

EURIPIDES, *HELEN* 1564

ὁ δ' Ἑλένης πόσις
 ἐκάλεσεν· ὦ πέρσαντες Ἰλίου πόλιν, (1560)
 οὐκ εἶ' ἀναρπάσαντες Ἑλλήνων νόμῳ
 νεανίας ὥμοισι ταύρειον δέμας
 ἐς πρῶραν ἐμβαλεῖτε, φάσανόν θ' ἅμα
 πρόχειρον ὥσει σφάγια τῷ τεθνηκότι;
 οἱ δ' ἐς κέλευσμά' ἐλθόντες . . . (1565)

1564 ὥσει LP: οἶσω Pearson: αἶρει Hartung: εἶχε Italie: (φάσανον . . . ὥρει)
 Musgrave: (φάσανον . . . ὠθεῖ) Bothe

The Messenger is relating how Menelaus and Helen escape from Egypt in a royal Egyptian ship, under pretext that they are going to carry out a ritual 'sea burial' of the supposedly drowned Menelaus. Helen's husband, whose identity was as yet unknown to the Egyptian crew, induced them to let his own shipwrecked crew (as though Greek strangers wishing to participate in honour to the deceased) come on board, and as the bull intended for sacrifice resisted being embarked he here cries to his men to manhandle it—in fact to carry it—on board.

Musgrave, Murray (O.C.T.), Grégoire and Méridier (Budé), Alt (1964 Teubner), Dale (1967), and Kannicht (1969) have all taken Menelaus' speech as extending to, or including, τῷ τεθνηκότι in 1564, hence the interrogation mark after that word. The problem is ὥσει in the same line. Murray, who printed this, presumably took it as a third person future indicative, with 'sword' as its subject, but the resulting sentence, whatever action is conveyed by ὥσει, is quite unconvincing Greek (Miss Dale calls it 'unintelligible'); the bull is not going to be driven or thrust on board by the agency of a sword, and if (alternatively) ὥσει is taken to refer prospectively to the moment of sacrifice itself, then, regardless of whether the accusative σφάγια be taken directly with ὥσει or, as Kannicht would prefer, as predicative to the understood object (the bull), we have no parallel for such a usage of ὠθεῖν, ἅμα is contradicted, and in any case an implied injunction to sacrifice the animal is, in the light of the sequel, premature and unwanted here. Several of these points tell against the elaborate interpretation of Paley, that 'Menelaus pretended to the crew that the animal was to be sacrificed immediately, for such was the Greek custom . . . Of course the action was only a feint . . .,' and also against that of Kannicht who, influenced by Paley, takes the close *conjoining* of sacrifice to the act of 'raising up' as ritually necessary even though here only done symbolically in words and gesture. Pearson's οἶσω gets rid of ὥσει but is paleographically unlikely and gives a conclusion lacking in point (a loaded 'I, but not you' would have point but would require ἐγώ).

Musgrave acutely sensed that the 'sword ready' idea must be part of the Messenger's narrative, but his parenthesis with the emendation ὥρει gives an even more unsuitable verb. Easier, but still objectionable, would be ὠθεῖ (Duportus). Bothe preferred a vivid ὠθεῖ, and the parenthesis in this form is accepted by the Budé and Teubner editors. But the fact remains that the intended gesture is not clear—certainly the sense 'draw' cannot be extracted from any part of ὠθέω (this vitiates Bothe's view and many others)—and apart from

that, *any* gesture with the sword is, as Miss Dale rightly said, premature at this stage.

Pushing further along the Musgrave-Bothe line of thought, we come to the possibility that Menelaus' words may rather have ended at ἐμβαλεῖτε and that in the immediately following words the Messenger is simply resuming his narrative. But, as replacements for the offending ὥσει, both Hartung's αἶρει and Italic's εἶχε, while allowing such a narrative continuation, fail on paleographic grounds.

We need a solution that is paleographically convincing, avoids any part of ὠθέω, avoids describing a gesture, and yet gives the words point and emphasis. The solution is to accept resumption of narrative and read ὥς ἐς or ὥς εἰς, with φάσγανον nominative and πρόχειρον its predicate. 'And at the same time his sword was ready to his hand as (though) for making sacrifice to the deceased. The men came . . .' No gesture is implied. For εἰς of purpose see LSJ s.v., A.V. 2. For ὥς εἰς of ostensible intention see *Heracl.* 672, *Phoen.* 1363. There the intention happens also to be single and genuine, but in the present passage ὥς has the effect of emphasizing Menelaus' duplicity. For πρόχειρος as predicate in a nominal sentence (i.e. without the verb 'to be') cf. Philemon 157, and the construction is common enough with ἐτοῖμος. And for mid-line termination of a short quoted speech within a Messenger's account, see lines 1591 and 1595 of this same narrative, where the phenomenon recurs.

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