night dews till their hair is shaggy as beasts'; but why remember these now? our

toil is past – so he suddenly recollects is that of the dead they have

left behind – but he will shake off these feelings: Troy is captured. The

Chorus feel youthful with such happy tidings. {569}

Enter Clytaemnestra from the Palace.

Clyt. Now they will believe me, who were saying just now that women believed too soon. What joy for a wife equal to that of a husband's return? and I have kept my trust as stainless as bronze. [*Exit into Palace.*] The Foreman goes on to enquire as to Menelaus: the Herald would fain not answer, and brings out the Greek dread of mingling bad news with good – at last he is forced to acknowledge Menelaus has disappeared, his ship sundered from the fleet by a terrible storm in which

They a compact swore who erst were foes,
Ocean and Fire, {634}

and the sea 'blossomed with wrecks of ships and dead Achaeans:' the fleet itself barely escaped. [Thus: foreboding indirectly assisted by its appearing that one of the two sons of Atreus has already been overtaken by Nemesis.] {663}

CHORAL INTERLUDE II

[*Positions, etc., as before.*]

Strophe I: to the Right.

Who could foresee so well and give her the name *Helen*– a *Hell*³ to men and ships and towers? She came out of bowers of gorgeous curtains, she sailed with breezes soft as Zephyrs yet strong as Titans, and unseen reached the leafy banks of the Simois; but bloodshed was in her train, and on her track followed hosts of hunters that carried shields. {680}

Antistrophe I: back to Altar.

So there is a wrath that works vengeance after long waiting: to the *Ilion* that received her she was a dear bride: then there was a shout of 'Paris, Paris,' in the Bridal Song: now his city has celebrated a Wedding of Death, and called on Paris' name in other tones. {695}

Strophe II: Altar to Left.

So once a lion's cub,
A mischief in his house,
As foster child one reared,
While still it loved the teats;

³ This is simply an English pun substituted for a Greek one: the name Helen resembles a Greek root which signifies captivity.

In life's preluding dawn
Tame, by the children loved,
And fondled by the old,
Oft in his arms 'twas held,
Like infant newly born,
With eyes that brightened to the hand that stroked,
And fawning at the hest of hunger keen. {704}

Antistrophe II: back to Altar.

But when full-grown, it showed
The nature of its sires;
For it unbidden made
A feast in recompense
Of all their fostering care,
By banquet of slain sheep;
With blood the house was stained,
A curse no slaves could check,
Great mischief murderous:
By God's decree a priest of Ate thus
Was reared, and grew within the man's own house. {715}

Strophe III: Altar to Right.

So I would tell that thus to Ilion came
Mood as of calm when all the air is still,
The gentle pride and joy of kingly state,
A tender glance of eye,
The full-blown blossom of a passionate love,
Thrilling the very soul;
And yet she turned aside,
And wrought a bitter end of marriage feast,
Coming to Priam's race,
Ill sojourner, ill friend,
Sent by great Zeus, the God of host and guest —
Erinnys, for whom wives weep many tears. {726}

Antistrophe III: back to Altar.

The time-honored saying is that Prosperity grown big will not die childless, its offspring will be a Woe insatiable. I say no, it is not the Prosperity, it is an Impious deed that breeds Impious deeds like the parent stock. {737}

Strophe IV: from Altar to Left.

Recklessness begets Recklessness, this begets full-flushed Lust and
Godforgetting Daring, two black curses to a household. {746}

Antistrophe IV: back to Altar.

Justice will dwell in houses blackened with smoke where life is ruled by law, but averts her eyes from gold-decked mansions conjoined with hands denied: and it is this Justice that is directing the course of things to its appointed goal. {755}

At this point, a grand Procession of the returning Warriors from Troy enters Stage and Orchestra by the Left Side-Door (signifying distance): Agamemnon in his chariot, followed in another chariot by Cassandra as captive, but still in the garb of prophetess: then a train of Soldiers laden with trophies and leading a train of Troïan captive women. The Chorus fall into their Episode position to receive them.

EPISODE III

Chorus (in marching rhythm as the Procession traverses the long Stage.)

Son of Atreus, how are we to hit upon welcome that shall be fit for thee, not missing or overshooting the mark? In both condolence and congratulation men's faces often belie their hearts; thou who knowest thine own sheep, should'st be able to tell kindness from flattery. We confess, when thou wentest forth on thy expedition, thou wast to us like a face limned by an unskilled artist, in the deed thou did'st to inspire false courage. Now, without a thought unfriendly, we say – all is well that ends well, and thou wilt soon hear who has deserved well of thee in thy absence. [Observe their guarded tone.] {782}

Agamemnon [the metre now settling into ordinary 'Blank Verse']. First thanks to the Gods by whose help we have laid Troy low, the ruins of which are still sending up clouds of smoke as sweet incense to the Deities of Vengeance. And your sentiments, both then and now, I approve: prosperity too often misses true sympathy amidst the envy it excites; envy that has the double pang of missing its own and seeing another's good. Experience has taught me the difference between professing and true friends: my unwilling comrade Ulysses alone proved true to me. As to the state we will deliberate in full counsel as to what needs preserving, and where disease calls for surgery. At present I must give thanks at my own hearth for my safe return.

Here the Central Door of the Stage is thrown open, and enter Clytaemnestra to welcome her lord, followed by attendants bearing rich draperies of purple and dazzling colors. {827}

Clyt. Notwithstanding your presence, Senators of Argos, I must pour out my heart to my lord. Ah! a sad thing is a wife waiting at home for her absent husband! hearing of wounds, which if true would have made you a riddled net, of deaths enough for a three-lived Geryon: again and again I have been stopped with the noose already on my neck! This is the reason why you see not your son Orestes: wonder not, he is being brought up by an ally to whom I sent him, lest danger befall us. I cannot weep; my tears have run dry by my weepings and sleepless watchings for the beacon. Now at ease I hail my lord —

as watch-dog of the fold,
The stay that saves the ship, of lofty roof {870}
Main column-prop, a father's only child,
Land that beyond all hope the sailor sees,
Morn of great brightness following after storm,
Clear-flowing fount to thirsty traveller.

The bare ground is not fit for the foot that has trampled on Ilion: strew (*to Attendants*) tapestry on the floor as the Conqueror steps from his car. The Attendants commence to lay down the draperies: *Agamemnon (hastening to stop them)* rebukes Clytaemnestra for the excessive tone of her welcome, and bids her not make him offensive to the Gods, by assuming an honor fit for the Gods alone, no man being safe in prosperity till he has died; fame, not foot-mats, and never to lose the path of Wisdom, are his glories. A contest ensues [the false Clytaemnestra anxious to entangle him in an act of Infatuation]; at last he yields, but removes the shoe from his foot, to avert the ill omen of such presumptuous display. He then commends the captive Cassandra to the Queen's kind treatment, and *Clyt.* renews her lofty expressions of joy: there is a store of purple in the palace, and many such robes

would she bestow to welcome his return, the root of the household bringing warmth in winter and coolness in the dog-days. Ah! may Zeus work out for me "all that I wish for." [*So Exeunt: Ag. walking barefoot on the rich tapestry. Cassandra alone remains on the Stage in her chariot.*] {949}

CHORAL INTERLUDE III

Strophe I: to the Right.

Why is it that forebodings haunt the gate of our hearts, and we lack steadfast trust to fling them away as visions? It is not long since that fatal starting for Troy, {959}

Antistrophe I: back to Altar

and now we have seen with our own eyes the safe return: and yet our mind, self-taught, keeps chanting within itself a dirge of fate. These inner pulses cannot be in vain: heaven send they prove false oracles! {971}

Strophe II: to the Left.

When Wealth o'erflows, Restlessness, as a near neighbor with only a wall between, presses it on with perpetual desire for more, till Prosperity strikes suddenly on an unseen rock – yet even then, by sacrificing a portion of the cargo, the rest may be saved; so by plenteous harvests sent from Zeus, hunger and pestilence may be allayed: {986}

Antistrophe II: back to Altar.

but when blood has once been poured upon the ground, what charm can bring it back? Zeus struck dead the Healer who found how to restore life. I would give my misgiving relief in pouring out words of warning: but I know that fate is certain and can never be escaped; so I am plunged in gloom, with little hope ever to unravel my soul that burns with its hot thoughts. {1001}

EXODUS, OR FINALE

Re-enter Clytaemnestra to fetch Cassandra. Clyt. addresses Cassandra in moderate tone, bidding her adapt herself to her new life and yield to those who wish to soften her captivity. [Cassandra pays no attention and seems gazing into vacancy.] The Chorus endorses Clytaemnestra's advice. At length it occurs to Clytaemnestra that Cassandra cannot speak Greek, and she bids her give some sign. [No sign, but a shudder convulses her frame.] Thinking she is obstinate Clytaemnestra will wait no longer [exit Clyt. into Palace to the sacrifice]. The Chorus renew their advice to Cassandra: She at length leaves the chariot and suddenly bursts into a cry of horror. {1038}

Then follows, marking the crisis of the drama, a burst of lyrical excitement. The dialogue between Chorus and Cassandra falls into lyrical strophes and antistrophes: Cassandra, by her prophetic gift, can see all that is going on and about to be consummated within the Palace. Her wailings reproach her patron and lover Apollo, who has conducted her to a house of blood; she sees the past murders that have stained the house, she sees the preparations for the present deed, the bath, the net, the axe; then her wailings wax yet wilder as she sees that she herself is to be included in the sacrifice. Meantime her excitement gradually passes over to the Chorus: at first they have mistaken her cries for the ordinary lamentations of captives (and borne their part in the dialogue in the ordinary 'blank verse'); then their emotions are roused (and their speech falls into lyrics) as they recognize the old woes of the family history and remember Cassandra's prophetic fame; as she passes to the deed going on at the moment they feel a thrill of horror, but only half understand and take her words for prophecy of *distant* events, which they connect with their own forebodings; thus in her struggles to get her words believed Cassandra becomes more and more graphic in her notices of the scene her mental eye is seeing, and the excitement crescendoes until: {1148}

As if the crisis were now determined the dialogue settles down into 'blank verse' again. *Cassandra ascends from Orchestra to Stage.* She will no longer speak veiled prophecy: it shall flow

clear as wave against the sunlight. She begins with the Furies that never quit the house since that primal woe that defiled it – as she describes this the *Chorus* wonder an alien can know the house's history so well —*Cassandra* lets them know of her amour with Apollo, and how she gained the gift of prophecy and then deceived the God and was doomed to have her prophecies scorned. – Continuing her vision she points to the phantom children, 'their palms filled full with meat of their own flesh,' sitting on the house: in revenge for that deed another crime is this moment about to stain further the polluted dwelling, a brave hero falling at the hands of a coward, and by a plot his monster of a wife has contrived. – The *Chorus* still perplexed, *Cassandra* NAMES Agamemnon, the *Chorus* essaying vainly to stop the ill-fated utterance. – Then *Cassandra* goes on to describe how she herself must be sacrificed with her new lord, a victim to the jealous murderess; bitterly reproaching Apollo, she strips from her the symbols and garb of her prophetic art, which the god has made so bitter to her, and moves to the 'butcher's block,' foretelling how the Son shall come as his father's avenger and hers. – The *Chorus* ask, why go to meet your fate instead of escaping? *Cassandra* knows Fate is inevitable. – Again and again she shrinks back from the door, 'tainted with the scent of death;' then gazing for the last time on the loved rays of the Sun, and invoking him as witness and avenger, she abandons herself to her doom.

Ah, life of man! when most it prospereth, { 1298 }
 It is but limned in outline; and when brought
 To low estate, then doth the sponge, full soaked,
 Wipe out the picture with its frequent touch.

[*Passes through the Central Door into Palace.*]

The Chorus (in lyrical rhythm). It is true good fortune can never be fended from the visitation of evil, which no strong palace can bar out. What will it avail Agamemnon to have taken Troy and come in honor home, if it be really his destiny to pay the penalty of that old deed of bloodguiltiness? { 1313 }

(*Here a loud cry is heard from within the Palace.*)

The *Chorus* recognize the voice of the King, and fear the deed is accomplished. In extreme excitement the *Chorus* break up, and each member, one after another, suggests what is to be done; at last they compose their ranks to learn what has actually occurred. { 1342 }

Suddenly, by the machinery of the Roller-stage [Eccyclema], the interior of the Palace is moved to the front of the Stage, and discovers Clytaemnestra in blood-stained robes, standing with attendants by the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra, the former lying in a silvered bath covered with a net.

Clytaemnestra, in an elaborate speech, glories in her deed. Deceit was necessary in dealing with foes: now standing where she did the deed, she glories in it: glories in the net in which she entangled and rendered him powerless, in the blows, one, two, three, like a libation, which she struck, glories in the gush of death-blood which has bespattered her. A late triumph: he had come home to drain the goblet of curses his old deed had been long heaping up. After an interruption of astonishment from the *Foreman*, she repeats: it is the handiwork of my artist hand. After the *Chorus* have recovered from their astonishment they (*in a lyrical burst*) denounce her: her confession is the incense on the Victim's head, she shall feel the people's strong hate, and have an exile's doom. —*Clyt. (calmly in Blank Verse)*: they denounced no such exile against Agamemnon when he sacrificed her daughter, the first of her travail pangs. Besides, are they sure they are the stronger? Perchance, though old, they may yet have to learn. —*Chorus (in a similar lyrical burst)*: she is now maddened with the spirit of vengeance, but she will one day find a nemesis, blow for blow. *Clyt. solemnly (in Blank Verse)* swears by the deed she has done, and the curse for which she did it, she has no fear of Nemesis, as lone as Aegisthus is her shield. Meanwhile, there they lie: the wife-wronger and his mistress. { 1377 }

Then follows an elaborate lyrical scene: the *Chorus* giving vent to their excitement in *Strophes* and *Antistrophes* irregularly succeeding one another, *Clytaemnestra* occasionally joining in. O for

death, sudden and without lingering, now that our beloved Protector is gone! Ah! Helen! one more deed of woe to your account! —*Clyt.* No need to wish for death or upbraid Helen. —*Cho.* (*interrupting*) O dread Power that dost attack this household, working even through women deeds of dread! —*Clyt.* Now thou art right: it is the Evil Genius of the House that feeds in their hearts the lust of blood; bringing fresh blood-guilt ere the old is healed. —*Cho.* Yes, there is a Power wrathful to the House; but it must be through Zeus he works; what amongst mortal men is wrought apart from Zeus?

Ah me! Ah me! {1467}
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,
In impious deed of death,
In this fell spider's web!
Yes woe is me! woe, woe!
Woe for this couch of thine unhonorable!
Slain by a subtle death
With sword two-edged, which her right hand did wield.

Clyt. You speak of me as the doer: it was the Avenger of the seed of Atreus who did the deed in the semblance of this dead man's wife. —*Cho.* None will hold thee guiltless of the deed; yet, perchance, thou mayest have had as helper the avenging Fiend of that ancestral time; he presses on this rush of murders of near kin.

Ah me! Ah me!
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,
In impious deed of death,
In this fell spider's web!
Yes woe is me! woe, woe!
Woe for this couch of thine unhonorable!
Slain by a subtle death
With sword two-edged, which her right hand did wield.

Clyt. This deed brings no dishonor to me: he slew my daughter and his own, wept over with many a tear; now slain in recompense he is gone to Hell with nothing to boast over. —*Cho.* Whither escape from this House? No longer drops, but fierce pelting storm of blood shakes it to its basement. —*Cho.* Oh that earth had received me ere I saw this sad sight! Who will perform funeral rites and chant the dirge? Wilt thou who hast slain dare to mourn him? —*Clyt.* It is no care of thine: we will give him burial; and for mourning – perhaps Iphigenia will greet him kindly by the dark streams below. —*Cho.* Hard it is to judge; the hand of Zeus is in all this; ever throughout this household we see the fixed law, the spoiler still is spoiled. Who will drive out from this royal house this brood of curses dark? —*Clyt.* Thou art right; but here let the demon rest content; suffice it for me that my hand has freed the house from the madness that sets each man's hand against each. [Observe: in this last infatuated confidence and throughout Clytaemnestra's exultation in the deed the dramatist is laying the foundation for the second play of the Trilogy.] {1534}

Enter Aegisthus by one of the two Inferior doors in front of the scene [representing the inferior parts of the Palace in which he has been concealed since the return of Agamemnon].

Aegisthus salutes the happy day of vengeance which shows him Agamemnon paying penalty for the deeds of his father: he relates the quarrel between this father Atreus and his own father Thyestes, how when the one brother came as suppliant to the other Atreus spread before him the horrid banquet of his own child's flesh, at the knowledge of which he died. *Aegisthus* himself had suffered banishment at the hands of Atreus while yet a child, and now has returned full grown to work vengeance on the son of his wronger, to see the long contrived nemesis brought to full conclusion. —*Chorus* note that he confesses the deed, and he shall not escape the righteous curse a people hurls with stones. —*Aeg.* Know your place: you are oarsmen, we command the ship; prison and fasting are admirable devices for helping old people to keep their tempers within bounds. Defiances are interchanged: the *Chorus* taunting him that he had to get a woman to do the deed he dared not do himself, —*Aeg.* contemptuously says the working out of the fraud was the proper province of a woman, especially as he was a known foe. — The *Chorus* threaten vengeance and suggest the name ORESTES as avenger: At this Clytaemnestra starts, *Aegisthus* enraged gives the signal at which { 1626 }

Bodyguard of Aegisthus pour in through both the Inferior doors on either side of the Central door of the Palace, and fill the stage [thus producing one of the Scenic Tableaux of which Aeschylus was fond]. The *Chorus*, though of course outnumbered, are nothing daunted, as representing the legitimate authority of the State now Agamemnon is dead, and therefore sure to be backed by the City; they make as if to ascend the stage.

Contest in blows between *Chorus* and *Bodyguard of Aegisthus* appears inevitable, but Clytaemnestra throws herself between them, urges that enough ill has already been done, and after further defiances, forces *Aegisthus* away and play abruptly terminates: *the Chorus returning to the Right into the City, and the Bodyguard into the Palace.*

SECOND PLAY: MIDDAY: THE SEPULCHRAL RITES (*CHOEPHORI*)

PROLOGUE

The Permanent Scene, as before, represents the Palace of Agamemnon at Argos. The only difference is that the place of the Thymele in the centre of the Orchestra is taken up by Agamemnon's Sepulchre. Enter by the Left Side-door (signifying distance) Orestes and Pylades, and descending the Orchestra-staircase advance to the Sepulchre.

Orestes, invoking the Conductor of the Dead, lays locks of hair and fragments of garments as offerings on his Father's tomb, cut off as he had been by exile from being present at the actual Funeral-rites:

He is interrupted by the opening of one of the Inferior Doors of the Palace, out of which comes Electra, and a train of Trojan Captive-maidens bearing urns of libations, all with dishevelled hair and the well-known gestures proper to Sepulchral rites. They descend (with the exception of Electra) the Orchestra-staircase, and perform a Choral Ode with funeral rhythm and gestures. Orestes and Pylades, recognizing them, stand aside. {19}

SEPULCHRAL ODE AS CHORUS-ENTRY

in three Strophes, Antistrophes, and an Epode,

describes in words the tearing of cheeks, rending of garments, and groans, which are actually the gestures of their dance, and are proper to a Sepulchral rite such as they have been sent to perform by their Queen, terrified as she has been by a dream the night before, a dream signifying how the Dead were wroth with those that slew them. But the Chorus like not this graceless deed of grace: what ransom can be found for the overthrow of the lord of a house? with him Awe has been overthrown, and Fear takes its place, or yet more Success is God. {53}

Yet stroke of Vengeance swift
Smites some in life's clear day;
For some who tarry long their sorrows wait
In twilight dim, on darkness' borderland;
And some an endless night
Of nothingness holds fast.

Yes: for blood once spilt, for the marriage tie defiled, there is no remedy – yet the Chorus must, as part of their bitter captive lot, perform the rite they have no heart in. {75}

Through this Ode Electra, who ought to have taken the lead, has stood on the stage irresolute: she now addresses the Chorus, who at her word fall into their Episode positions.

EPISODE I

Electra puts to the Chorus the same difficulty they have been feeling:

What shall I say as these funereal gifts
I pour? How shall I speak acceptably?
How to my father pray? What? shall I say
"I bring from loving wife to husband loved
Gifts" – from my mother? No, I am not bold
Enough for that, nor know I what to speak,
Pouring this chism on my father's tomb:
Or shall I say this prayer, as men are wont,
"Good recompense make thou to those who bring
These garlands," yea, a gift full well deserved
By deeds of ill? Or, dumb with ignominy
Like that with which he perished, shall I pour
Libations on the earth, and like a man
That flings away the lustral filth, shall I
Throw down the urn and walk with eyes not turned? {97}

The *Chorus-Leader* breaking ranks to lay her hand on the Sepulchre as sign of fidelity, advises to throw off all disguise and pray boldly for friend and against foe. Electra in this sense offers the Prayer: setting forth the wrongs of the house and praying for Orestes and Vengeance: then calling on the Chorus for a Sepulchral Song she descends to the tomb. {144}

Sepulchral Paeon of short Strophe and Antistrophe: for these libations' sake may the curse be averted – yet who strong enough to come as Averter: *while Electra is pouring the libations on the tomb*. {157}

Electra returns to Stage, her whole manner changed: as if the prayer had already begun to be fulfilled, she has found the mysterious locks which, she bit by bit lets out, must be those of Orestes – the Chorus, like sailors in a storm, can only invoke the gods: if the day has come, from a small seed a mighty trunk may grow – Electra then discovers foot-prints [*as if leading from the Side Stage-door to the Orchestra-staircase*] of two travellers; one foot-print agrees with her brother's: {203}

Orestes and Pylades come forward: recognition and joy, Electra hardly believing. She addresses him by four-fold name: as father dear,

The love I owe my mother turns to thee,
My sister's too that ruthlessly was slain,
And thou wast ever faithful brother found.

Orestes compares his family to an eagle's brood orphaned by the spoiler. Electra catching at the omen of eagle, dear bird of Zeus who will avenge his own —*Chorus* are afraid that their noisy joy may be overheard and ruin all – Orestes has no fear of ruin after the strong oracles of Apollo that bade him come under terrible penalties if he disobeyed: {261}

Leprous sores that creep
All o'er the flesh, and as with cruel jaws
Eat out its ancient nature, and white hairs
On that foul ill to supervene: and still
He spake of other onsets of the Erinnyes,
As brought to issue from a father's blood;
For the dark weapon of the Gods below
Winged by our kindred that lie low in death,
And beg for vengeance, yea, and madness too,

And vague, dim fears at night disturb and haunt me,
Seeing full clearly, though I move my brow
In the thick darkness.. and that then my frame
Thus tortured should be driven from the city
With brass-knobbed scourge: and that for such as I
It was not given to share the wine-cup's taste,
Nor votive stream in pure libation poured;
And that my father's wrath invisible
Would drive me from all altars, and that none
Should take me in or lodge with me: at last,
That loathed of all and friendless I should die,
A wretched mummy, all my strength consumed.
Must I not trust such oracles as these? {297}

The Chorus, breaking into lyrics, feel that Justice has at last taken their side: then follows an elaborate

KOMMOS, OR LYRIC CONCERTO

by Orestes, Electra and Chorus, in highly intricate and interwoven Strophes and Antistrophes, with funereal gesture. The jaws of flame do not reduce the corpse to senselessness; they can hear below this our Rite and will send answer – what a fate was Agamemnon's, not that of the warrior who dies leaving high fame at home and laying strong and sure his children's paths in life, but to be struck down by his own kin! But there is a sense of Vengeance being at hand, Erinnys and the Curses of the slain; they make the heart quiver: the Dirge crescendoes till it breaks into the 'Arian rhythm,' a foreign funeral rhythm with violent gestures (proper to the Chorus as Asiatics); and so as a climax breaks up into two semi-choruses: one sings of woe, the other of vengeance, and then the formal Dirge terminates and the Blank Verse recommences. {469}

In a composed frame (and in Blank Verse) *Orestes and Electra* repeat the distinct prayer for Vengeance and the death of Aegisthus and then address themselves to the means. *Orestes* enquires as to the meaning of the Sepulchral rites, and the dream is narrated, which he interprets as good omen.

Orest. And have ye learnt the dream, to tell it right? {517}

Chor. As she doth say, she thought she bare a snake.

Orest. How ends the tale, and what its outcome then?

Chor. She nursed it, like a child, in swaddling clothes.

Orest. What food did the young monster crave for then?

Chor. She in her dream her bosom gave to it.

Orest. How 'scaped her breast by that dread beast unhurt?

Chor. Nay, with the milk it sucked out clots of blood.

Orest. Ah, not in vain comes this dream from her lord.

Chor. She, roused from sleep, cries out all terrified,
And many torches that were quenched in gloom
Blazed for our Mistress' sake within the house.
Then these libations for the dead she sends,
Hoping they'll prove good medicine of ills.

Orest. Now to earth here, and my sire's tomb I pray,
They leave not this strange vision unfulfilled.
So I expound it that it all coheres;

For if, the self-same spot that I left leaving,
The snake was then wrapt in my swaddling clothes,
And sucked the very breast that nourished me,
And mixed the sweet milk with a clot of blood,
And she in terror wailed the strange event,
So must she, as that monster dread she nourished,
Die cruel death: and I, thus serpentised,
Am here to slay her, as this dream portends;
I take thee as my dream-interpreter.

They rapidly arrange their plan to appear as foreigners, and get admission to the Palace, or, if Aegisthus come out, strike him down at once – with a prayer to Apollo *exeunt Electra, Orestes, and Pylades by the Distance Sidedoor.* {575}

CHORAL INTERLUDE I

in four Strophes and Antistrophes.

Monsters and woes are many, but most terrible of all is a passion-driven woman: Thestias, who burnt out the mystic brand that measured her son's life; Scylla, who robbed her father of his life-charm; another – but the woman who slew her warrior-chief it is meet for me to pass over in silence. Then there is the great Lemnian Crime, foremost of all crimes; yet this might well be compared to it; and as that race perished, so is judgment at hand here; the anvil-block of Vengeance firm is set, and Fate is swordsmith hammering; in due time the debt of guilt is paid. {639}

EPISODE II

Enter by the Distance Side-door Orestes, Pylades, and attendants, and advance to the Central Door.

Orestes calls loudly for admission, telling the slave who opens that he is a traveller, and must do his message to those within ere night falls; to a lady if a lady rules, though a lord is seemlier. *Enter Clytaemnestra*, who gives a formal offer of hospitality (having noticed his irreverent tone), and to whom he bluffly gives a message from a fellow traveller, who learning he was bound for Argos, begged him to seek out *Orestes'* kinsmen and give the news of his death. *Clytaemnestra* affects a burst of grief; the curse has taken another victim as he was disentangling himself from the net. *Orestes* regrets he cannot hope for the welcome of those who bear good news. *Clytaemnestra* (with a dim feeling of suspicion) assures him he shall want for nothing 'that is fitting', orders *Orestes* to be led one way, and the rest another, and goes to call Aegisthus 'and friends.' *Exeunt Clytaemnestra by Left Inferior Door to the Women's Quarters, Orestes and Porter through Central and Pylades, etc., through Right Inferior Door. Chorus, in marching rhythm, catch the touch of suspense, and invoke Hermes and the Spirit of Persuasion for Orestes.* {720}

Enter from Women's Quarters, Cilissa, Orestes' Nurse, bidden to seek Aegisthus, as the stranger looks like one meaning to cook some ill. She is in tears at the death of her boy, and details all the petty cares she had over his helpless infancy, and how they are now all profitless.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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