

parades as (Λ) 8 among the 'Veneti'.

It should be noted that Ven.app.cl. 4. 54 is traditionally dated to the thirteenth century. But E. Mioni has (loc.cit.; *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum Codices Graeci Manuscripti* i. 2 (Rome, 1972), 244) placed it in the early fifteenth century.

Amsterdam, Free University

S. R. SLINGS

AESCHYLUS, *CHOEPHOROI* 275¹

It may be unlikely that a kingdom will ever be lost because of an error in the translation of a line in a Greek tragedy, but (as it is the purpose of the present note to show) a mistaken rendering of a single line can do much to disseminate doubt or misunderstanding about the dramatic intentions of the author.

ἀποχρημάτοις ζημίαις ταυρούμενον

This line, composed of only three words, occurs near the beginning of a speech in which Orestes, having revealed himself to his sister, is passing on to her and to a sympathetic chorus consisting of slaves in the royal palace at Argos, the gist of the instructions Apollo, through his oracle at Delphi, has given him about avenging his murdered father. The God, less merciful than the ghost of King Hamlet, has ordered him to kill his mother as well as her paramour.

Two of the best-known English translations of the *Oresteia* translate the line under discussion in completely different, one might almost say, in directly opposed senses. Which of these he accepts could make a significant difference to an attentive reader's understanding of the play.

The bifurcation is traceable to the Loeb edition of Aeschylus, where one translation of this line is given in the text and a different one is suggested in a footnote. The editor, Herbert Weir Smyth, renders the line 'infuriated by the loss of my possessions'. This has been accepted by various commentators and translators, including the author of one of the most applauded recent verse translations, Richmond Lattimore. In some quarters the rendering, or one similar to it, has been cited in support of a Marx-inspired interpretation which holds that Orestes (as Aeschylus, of course, intends us to understand) was inspired by no other motive than that of getting back his possessions and his position as lawful king. But it seems that Weir Smyth himself was not entirely happy about his version of the line because he adopted the very unusual course of printing an alternative rendering, that suggested by T. G. Tucker in a footnote: 'fiercely stern with penalties not to be paid with money' — in other words, the guilty pair are not to be allowed to escape suffering the death-penalty by offering to pay blood-money. This interpretation, which is followed by the translator of the *Oresteia* in the Penguin Classics, Philip Vellacott, suits the context a great deal better than does that given in the text of Loeb, for it is, surely, improbable that Apollo would have instructed Orestes to kill his mother as well as her lover out of anger at the loss of his possessions when the god had at his disposal and was just about to

1 The usual English title is 'The Libation Bearers'. It is doubtful whether this literal translation of the Greek title means much to the average English reader, since we do not

normally associate libations with death. 'The Mourners' or 'The Last Rites' would perhaps be better.

make use of a much more compelling inducement, in the threat of the Furies' vengeance, if he failed to carry out the harsh duty imposed on him by primitive religion and custom. This would include having his flesh eaten away by a loathsome disease, being driven out of his mind by groundless terrors, and, finally dying a miserable and friendless outcast.

The argument is further reinforced by what Orestes says later in the same speech when, avowing the multifarious nature of his motives, he clearly distinguishes between his anxiety to carry out the god's command and his personal desire to avenge his father, his embarrassment at being penniless, and his disgust with the present regime in Argos. Aeschylus portrays him as a very normal young man, more of a young Fortinbras ('of unimproved mettle hot and full') than a Hamlet, and one can readily believe that he was quite sufficiently indignant at being excluded from his rightful possessions and position in life without any promptings from on high; but the subsequent course of the play shows that it was not, in fact, necessary for him to kill his mother (after Aegistheus had been dealt with) in order to recover these, and it was only when his friend Pylades reminded him of the god's instructions that he could bring himself to do so.

But, it is questionable whether either the translation given by Weir Smyth or Tucker can be defended on grounds of grammar and etymology. The participle *ταυρούμενον* belongs to the middle or passive voice of the verb *ταυρώω* (to turn someone into a bull or into the semblance of a bull). Weir Smyth regards *ταυρούμενον* as a passive and assumes that, as such, it includes the notion of being infuriated or raging. But its use in the dramatists does not seem to support this view; for instance, in Euripides, *Bacchae* 992, it clearly does not have this meaning as the two following lines show. Bulls in Greek literature and legend were not always savage, as witness the playful bull that carried off Europa. Tucker, on the other hand, appears to take *ταυρούμενον* as a middle and is probably right in doing so, but his translation of the adjective *ἀποχρημάτοισι*, 'not to be paid any money' though ingenious and attractive does not seem to have gained general acceptance. *ἀποχρήματος* is generally taken to be an alternative or strengthened form of *ἄχρηματος* (moneyless) and to mean, in this context, 'involving deprivation of money', 'impoverishing'. The clue to a convincing rendering is provided by A. W. Verrall in his note on the line in his edition. He too recoils from the idea that Apollo told Orestes to kill his mother out of rage at the loss of his estates and agrees with Tucker that the line, in effect, imposes a ban on the acceptance of 'wergild', but he reaches this result by a rather, different route. According to him, the middle voice of *ταυρώω* always has in the dramatists, a force akin to that of the English phrase 'to look askance at', derived from the bull's characteristically sidelong glance. Whilst this last point may be debatable, it is manifest that the verb has some such meaning in Euripides, *Medea* 92, where the nurse relates how she saw Medea eyeing the children in a way that suggested she intended them some harm;

ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ὄμμα νῦν ταυρουμένην
τοῖσδ', ὥς τι δρασείουσιν.

It is to be noted that, as here, the indirect object of the verb, the person or thing looked at, is in the dative case. Consequently, such a rendering as 'sternly refusing any proffered recompense in money' not only suits the context, but also does not raise any grammatical difficulties and should therefore be accepted.